



A Union of Professionals

AFT National Higher Education Issues Conference
Our Work, Our Union: Making a Difference for Students Every Day

April 1-3, 2011

Sheraton Philadelphia City Center Hotel
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

PROMOTING THE SUCCESS OF STUDENTS is what you, our members, do every day. Ensuring that you, in turn, have the financial security and the professional and political support to do this work is what the union is all about. The AFT is strong and healthy but this year urgent alarm bells are ringing all over the country. The alarms are telling us in unmistakable terms that the continued success of our students and institutions is deeply endangered by the lingering impact of the financial crisis, the phasing out of stimulus funds and particularly by the shift in the political landscape at the federal and state level.

At college after college, enrollment is booming while capacity is being stretched past the breaking point by program and staffing cutbacks. Still worse, we are being confronted with a relentless demonization of public servants—including faculty—with privatization, pension denial, even loss of collective bargaining rights back as serious political threats.

What does this mean for us? It's certainly **not** a time to hunker down and wait it out. Overcoming these threats will require a new, much more active partnership among locals, state federations and the national AFT. From the standpoint of the local union, this means developing strong messages and campaigns in solidarity with other AFT affiliates and organized labor; learning the basics of mapping power structures, building coalitions and community engagement; and demonstrating continually the fact that the union is focused on advancing student success.

That will be the focus of this year's national conference. We want to make sure we are all energized, trained and supported to tackle the challenges we face and to continue the good work we're doing on issues such as academic staffing, student success, faculty diversity and privatization, the last of which is represented most graphically today in the enormous growth of for-profit higher education. Looking at the agenda, you will see that all sessions are either labeled **Campaign Planning** or **The Union on Campus**—and some of the most important Campaign Planning sessions are repeated. I hope these categories help plan your participation but, of course, most sessions will include some of both elements. I hope you will be able to join us in Philadelphia and, not only that, I also hope you are able to bring some colleagues to help get your mobilization efforts into high gear.

—Sandra Schroeder, Chair, AFT Higher Education Program and Policy Council