

Democracy 101

by Allison Mosshart

Have you ever heard someone complain that their paycheck was too low? Or grumble about not having health benefits for adjuncts, or even education incentives for classified employees? Lots of people like to gripe about the status quo, and for them that might be enough. But we are fortunate enough to live in a democracy, and I like the interactive part of that process. The policies and procedures of this college are set, like many, at its top level, the Board of Trustees. If one wishes to understand the process and, indeed, make any kind

of difference in the process, one must begin at the top.

Attending Board meetings can be boring (excuse the pun) or, in the extreme, very busy and exciting, depending on what is being presented or discussed that evening. I usually go to the first of the month meetings, but there are two meeting per month—the first Monday and the third Monday, check the schedule for any time changes—but only on the first Monday can people speak at the microphone. Being open public events *everyone is welcome*, so it is disheartening that so few ordinary ACC people show up. We are

a part of this proud institution, and everything discussed there impacts us. Usually there are several top administrative people, anyone who wants to speak at Citizen Communications (usually few to none) or is concerned by topics discussed, and the officers for the different employee organizations. The Board sits at the front while the audience is filled, or not, with the onlookers. I've been there nights where it seemed like only 10–12 people were there. However, if things are hopping, the place can fill and you can end up sitting next to somebody wonderful you would never have met otherwise.

I know that working alone at a campus can be isolating and it's sometimes hard to feel a part of the big picture. Going to Board meetings helps to see how those at the top see those of us further near the bottom. Perhaps those disgruntled employees would be interested in knowing what Board members had to say when given statistics concerning adjuncts—that at the height of extreme adjunct usage (adjunct vs. full-time) their percentage of use was 72%, now it is 55% and the goal is 50%. And although the AFA cried out month after month for health insurance and individuals came forward with moving personal predicaments to urge the Board to take action, there was little to no discussion before the board that had anything to do with adjunct health benefits. If they are talking somewhere else, I don't know. But they are not talking in public. Hopefully, the adjunct health benefit issue can hop onto the wagon of universal healthcare; that may be the only way to find justice for this long overdue situation. And the question of classified education incentives was one that was discussed through more than one board meeting. In May the Board was informed that the incentives now are one single payment of \$1000 for a BA degree and \$1500 for a MA degree, which

In the news:

Board Rescinds Fee Increase

On Monday, November 4, 2007, the ACC Board of Trustees unanimously voted to rescind the \$2.00 fee increase that offset a reduction of state funding caused by Governor Rick Perry's veto of Higher Education funding. Administrative staff was directed to explore ways to refund or recycle that money. The Board and union both worked diligently on this matter so students were not affected.

October:

Union Endorses Choice For Classified Employees

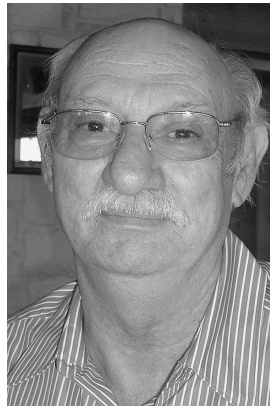
At our October meeting the membership of the ACC/AFT voted to endorse choice for classified employees concerning bi-weekly pay. The administration has said that all classified will go to monthly pay in September 2008, despite the widely-held and deeply-felt objection from the employees.

Union Elects New Leadership

At our October meeting Cleaburn "Z" Zwernemann was elected President of the ACC/AFT, Charles Wukasch was elected Faculty Vice-President, Mark Godrich was elected Staff Vice-President, Dan Dewberry was elected Treasurer and Allison Mosshart was elected Secretary. Our thanks to all of these faithful for agreeing to serve us. It is the members taking their time to work for their fellow employees and for the good of the students and the college that makes our union strong.

ACC/AFT Joins Austin Interfaith

We are proud and excited to announce that at our October meeting we voted to join forces with Austin Interfaith. Austin Interfaith is a coalition of religious congregations, public schools, and unions which organize around issues which impact families in Travis County. Since they support a strong public sector and organize around issues such as education, health care, immigration and housing, we felt that we could help them and they us. We look forward to our future together, working to make the families and the workers of this community stronger.



