



# The Advocate

## Six Signatures

At their April 6 meeting, the Lone Star College Board of Trustees approved faculty contracts for Fall 2017. The long list of full-time faculty members shows the depth of talent and dedication that Lone Star College is lucky to have serving our students. Unfortunately, there are also dedicated and talented colleagues whose names are not on this list because their contracts are not being renewed or whose names are on an unexpected list because their contract status was reduced from multiyear to single year.

These decisions are governed by LSC Board policy IV.F.8 on Change in Contract Status. This is not the time and place to go into specifics about individual cases, but we in the AFT have some concerns and recommendations about the decision-making process that we shared with the Board at their March 2 meeting. Now, we'd like to share our concerns with all of you.

The Chancellor has mandated that, if supervisors want to non-renew professors' contracts or change their contract status, or terminate any employee, faculty, or staff, they must formally make their cases to the administrators in the chain of command above them, up to the level of the General Counsel and, finally, to the Chancellor. The entire chain of command must be convinced that the decision is valid and must sign off. That originally meant six levels of approval, so we have come to know the process as the Six Signature process. (That may have been

reduced to fewer signatures, but we'll keep the name for discussion purposes.) To emphasize, the Six Signature process is not written into Board policy; it is a procedure adopted by the Chancellor.

The Six Signature process is intended to prevent supervisors from capriciously firing employees for invalid reasons. We understand that this process has stopped some unwarranted disciplinary decisions. Given that is the case, this is clearly a procedure that was needed. A look at some policy manuals at other community colleges around Texas indicates that other schools do not require as many layers of approval for changes in contract status. So, the AFT genuinely appreciates the intention represented by this policy on the part of the Chancellor.

A concern with the Six Signature process, however, is that as supervisors send their arguments for discipline up the administrative chain, there is no opportunity for employees to present information on their own behalf. So the documentation upon which decisions are made is assembled by the administration without input from the employee in question about his or her side of the story. Indeed, in the faculty cases that we are aware of this year, most professors had no idea that this process was going on until they got a letter notifying them that a disciplinary decision had been made.

Some of those faculty members are filing appeals under procedures out-

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lined in Section IV.F.8 of the Policy Manual. As regular readers of *The Advocate* will note, we have written extensively about the college's grievance policy, and this edition includes an article on this topic. Appeals are a similar but separate process about which we haven't written previously. A faculty member electing to appeal a change of contract status does so directly to the Chancellor with the narrow possibility of appealing to the Board of Trustees under very restrictive circumstances. The appeals hearing before the Chancellor includes testimony from the recommending college president.



The AFT sees two problems with the Six Signature procedure.

First, since the faculty member is not consulted for input as the Six Signature

process is set in motion, he or she is now placed in the position of trying to reinstate a contract rather than preventing it from being taken away in the first place. This is much more stressful. In fact, some of the faculty who have had changes in contract status felt this process would be hopeless and didn't try, even though they believed the decision was wrong.

Second, the person to whom a faculty member must appeal (the Chancellor) and the person being consulted (the college president) are in the same chain of command that has already signed off on the decision. Those individuals have already made a decision about the faculty member based on information they have received during the Six Signature process. Not only were these professors unable to share their side of the story during the decision-making process, but now they have to convince people to reverse decisions about which they have already made up their minds.

No doubt, many of our readers are involved in some sort of supervisory or counseling position, even if it is low level. We are trained to hear both sides of a story before we make a decision. This makes both ethical and common sense. Similarly, we believe that people in the Six Signature chain should refuse to sign off on a contract status change until the affected employee has had a chance to tell his or her side of the story. Otherwise, each person in the chain has already been biased against the employee before the employee begins an appeal.

Interestingly, some precedent already exists in another policy area that would support an improved approach.

Section IV.F.10.13 deals with termination of a contract (rather than non-renewal). This policy applies if the administration wants to fire a contractual employee during the school year as opposed to letting the employee complete the contract period but non-renewing the contract for the next year.

In the case of a termination, the college president is required to first notify the employee that a termination is being considered. The employee is allowed to respond to that notice to explain his or her side of the story and to explain why he or she feels the termination would be incorrect. If the college president is convinced, the case can be dropped at that point.

If not, the case moves to a pre-termination appeal—an appeal before action is taken, rather than after. At this appeal, the employee may again provide evidence, this time including witnesses, and may have representation. Decisions about possible terminations are only made after the employee presents his or her case. There is still a narrow window for appeal to the Board.

