



# HFCC Adjunct Faculty Organization Organizing Committee News

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Help us build the Adjunct Faculty Organization! Help us build a better college!

## Historic Election to Legally Recognize the AFO Begins April 15!!!

After months of hard work, we are on the eve of one of the most significant moments in the history of Henry Ford Community College. Beginning April 15, more than 550 adjuncts will have an opportunity to vote to be represented by the Adjunct Faculty Organization (AFO). If a simple majority vote YES, the AFO will be legally recognized as the union representing all 500+ of us.

The Michigan Employment Relations Commission (MERC) will mail ballots to the home addresses of all eligible voters on April 15, 2008. Ballots need to be returned to MERC by May 6 to be counted May 7. While MERC will furnish a return envelope, voting members will have to provide their own first class stamp. This is a small price to pay for the opportunity to vote YES for a union that will be dedicated to improving working conditions for adjuncts and the overall quality of education at HFCC.

Our successful fall term membership campaign culminated in our filing for a union representation election with MERC in December, 2007. After weeks of talks with the College, we finally got an agreement on February 26 regarding the definition of our bargaining unit. The College agreed that all adjuncts and other part-time professional employees of the College would be eligible for membership and to vote in the election regardless of the length of their tenure or the number of classes they teach.

As previously reported, the College has agreed to remain neutral during the election period. We commend College administrators for reaching that decision because it suggests that we will be able to work constructively with them to improve working conditions for adjuncts and to reach our mutual goal of improving the quality of education HFCC students receive.

We know, however, that just winning the election is not enough; we need to have a strong mandate. Accordingly, we have been conducting our own “get-out-the-vote” campaign. We are asking members to wear their AFO buttons proudly during the election period and we have been talking to as many people as we can to ask if they’re willing to affix their names to our “WE’RE VOTING YES” poster. Approximately 80% of our members who we’ve contacted agreed to having their names on the poster.

Whether or not your name is on the poster, your vote is important. Make a difference—vote YES!

### Hold the Date! Victory Party May 17

Plan on joining us May 17 at 7:00 p.m. for a victory celebration. Look for details by email.

### We Need Your YES Vote!!!

Look for your ballot in your  
home mail soon  
after April 15

Send it back right away!!!

If you are willing to help out, or do not receive  
your ballot by April 18, call (313) 505-5182

### Ten Reasons to Vote YES

- Reason #10: Since the AFO is affiliated with the American Federation of Teachers (AFT), your YES vote means that we will join the world-wide union movement focused on equity and dignity for all workers.
- Reason #9: The AFO will be a union of adjuncts, by adjuncts, for adjuncts.
- Reason #8: AFT staff will continue working with us after the election to negotiate a contract that will make a real difference in our working conditions.
- Reason #7: You will not pay union dues until AFTER our first contract is implemented.
- Reason #6: The AFO will be governed by democratic processes—you will have the opportunity to vote for our constitution, officers, and any proposed contract.
- Reason #5: AFO bargaining priorities will be established based on the consensus of the membership.
- Reason #4: A YES vote is a way of showing your concern for those adjuncts who are trying to piece together a living by working at multiple colleges.
- Reason #3: Winning the election is not enough—the more adjuncts that vote, and the higher the percentage of our winning vote, the stronger our mandate will be.
- Reason #2: Currently, HFCC adjuncts are among the lowest paid in the nation, are not allowed to participate in College benefit programs, and have no job security.
- And the #1 Reason for Voting YES (drum roll): The AFO is committed to helping make HFCC the “Harvard of community colleges.” Our goal is to improve working conditions for adjuncts and, in the process of doing so, to improve the quality of education our students receive!

## How We Got Here—A Brief History of the AFO

It took a lot of collective effort to reach this historic moment. To get us from the inception stage more than a year ago to this point, hundreds of adjuncts took time out of their busy lives to consider the merits of signing an Adjunct Faculty Organization (AFO) membership card. More than twenty dedicated Organizing Committee (OC) members and supporters took even more time out of their busy lives to explain to members why they believe forming a union is a good idea, not only for adjuncts, but also for the College. Some members were able to devote no more than a few hours total; others made it almost a full-time job.

