

November 2003

# The Portable

The Newsletter of Austin Community College's Adjunct Faculty Association

## AFA news in brief

The General Meeting of the AFA will be November 12, 4:00 pm, EVC student commons

Keep up with the AFA at [www2/austincc.edu/afa](http://www2/austincc.edu/afa)

## Come to the AFA Fall General Assembly

The Fall General Assembly of the AFA will be at Eastview Campus, Friday, November 12, 2003. The meeting will begin at 4 pm and end around 6 pm. Latecomers are welcome. Refreshments will be provided.

The main event will be a discussion with Bookstore personnel about all Bookstore related issues. There will also be a discussion of the complete and very significant revision of ACC's administrative rules related to adjunct faculty. These include workload limits, eligibility lists, highest priority to hire and MSTA status, voting rights in departmental governance, and a new procedure by which adjuncts can question whether the rules are being properly implemented.

## Portfolio Required for Faculty Evaluation at ACC

Helen Guillory  
ACC French adjunct  
Pinnacle Representative

In addition to student evaluations and the occasional supervisorial visit to the classroom, the professional evaluation of an ACC adjunct or permanent faculty member includes building and submitting a portfolio every three years. Since 1990 the use of portfolios in higher education has increased as teachers sought to obtain, at their respective institutions, a more well-rounded presentation for pedagogical *savoir faire*. It is important, of course, to obtain student

evaluations of the teaching in a course. On the other hand, students are not experts in pedagogy, and their assessments must be judged carefully.

The ACC guidelines call for faculty to make a portfolio in the first year, a portfolio which only includes the first fall semester, and every three years calculated from the date of hire. The guidelines exist on the web, but are not easy to find ([fe.austincc.edu/procedures.htm](http://fe.austincc.edu/procedures.htm)). The guidelines presented there are as follows:

1. *First Year Portfolio for first year faculty: Syllabus*

*for each course--not section - taught (maximum of 4 courses). Samples of major assignments, tests and projects.*

2. *Second Year Portfolio: Same contents\* as the First Year Portfolio for the preceding academic years. Statement of Teaching Philosophy*

3. *Third Year Portfolio: Same contents\* as Second Year Portfolio for the three preceding academic years. Course commentary. Faculty Development plan.*

*\*Contents of the Portfolio are listed on the web site, as follows:*

*Syllabus--for each course*

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## Portfolio

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*(not section) taught during the years in question at a maximum of four courses.*

*Samples of Major Assignments, Tests, and Projects--materials related to major assignments or projects; samples of tests or quizzes. Ideally, these samples should complement and reflect the objectives in your syllabus.*

*Statement of Teaching Philosophy--Statement of your values as a teacher and your approach to the learning process. [This is a reflective process.]*

*Course Commentary--statement of your goals, objectives, and methods in a particular course. [This is a reflective process.]*

*Faculty Development Plan--Faculty Development activities planned for the next one-year or three-year portfolio cycle. The plan might include activities designed to improve an instructor's subject matter knowledge, to correct any deficiencies, or to address pedagogical concerns identified through the faculty evaluation process.*

Building a portfolio should be considered part of earned income for faculty. However, there is no stipend that remunerates adjunct faculty for the work outlined above. The author has some experience, having prepared the first and third year portfolios. The latter required eight hours to do. Since adjunct faculty is not paid for preparing these large documents, then adjunct faculty should prepare them as sparingly, but as sufficiently as possible. The following hints could help limit the wasted time that adjunct faculty might put into the portfolio building process.

To begin, the individual adjunct has to know what to

keep in his or her files. It is evident that copies of syllabi and tests should be kept. What constitutes a major assignment or a major project is already be included in the syllabus, so perhaps one or two handouts about each project could be included. This is a discretionary item, and it is possible to include lots of information, especially with courses in which there is no traditional testing.

It is better to be judicious. The benefit for the reviewer with the job of reading through the entire portfolio lessens for each 'overstuffed' course. Because of the breadth of the review process, with such a large collection of pages per course, it is no wonder that some of the input is never read.

Finally, start with a page dedicated to your name, the years for each course, the course name under each year, and section number for each course. To help the re-viewers find easily what is interesting within the materials, make the second page a table of contents. Make these pages in large type, 36 or 48 point. Rather than numbering each page, slip a colored piece of paper with a heading on it between each of the parts of the body. In this way, each course can be fingered easily. After the table of contents should come the teaching philosophy and any commentary on the teaching for certain years, plus the projections for ensuing years. The last part is the true body of the portfolio, the documentation of the courses themselves.

In conclusion, a good organizational pattern will enhance the presentation of the material that you judiciously decide to include in your portfolio.