Legally, there is a difference between a termination and a non-renewal because an employee being terminated is still covered by a contract guaranteeing him or her a "property right." That property right ends once the contract ends.

Nevertheless, the principle is ethical and could be adapted and grafted into the Six Signature process. A faculty member or other contracted employee could be notified that someone in administration was considering a change in contract status recommendation. The employee could respond at that point and, potentially, problems could be resolved satisfactorily.

If the Six Signature process begins anyway, the employee should be able to provide evidence at each level, including witnesses, and bring a representative of his or her choice; a decision to non-renew a contract or to move the employee to a lower level would be made only after these hearings. The possibility of an appeal to the Board would be included. Would this process be more time consuming? Yes,



but it would be worth it to ensure that contract status changes only occur when they are truly warranted.

Are there other improvements that could be made to this process? Possibly. Looking at policy manuals at some other colleges around the country we have seen scenarios in which contract change and termination cases are heard by third parties from outside the institution. We have also seen policy manuals in which these changes (for faculty) have to be approved by a panel of faculty peers. The best thing that could happen would be an open dialog about issues related to contracts to reach a consensus. The AFT would support such a process and would enthusiastically welcome the opportunity to participate.

In the meantime, since disciplinary decisions have been made this year without giving employees an opportunity to present evidence, we believe it is especially important that disciplined employees have an opportunity to appeal their cases to parties who have not already been part of the decision-making process. In particular, we advocate that those employees be allowed to appeal their cases to the Board for fair and unbiased hearings if needed. We have discussed in the past (including the December 2016 edition of *The Advocate*) that we feel the criteria under which employees can appeal to the Board are far too narrow. That problem still needs to be addressed in general, but this year, to provide equity there should especially be some flexibility.

I will close this article by drawing an analogy that I hope will address our mindset as we consider issues of contract non-renewals and status changes.

Those of us who teach at Lone Star College are committed to the success of our students. If they don't do well on their assignments or tests, our reaction is to offer them help, especially if we see that they are trying to learn. Some of them will fail in spite of our best efforts, but recording their failure is always a disappointment. We want them to be successful.

I hope that all of us feel the same way about the success of our faculty and other employees.

John Burghduff  
Professor of Math  
LSC-CyFair

## Payroll Deduction for Union Dues

In a replay of the previous Texas legislative session, Sen. Joan Huffman, R-Houston, has again introduced a bill to end payroll deduction for teachers' union dues. Although the previous effort died in the House, Senate Bill 13, also known as "the anti-teacher bill," appears more likely to pass this time. Huffman says she wants to get the state out of the business of collecting union dues, but critics say the bill picks winners and losers by targeting teachers but exempting police officers, firefighters and emergency first responders as well as charitable organizations. The bill is a legislative priority of Lt. Gov. Dan Patrick, and in his state of the state address to the Legislature in January, Gov. Greg Abbott indicated his support for the measure.

Because of this, AFT-Lone Star has adopted a secure method for members to pay dues through a bank draft system. In February, Cindy Hoffart-

Watson and John Burghduff, AFT officers at LSC Cy-Fair, volunteered to pilot the new payment method there. On March 8, Burghduff initiated an email correspondence with the LSC Payroll office, thanking them for their years of payroll deduction for our members and asking for their advice about the best way for them to make the transition. Burghduff stated in his first email that his goal was to make the change "as simple as possible for your office."

Payroll responded in a friendly and professional manner, laying out a process with payroll change deadlines to complete the transition by the end of August. The agreed upon plan was for the AFT to send names of members who were ready to switch in batches twice a month, two to three days before the payroll change deadlines. Payroll staff readily agreed to the August timeline and stated that the plan would be great for them.

Everyone seemed to be on the same page when another Payroll employee sent an email to 139 AFT members on March 23, announcing that LSC would unilaterally end payroll deduction for AFT dues with





the pay period beginning May 1, 2017, for full-time semi-monthly employees, and the pay period beginning May 7, 2017, for part-time employees. According to that email, Payroll was taking this action in response to a request by the AFT. Regrettably, this statement was inaccurate and misleading to employees because the AFT never requested that all payroll deduction for AFT dues end so quickly. We were puzzled by the abrupt reversal of our agreement, particularly when Payroll had been so clear about the end of August timeline in their correspondence.