Three adjuncts deserve special credit for getting us started. During the fall 2006 term, business administration adjunct Peter Badry and economics adjunct Bill Breger approached John McDonald, the president of American Federation of Teachers (AFT) Local 1650 (the union that represents full-time faculty members at HFCC), and asked for his help in setting up a union of part-time faculty members. Working separately at first, sociology adjunct Bill Norris began his own efforts to convince adjuncts that the best way to address concerns over working conditions and the quality of education was to form an adjunct union. John McDonald asked AFT-Michigan to dedicate an organizer to the effort and invited all HFCC adjuncts to a series of meetings held in December 2006.

About 50 adjuncts attended one of those initial meetings and an equal number expressed an interest in forming a union, but said they were unable to make one of the meetings. During these meetings, AFT organizer Jon Curtiss explained the organizing process and listened to the concerns HFCC adjuncts had regarding their working conditions.

Since it was clear that adjuncts here were interested in forming a union, the AFT assigned Lynn Marie Smith and Dave Dobbie to work with us to build an organizing committee. The OC met periodically during the summer months, agreed to the name of our organization, discussed our goals, and benefited from the training, expertise, and energy provided by Lynn Marie and Dave. These efforts culminated in the kick off of our card-signing campaign in August 2007. That drive came to a successful close (because over 70% of adjuncts who were contacted agreed forming a union was a good idea and signed cards) on December 6 when we filed a petition for a union representation election with the Michigan Employment Relations Commission. Jon Curtiss led our discussions with the College administration regarding the definition of our bargaining unit and election procedures. As reported last month, John McDonald was instrumental in helping us reach an inclusive agreement with the College.

Space doesn't permit a listing of all of the names of OC members and their contributions, but several deserve special mention. Mary Beck, Ron Webb, Sherry Morgan, Tim Egan, Glenn O'Kray, Jacqueline Martin, Ventra Asana, Don Beesley, Dorothy Pelton, Joe Sorokac, Neam Zalzal, Amy DeWys-VanHecke, and Beatrice Thomas all went above and beyond the call of duty. Give them a pat on the back when you see them in the hallway and consider getting involved yourself—our union will be as strong as we all make it!

### Wear Your Button!

Show your support for the AFO by wearing an AFO button during the election period. See any OC member to get one!

## This Issue's Member Profile: Glenn O'Kray

To celebrate the diversity of our membership, the *Adjunct Faculty Organization Organizing Committee News* has begun a series of "member profiles." This issue features a profile of Glenn O'Kray, who spent 30 years as Henry Ford Community College's director of financial aid before "retiring" in 2003 and beginning a second (or maybe third or fourth) career as an HFCC adjunct teaching a "college success" course.

Glenn has been an organizing committee stalwart who personally met with dozens of our members during our fall card-signing campaign and during this term's "get out the vote" campaign.



Glenn had a long and productive career before beginning his new life as an adjunct. He earned a B.A. in history at the University of Detroit and a master's degree in Industrial Relations from the University of Minnesota. Returning to Michigan, he taught junior high classes for two years at St. Anselm in Dearborn Heights before taking a job as assistant director of placement at U-D. His work at U-D led to his appointment as HFCC's director of financial aid, the job he held for 30 years. In that position, Glenn worked tirelessly to help HFCC students get the resources they needed to cover the cost of their education. Glenn brings that passion for providing students with the tools and resources necessary to be successful into his "college success" classroom to this day.

The AFO is not Glenn's first foray into union organizing. While director of financial aid, he was instrumental in establishing the HFCC administrators' union, Local 71 of the American Federation of School Administrators. While serving as president of Local 71, he helped align the goals of his membership with the goals and mission of the college, something he believes the AFO can accomplish as well.

Glenn is not the only person in his family who has a history of building unions. Jane, his wife of 42 years, is a retired para-professional who spent her career working in a Redford Union school program for emotionally impaired students. Jane helped organize a union of Redford para-professionals and served as president of her local. Glenn and Jane have two daughters—Sarah, a school teacher in Orlando, and Rebecca, an attorney in Phoenix—as well as five grand-children.

Glenn teaches at HFCC because he enjoys spending time with students and making a difference in their lives. He got involved with the AFO because he believes that "the only way adjuncts can achieve a sense of balance with the institution is by being organized. I'd like to see HFCC become the nation's best community college, something that just can't happen if the College continues to exploit some of its most valuable employees."