### **Here are a few more hints to ease the portfolio process--editor**

- ACC does not make the reasoning behind the portfolio process very clear. Because of that, putting together a portfolio can seem both daunting and pointless. An excellent article on "The Teaching Portfolio," by Peter Seldin and Linda Annis, explains that the "primary purpose" of the portfolio "is to improve teaching performance." While putting together a portfolio, an instructor should "1) think about personal teaching activities; 2) rearrange priorities; 3) rethink teaching strategies; and 4) plan for the future" <[www1.umn.edu/ohr/teachlearn/MinnCon/port.html](http://www1.umn.edu/ohr/teachlearn/MinnCon/port.html)>
- Statement of Teaching Philosophy: Iowa State University's Center for Teacher Excellence <[www.cte.iastate.edu/tips/philosophy.html](http://www.cte.iastate.edu/tips/philosophy.html)> will get you started on your Statement of Teaching Philosophy. Their page will guide you along with a simple four step process that will save you a lot of hair pulling and navel gazing. When you have time later, you may want to check out their other teaching

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## AFA News Flashes

### ***Pinnacle Needs a New Representative***

Circumstances have come up that have made it necessary for Linda Mackey to resign her position as an AFA rep from PIN. If anyone would like this position, please contact Don Becker at [dbecker@austincc.edu](mailto:dbecker@austincc.edu).

### ***Shared Governance News***

Mona Dalle (**HR committee**) reports that we should be seeing a new Employee Handbook soon.

Michael Martino, who serves on the **IT Committee**, is currently collecting information regarding the computer situation adjuncts face. Look for more on that in the months to come.

### ***A Pat on the Back from San Antonio***

Charles Wukasch is adjuncting both at the ACC and at San Antonio College (SAC) this fall. At an English Department meeting at SAC on August 19th, the adjunct coordinator praised the Austin Community College adjuncts for their hard work in getting the benefits bill passed. Charles says: "Congratulations to all the hard-working people who did work on this! You're not only doing a great job for adjuncts everywhere, but you're also putting the ACC/AFA on the map!" (Of course, there is still work to be done to make sure the bill goes into effect, so adjuncts still need to keep the pressure up on the Legislature and EPS ed.)

tips <[www.cte.iastate.edu/tips](http://www.cte.iastate.edu/tips)>.

- Sample Portfolios: The AHA-AAHE-CF Teaching Portfolio Project has a selection of history instructor portfolios <[www.theaha.org/teaching/aahe/aahecover.html](http://www.theaha.org/teaching/aahe/aahecover.html)>. A variety of academic instructor portfolios can be found at The University of Texas at El Paso's web site <[www.utep.edu/~cetal/portfoli/samples.htm](http://www.utep.edu/~cetal/portfoli/samples.htm)>.



## Adjunct Soapbox

The views expressed in this column do not reflect an official stance by the AFA. This guest feature is for adjuncts to express opinions on a variety of subjects of concern to ACC adjuncts.

### ***I Hated the Best Teacher I Ever Had***

by *Maraaret Dahl*

"I hated the best teacher I ever had."

Musician Keith Jarrett admitted that during an interview on NPR's Fresh Air.

It is the kind of admission a student can make in retrospect. A popular teacher is easy to identify; a good teacher is not. One can wonder if the path to popularity diverges from the road to being a good, a "best," teacher. Are these even compatible paths? It appears that most students and administrators (parents, too?) would argue that the paths are not only compatible, but one and the same.

I heard a novelist recently describe as smarmy the behavior of one of his characters because the character opted for being liked by his children instead of taking his parental responsibilities seriously. *Smarmy*. A most fitting adjective.

Educators, too, encounter such choices; and in an age of student evaluations it is tempting to go the politician route, i.e., one that the students will like. (I actually had a student find fault, during class I might add, because I was a "conformist...always starting class and ending it on time." )

To the credit of the faculty, I've met few instructors who placed popularity over professionalism. Remaining an educator and not turning into a smarmy vote getter has become increasingly difficult, however. Seldom do our educational institutions support the "tough love" or "teach a man to fish..." approach to education. Instead, the institutional preference to "please" the student/parent seems to be

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## Call for Articles

The December issue of *The Portable* will focus on teacher-to-teacher advice. What is the most effective use of the first class meeting day? What do wish you had done this semester that you did not do, and what did you do that you are glad of?

Whether you are up to writing an entire article, or have one or two short hints (or desperate pleas!), be sure to send them to

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Editor, *The Portable*  
Lhague@austincc.edu

Or by campus mail via EVC

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*Can an instrument compensate for an evaluator who quite possibly confuses "liking" a teacher with a knowing a good teacher when he/she sees one?*

the norm. One can't help but think of the Bread and Circuses of ancient Rome.

The evaluation instrument is itself at fault, but, too, the assumption behind it, *viz.*, that students are truly qualified and objective enough to evaluate good teaching. I'll admit that I was a member of the generation that insisted on student evaluation. (As ye sow, so shall....) The question is: Can an instrument compensate for an evaluator who quite possibly confuses "liking" a teacher with a knowing a good teacher when he/she sees one?

Often the problem creating the confusion between a popular versus a good teacher arises when a student is not serious about learning the subject matter. Typically the case in required courses. Students prefer these courses to be as hassle free as the express check-out in HEB. However, as Jarrett's admission illustrates: even a motivated student is not always a competent judge of the merits or demerits of teaching.

Doing the unpopular thing has never been easy. It does, however, help when the person one works for (Department Head) is a professional and honorable person and not a politician. Fortunately, I have such, but that has not always been the case. There have been times when I realized what a dehumanized and unprofessional work environment the Ivory Tower had become.