Our requests for clarification have not yielded an explanation of the reversal. Through the grapevine, we have heard that Chancellor Head became angry at the AFT for assisting its members in grievances and appeals that he considers frivolous, essentially ordering Payroll to renege on its agreement. Unfortunately, in the March 23 email from Payroll, all 139 recipients were listed in the "To" field, revealing private payroll information to everyone included on the email. Perhaps this was done out of haste. Rightly or wrongly, some AFT members fear repercussions from their supervisor's knowledge of their union affiliation. Many worry that some supervisors may interpret Chancellor Head's anger at the AFT as a license to harass union members, promoting a culture of fear.

Moreover, many employees claim that LSC Human Resources has long maintained that, according to state law, only employees can initiate changes to their payroll deductions. We inquired about the legal issue with attorneys in the Texas AFT office. They agreed with LSC Human Resources' interpretation of the law, specifically citing Texas Education Code § 22.001 and Tex. Admin. Code tit. 34, § 5.46 (b) (8). The latter statute states that,

(B) A state employee may cancel a deduction authorized by this section to an eligible organization only if the employee:

- (i) properly completes a cancellation form and submits the form to the organization or the employee's employer; or
- (ii) provides other written notice of the cancellation to the organization or the employee's employer.

Regardless of the legal question, AFT-Lone Star's immediate goal is to switch all of our members to dues payment by bank draft. Because this potential

change has been pending for several years, the national and Texas AFT had ample time to research alternative options. They have chosen a national vendor, **billhighway.com**, which is recognized for its enhanced security systems, to store and process all banking information. Please visit the following website to complete a handy form: <https://join.aft.org>. You will need to know your bank account number and check routing number. With that information in hand, the entire process will only take a couple of minutes.

Many members have already made the transition without any glitches. If you do encounter problems, please contact AFT Lone Star right away and we will get it fixed. If you see deductions from both Payroll and your bank account the first time, the AFT will promptly reimburse you.



Staff

## Appeal of Grievances

LSC employees are entitled to due process. They can file grievances over violations of board policy and other issues, and they can appeal demotions, non-renewals, and terminations. The grievance/appeal can move up the administrative chain and, in very narrow situations, to the Board of Trustees. This due process is provided in LSC Board Policy IV.F.10. We encourage all employees to read this section online at [www.lonestar.edu/policy](http://www.lonestar.edu/policy) to make sure they understand their rights.

Lately, AFT-Lone Star officers have heard administrative concerns about the number of grievances and appeals in which the union is involved or has provided representation. To be absolutely clear, AFT officers do not encourage employees to file grievances or appeals. The grievance process begins with an informal meeting between the employee and the supervisor in an attempt to resolve the employee's concern at the lowest possible level. To date, AFT has seen little to no luck for employees with this informal



process, which then pushes the member into the formal process. In the last Board meeting, Chancellor Head stated that, on appeal, he has recently overturned two out of four grievances. Since that is not public information, we were pleased to hear him say that.

Given the administrative concern, one might ask why so many grievances/appeals are emerging. In order to protect the parties, I will not divulge names or specific circumstances, but I can provide general examples that have led to grievances/appeals. We have seen faculty targeted by administrators, poorly executed investigations, and meetings that turned into inquisitions lasting many hours. Recently, an employee's supervisor claimed he was terminating her on the basis of his own investigation of a civil rights complaint, in conflict with all employees' annual civil rights training, which states that only the LSC EEO Officer should investigate those complaints. We believe it makes more sense for a disinterested party to conduct the investigation.

College administration has complained that the AFT has cost the college \$1.5 M in legal fees over the last five years. The AFT has no control over how LSC's upper administration chooses to use its resources; however, we do have the responsibility of representing members and ensuring due process. Surely there is a simpler solution to such a conflict.

Before Dr. Head became chancellor, the official policy on grievances was sorely lacking. The Board, Dr. Head, and General Counsel all agreed with us on that point and have worked long and hard to remedy problems with the policy. They all deserve tremendous credit for that.

The AFT welcomed the opportunity to provide input during the revision process and signed off on the new grievance policy. For a detailed description of the history of the policy and revisions that were made, please read the article "The Grievance Policy—How Far Have We Come? Where Do We Need to Go?" in the November/December 2016 issue of *The Advocate*. (You can go to [www.aftlonestar.org](http://www.aftlonestar.org), select **News**, and review the archive of past issues.)