President "Z"

seems a small sum for such enormous endeavour, especially for an educational institution. In June, when Trustee Davis spoke against any tuition aid for ACC employees, the faculty in the audience were surprised since they had all had IBM employees in class going to school on employer-funded tuition waivers. When it came time to vote on this issue, Trustee Kaplan was the odd man out, on our side I mean, all the others voting against tuition assistance for classified employees. We need to watch which trustees are truly on our side, so when voting comes around next May, we are prepared. Remember what I said about democracy in action; this is where it begins.

Sometimes, the Board meeting is the place to be (and to be seen). With all the new building and reconstruction projects, there have been many different architectural firms in attendance presenting their models. It is great to see the input that the employee associa-

tions have with these projects. And everyone is enjoying themselves. In November I learned two new things: one, that the Faculty Senate is cool enough to come out in support of the issue of child care which we all know can be so vital to our students, especially working mothers, right! Second of all, from the ACC Student Government: it just so happens that non-traditional students have gone over the 50% mark, so they can't be called non-traditional anymore. They are now being called "contemporary." One more term to add to your lexicon.

That's all for now. We only live in the freest country in the world if we continue to speak out. **Citizens Communication** is for *you*, the **citizen**, to stand up and **communicate**.

Let the Board know what you think with your **Voice**. In the Spring, we'll let them know with our **Vote**.

ACC/AFT Local 6249 MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

Austin Community College American Federation of Teachers
 Affiliated with the Texas Federation of Teachers, A.F.T., AFL-CIO
 3000 South I.H. 35, Suite 175, Austin, Texas, 78704, Phone 448-0130, Fax 448-0678

NAME	E-MAIL ADDRESS	ACC CAMPUS:
HOME ADDRESS	CITY	ZIP CODE
HOME PHONE	WORK PHONE	CELL PHONE

ACC Position (check one):

- Full-Time Faculty
 Adjunct Faculty
 Professional/Technical
 Classified
 Hourly

The ACC/AFT dues are based upon classes of membership defined in the national AFT constitution and by-laws. The dues levels are based upon your estimated current annual calendar year income. Please check your income category below and note the **monthly dues** amount associated with it.

- Less than \$10,000 annual income
 \$18.83 monthly
 Less than \$20,000 annual income
 \$23.71 monthly
 \$20,000 or more annual income
 \$34.75 monthly (\$29.88 if Classified or Prof-Tech)

Fill out the form below for dues payable through payroll deduction or send annual dues check payable to "ACC/AFT". Send this form to ACC/AFT, 3000 S. IH 35, Suite 175, Austin, TX 78704. Authorization for payroll deduction ACC/AFT dues

NAME: (LAST, FIRST)	SOCIAL SECURITY NUMBER
<input type="checkbox"/> \$18.83 (under \$10,000 at 12 months) <input type="checkbox"/> \$25.11 (under \$10,000 at 9 months) <input type="checkbox"/> Classified or Prof-Tech \$29.88 (\$20,000 or more at 12 months)	<input type="checkbox"/> \$23.71 (under \$20,000 at 12 months) <input type="checkbox"/> \$31.61 (under \$20,000 at 9 months) <input type="checkbox"/> Classified or Prof-Tech \$39.84 (\$20,000 or more at 9 months)

I voluntarily authorize and request that my monthly membership dues and fees be deducted from my payroll checks by Austin Community College and remitted to the organization indicated above. I further authorize my membership in the organization to be considered continuing for this and future years until written notification or dissolution of this agreement is given by me. I further authorize that any increase in these dues and fees be automatically applied to my monthly payroll deduction. I understand these increases will be communicated to the ACC payroll office in writing by the organization's authorized representative.

NEW MEMBER'S SIGNATURE	DATE
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Note: Dues and payroll deduction amounts reflect a \$1.00 per month contribution to the ACC/AFT Committee On Political Education.

You may decline to contribute to the ACC/AFT Committee on Political Education by initialing here. _____

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