We were particularly pleased that the new policy provided an opportunity for employees to appeal a

grievance to the Board if all lower levels of appeal had been exhausted and if they alleged that a policy had been violated or that procedures had not been followed related to their grievance, contract, or termination. However, at the September 2016 Board meeting, when the first appeal came to the Board after adoption of the revised policy, Board members could not agree on an interpretation of what constituted grounds for appeal. They discussed the issue with their attorney in closed session, and in open session ruled that a grievance can *only* be appealed to the Board if the *process described in the grievance policy* was violated. The Board codified this interpretation at the February 2017 Board meeting. In effect, the Board unilaterally moved the goal post after adoption of the collaboratively created policy. Since the Board Policy Manual contains far more than the grievance policy, this narrow interpretation means that the Board cannot oversee or enforce implementation of the bulk of its own policies.

Prior to the announcement of that surprising interpretation, AFT leadership as well as several Board members had understood the new policy to mean that the violation of any policy could be appealed to the Board. The AFT never anticipated this narrow interpretation. Tellingly, the Board has heard no grievances since it was adopted.



A solution to the administrative and union concerns is simple: talk to each other on a regular basis. AFT leadership does not have all the answers, but it can provide an alternative viewpoint on these issues that will help administrators make better decisions about the treatment of individual employees.

Alan Hall



## Students Speaking to the Board

As educators, we focus a great deal on empowering our students to create positive change in their communities. Indeed, this is the central purpose of LSC's Center for Civic Engagement. I would like to comment on some of our Lone Star College-CyFair students who addressed the Board of Trustees last Thursday (April 6). I did not attend the meeting, but I watched the video. To say that my heart filled with pride would be an understatement.

The students spoke bravely about their opposition to the college president's decision to terminate a valued staff member and not to renew the contract of one of our most beloved faculty members. On our campus, we have come to understand that speaking out against administrative decisions will result in negative consequences. We have witnessed what happens to those who criticize our administration. The students must have recognized that their statements were likely to provoke anger from the college president. Yet they demonstrated "No Fear!" by speaking honestly and movingly

about how these two members of our community influenced their lives for the better. I was moved to tears as I witnessed their passion, their resolve, and their courage.



As I listened to their statements, I realized that these students represent the very best in higher education and the community college world. As professors, we hope to inspire students not just to achieve social mobility but also to discover their truest passions and to become engaged citizens. The students who spoke were thoughtful, intellectually honest, and brave. At the present time, the college leadership focuses most of its energy on a corporate-driven agenda of workforce preparation. Students, we are told, must move quickly through their coursework with an emphasis on attaining a job after graduation. But community colleges represent so much more than career training: we pro-

vide the liberal arts experience for nearly half of the nation's undergraduates.

The students who spoke at the board meeting reminded me why it is so important to fight for our right to educate the whole student. Those students did not view education merely as a means to an end or the chance to earn a large paycheck. They were active citizens who put their education to use by advocating for a fairer college. By their presence at the meeting and with the power of their words, they demonstrated for all of us the importance of higher education. They also reminded me why we must continue to fight for academic freedom, meaningful shared governance, and free speech.

Staff

## Counselors

For some time, LSC seems to be reducing the number of counselors while hiring advisors. We are not opposed to hiring more advisors; however, we are opposed to losing counselors. When a counselor leaves the college to accept another position or retires, we often hear administrative discussions about not replacing the counselor. In fact, my own division met recently with the LSC-NH Vice President of Enrollment Management to make the case for hiring a counselor to replace the one who retired in the SIP.

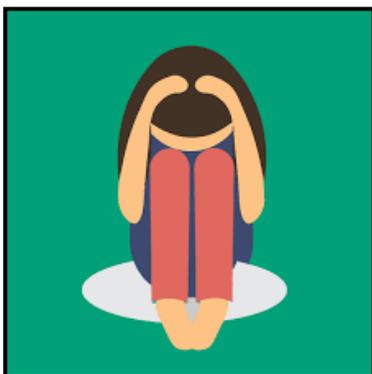
The need for on-site counselors is reflected in a survey one of our counselors recently shared with me. The Association of University and College Counseling Center Directors conducted a survey between September 2015 and August

2016. Respondents came from four-year colleges, community colleges, professional schools, and art schools, and their responses reflected a high de-





mand for counselors. For seven consecutive years, students' top mental health concern has been anxiety. A total of 51% of the respondents listed it as their top complaint. Additional concerns included depression (41%), relationship concerns (34%), and suicidal thoughts (20.5%).



Many of us at LSC have worked with students struggling with these and other issues. We can listen and sympathize with them, but they need trained professionals helping them with their very personal and often traumatic problems.

Our students need and deserve the assistance.

Alan Hall

### Tales from the Unionside

The public education scene in Texas today looks like a train wreck. For students and teachers, from kindergarten to college, the times are bad and they are not changing in 2017. These bad times are being made worse by the actions of a clueless Austin crowd bent on destruction. It used to be that you could expect, when Democrats were running the Legislature, that they were content with starving schools in the Lone Star State. With Republicans occupying all three state branches of government in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, the starvation has turned into strangulation for Texas students and teachers.

By and large, the Senate and House membership is made up of circus clowns and party animals. It is a hapless bunch of know-nothings with a few exceptions. Two-thirds of the leadership team fall right in line with the clowns and animals in the Capitol circus. Lieutenant Governor Dan Patrick—who sees himself as “a Christian first, conservative second, and Republican third”—clearly has vision problems with his focus on a bathroom bill and

worries about transgender people. Governor Greg Abbott is no better, as his legislative priorities include a ban on sanctuary cities in Texas and a call for a US constitutional convention to curtail federal government powers. It has been up to Speaker Joe Straus to play the role of “the adult in charge” among the leadership trio.

Speaker Straus is a business Republican, which puts him at odds politically with the Tea Party set of Patrick and Abbott. It is Straus, the establishment man, who finds himself surrounded by Tea men in Austin. The problem for students and teachers is, if the speaker is the state savior of public education, then it may be time to change religions. Business Republicans were in charge of the Legislature from 2003 until 2011: their tenure produced little good for education and much that was bad.

The statute of limitations for blaming Governor George W. Bush for his educational missteps has run out, but the Democratic Party deserves some retroactive whacks for joining the Governor in enacting the business model of educational reforms that has proven its worthlessness. Since 2003, public education in Texas has been a GOP horror-show production. With today's college degree being the equivalent of a high school degree of a generation ago, the state's retreat from supporting students in higher education has been chilling. In 2003, the Texas Legislature moved to deregulate public college and university tuition rates. This government decision has meant economic devastation for millennials as tuition rates have skyrocketed over 100% in 12 years, from \$1,934 to \$4,229 for a 15-hour course-load in 2015. The major cause of this cost increase has been legislative funding cuts to higher education over the years.

With the soaring college costs brought on by tuition deregulation and state funding cuts, students have been the big losers in this Republican shell game. It is standard practice these days for the average college student to have to take out a personal loan to afford the higher education bill. These loans will weigh heavily on students' lives for years to come.





The numbers are numbing, as close to 60% of Texas college students today have taken out loans with the average debt amount being around \$30,000. It is a sad state of affairs when 40-year-olds will be holding parties in the future to celebrate the month of their last education loan payment.

As political pressure builds in Austin to do something about this economic burden on the young, the Legislature's answer to this 2017 mess is to announce major higher-education budget cuts and to take up the question of freezing college tuition rates. It is a bizarre world where those who created the problem (deregulation of tuition) in 2003 are now trying to atone for their mistakes by going back to the pre-2003 condition that they undid (that is, they now want to regulate tuition again by freezing tuition rates for 3-4 years). The past system appears to have not been that bad after all, and the Legislature's caving in to the ideological demands of the right and the arm-twisting of UT and A&M have proven to be huge policy mistakes.

Despite claims to the contrary by in-state shills, public education in Texas has a long way to go to achieve some degree of national respectability. We are fighting the closed minds of most Austin Republicans, who feel that more money will not make a difference in education. Their standard approach of underfunding schools will only perpetuate the Lone Star State condition of low high school graduation rates, low SAT scores for college admission, and high percentages of incoming college freshmen needing educational remediation. In the language that Republican legislators should understand: you need money to make money, and K-16 needs more money to educate today's K-16 students.

If these conditions were not bad enough, the real shocker in public education was uncovered recently by *Houston Chronicle* investigative reporter Brian Rosenthal. His reporting showed that for 12 years, the Texas Education Agency had capped special

education enrollments in K-12 classes arbitrarily at 8.5% of the student population, which is far below the 13% national average. This previously-hidden cap denied educational opportunities to those with the greatest needs—students with disabilities—in an action the *Chronicle* editorial board called “Humanity Denied.” The question for the Legislature and the Governor is: What happened to your administrative oversight? If you were aware of this, all shame on you. If you were aware of this and looked the other way, enjoy the fires of hell.



As a positive realist, I will not give up hope for public education in Texas. During my 40-plus years at Lone Star College, I have seen the Legislature, first controlled by Democrats and now by Republicans, back away from its financial support of LSC. During the late 1970s and early 1980s, the state provid-

ed close to 78% of college funding support, which has fallen these days to below 30%. The main revenue supports for the Lone Star system today come from property taxes, tuition and fees, and grants—as opposed to state funding. One hopes that the legislature has reached near-bottom and will begin in the 2019 and 2021 sessions to start moving the revenue line northward.

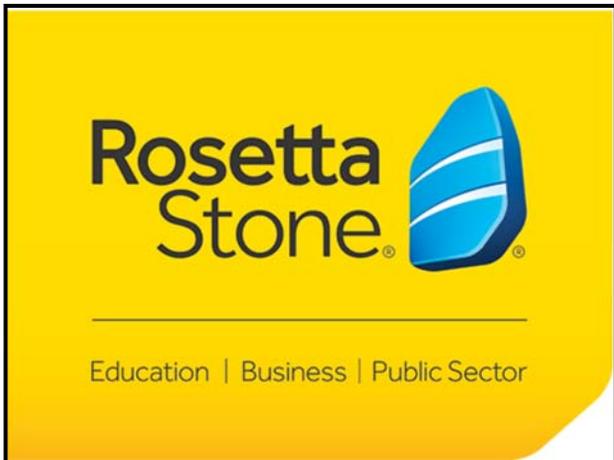
Bob Locander  
Professor of Political Science  
LSC-North Harris

**Editor's Note:** Locander is a regular political columnist for *The Advocate*.





# A Highlight On AFT PLUS BENEFITS



Rosetta Stone—a recognized leader in providing language-learning programs through the use of interactive online and on-the-go mobile apps—has partnered with the AFT to offer a high-quality product at a greatly reduced cost.

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AFT members will receive 25 percent off vacation rentals when booking online

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[www.aft.org/about/member-benefits](http://www.aft.org/about/member-benefits)



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- ◆ Computers: Member Pricing for all major brands
- ◆ Dining: Up to 90% off at 18,000 locations
- ◆ Electronics: Best Prices from manufacturers & retailers
- ◆ Personal Vacations: Air, Hotel & Car Rentals from Corporate Perks
- ◆ Beauty: Free shipping for Mary Kay products
- ◆ Auto: Save 10 percent on regularly priced Goodyear tires, auto parts and maintenance at company-owned Goodyear and Just Tires stores. Plus, save 5 percent on sale tires and preventive maintenance.

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[www.aft.org/about/member-benefits](http://www.aft.org/about/member-benefits)



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# AFT-Lone Star College

AFT Local Union # 4518

## GOALS

- To promote academic excellence
- To protect academic freedom in higher education
- To preserve and protect the integrity and unique identity of each of the institutions of higher education in Texas
- To protect the dignity and rights of faculty against discrimination
- To ensure that faculty have an effective voice on all matters pertaining to their welfare
- To secure for all members the rights to which they are entitled
- To raise the standards of the profession by establishing professional working conditions
- To encourage democratization of higher education
- To promote the welfare of the citizens of Texas by providing better educational opportunities for all
- To initiate and support state legislation which will benefit the students and faculty of Texas
- To promote and assist the formation and growth of Texas United Faculty chapters throughout Texas
- To maintain and promote the aims of the American Federation of Teachers and other affiliated labor bodies

Professional career  
 protection and a united  
 voice at work  
 Join us today!

## BENEFITS

- \$8,000,000 Occupational Liability Insurance
  - provides security while teaching
  - protection against litigation
  - malpractice protection
- \$25,000 Accidental Death Insurance
- Legal Assistance
  - Free consultation and representation on grievances and job related problems
  - Services of leading labor attorneys
  - Legal Defense Fund protection
- Political Power
  - Texas AFT lobbyists in Austin
  - AFT lobbyists in Washington
  - Representation at the Coordinating Board
  - Support for local electoral work
- Affiliations
  - Affiliated with the Texas AFL-CIO
  - Affiliated with the American Federation of Teachers and Texas AFT
- Staff Services
  - Professional representatives to assist and advise in processing grievances
  - AFT research facilities
  - Leadership Training
- Savings and discounts on goods and services with AFT PLUS Benefits
- Free \$5,000 term life insurance policy for first year of membership

### Monthly AFT Dues

Full-time Faculty	\$40.00
Full-time Professional Staff	\$28.60
Full-time Support Staff	\$25.88
Adjunct Faculty & Staff	\$14.00

### Membership Eligibility

Membership in the American Federation of Teachers (AFT) is open to full and part-time faculty and staff up through the dean level. If you would like to join or find out more information about membership, please contact any of the officers listed on the back page of this newsletter, or check out our online information and application at:

[www.aftlonestar.org](http://www.aftlonestar.org)



American Federation of Teachers  
 Texas AFT  
 AFL-CIO





# American Federation of Teachers

## Lone Star College



### Directions: How to Join the AFT

**AFT-Lone Star has a new online form that makes it easy for new members to join or for current members to switch to our new system.**

**Here's the best way to sign up:**

1. Go to <https://join.aft.org>. From the pull-down menu in the box under "FIND A LOCAL," choose "Texas." Click "search" and then scroll down to find "AFT Lone Star College, Local 4518."
2. Fill out the form that appears; you're asked to provide your name, address and so on. Toward the bottom of the page, a question asks, "Are you an AFT member transitioning from payroll deduction e-bank transfer system?" If you are, check "yes". If you are not, and new to AFT, check "no".
3. You're then asked to identify your membership category: Full-time faculty, Full-time professional staff, etc.
4. You're then asked to provide your bank name, routing number and account number, check boxes authorizing the semi-monthly deductions for dues, and type your name. Then, press "SUBMIT." YOU'RE DONE! (in minutes!)

**Note:**

Our new system:

- Is PCI Level I Compliant and adheres to all payment card industry standards and best practices for the utmost security.
- Includes multiple secure layers of hardware, software and processes to ensure safety & security of valuable information.
- Uses industry-leading firewall technology and software. All critical customer data is transmitted and stored using high-grade encryption, and its leading technology monitors data 24/7 from multiple sources, ensuring protection against security breaches and reducing vulnerability.

**SIGN UP TODAY!**

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We invite all employees to send us their opinions, news, questions, and so forth. *The Advocate* is a forum for information and free interchange of ideas. Send your ideas. Send your articles to **Katie Hurter, Editor** via e-mail: [katie.hurter@lonestar.edu](mailto:katie.hurter@lonestar.edu), or submit to any of the following officers.

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Cindy Hoffart-Watson	Cy-Fair	LRNC 101-C	281-290-3265
Earl Brewer	Fairbanks	S - 13	832-782-5029

The union encourages employees to join because they believe that college employees should have a voice in their professional lives. We don't encourage employees to join because they anticipate conflict or are already engaged in a conflict. In fact, if they are already embroiled in a situation, we are unable to help them. It is all too common for someone to approach the AFT and say something like, "I've been an employee for the district for several years, and I've just recognized the importance of joining." Typically, following that comment is, "I'm in trouble and need help." I finally lost track of how many times in the last year I've had to say, "I'm sorry, but member benefits don't cover anything that pre-dates membership." The individuals to whom I had to give this message were invited to join and provided some advice on how to proceed with their situation, but assistance

ended there. Were they members, a host of benefits would have been available.

The AFT provides its members with advice and guidance as well as representation in conflict resolution and grievances. We have our own local attorney and can seek legal advice and counsel for members. We maintain a local legal defense fund. In addition, membership dues include, at no extra charge, \$8 million in professional liability insurance for claims arising out of professional activities.

Most of our members don't join because they believe that they may need the AFT's help in a conflict. They join because they believe in the values of the AFT— that employees should be treated with dignity and respect, that employees should help each other, that employees should have a voice

in their professional lives, that employees deserve fair pay and good working conditions, and that the district needs a system providing checks and balances. They join because they want to support an organization that helps others in so many ways. A nice benefit is that, if they do need help, AFT is there for them.

If you believe in these values and are not a member, now is the perfect time to join. If you believe in our values, take action now and join the AFT.

—Alan Hall

