



# TECH TO TECH

Newsletter

of the College Laboratory Technician Chapter of the PSC/CUNY

Vol. 8

FALL, 2005

No. 1

## WHAT WILL IT TAKE?

### Questions we need to ask ourselves

#### What will it take to get a good contract?

What will it take for the Chancellor to recognize that his salary offer of 6.2% over 4 years just won't do? In fact, it's insulting!

What will it take for him to see that our work is valuable, and not tell us to be happy with a below-inflation wage increase (an oxymoron, if ever there were one) to work more and be paid less?

What will it take for the City managers to recognize the importance of CUNY to the current and future wellbeing of NYC? What will it take for the City to let go of some of the \$3 billion surplus in its coffers and use it to improve CUNY and to offer us a fair wage package?

What will it take for the State to push for us a fair, above-inflation salary package as it has with other state higher-ed unions? What will it take for the State to support us with its established bargaining pattern, since it pays most of our salaries?

What will it take to shore up our Welfare Fund? What will it take for the City to take over the benefits of our part-timers, as it does for other municipal unions? What will it take for both the City and the State to put money in the Welfare Fund that does not impinge upon our salary package?

#### What will it take to get a good contract?

What will it take for you to actively support the PSC? What will it take for you to realize that the union is not "them," but you, us? What will it take for you to conclude that, at this time, if we (you included) collectively don't do it, it won't get done?

What will it take for you to attend meetings, rallies, marches? What will it take for you to voice your opinion, to make some noise? What will it take for you to stand up and be counted as one who is fed up with the current state of affairs? What will it take for you to take action because what you want is not what's being offered?

What will it take for you to attend the PSC mass meeting on Sept. 29 at 6:00 PM?

What will it take for you to say "YES" to give the PSC Executive Council the go-ahead to decide our next action? What will it take for you to participate in that action?

Shelly Mendlinger

### PSC MASS MEETING

Thursday, Sept. 29 6:00 PM

Great Hall, Cooper Union

E. 7th St. and 3rd Ave.

# Put It in Writing

Believe it or not, we CLTs work in Academia! In Academia power is in the written word. The writing that is important to techs in personnel matters is the contents of their personal files. “The Written Record,” as it is referred to in grievance circles, is all-important to us for reappointment and promotion.

This may seem obvious or even trivial to you. Yet when I wear my grievance counselor hat across the CUNY campuses, I find many CLTs have missed the point about having it put in writing. (And it’s usually too late by then!) I am referring to the many opportunities we have to enhance our files with letters of commendation, rebuttals of unfavorable evaluations and documentation of unusual or untoward situations.

Every time someone—professor, dean or off-campus contact, etc.—comments about your good work, ask them to “Put It In Writing,” in a letter of commendation. This will let reviewers know that your work is of high quality and appreciated by others. You should also get letters of commendation for work done above and beyond regular duties and for service to the college and outside community.

Rebutting unfavorable evaluations is perhaps the most important writing you will need to do at CUNY. This is your chance to give your side of the story, to detail how things really are in the workplace. It is not, however, an occasion for a diatribe, an attack or a tirade. In fact, the cooler statements and the more cogent your arguments, the better they will be received and perceived.

Instead of blaming or belittling others, calmly state the facts, e.g., “When the alligator got loose and ate the experimental rats, it was not my watch,” or “Proctoring exams is not within the CLT job definition. It is a teaching function and I should not be reprimanded for declining to do it.” Tell it as it is, just “Put It In Writing!”

The documentation of an unusual situation is a little tricky. Your supervisor may consider it “uncollegial” if you habitually dispatch a treatise at the drop of a hat. No one wants to create or receive a snowstorm of paper, but you may need proof of what transpired or was said. You do not need to have in your personal file every piece of paper you generate. You do, however, need to save certain communications in your own file as a written record, a paper trail to sustain your argument, if need be.

One such situation comes up when you are given an order verbally, on the fly. Other than being ordered to do something illegal, immoral or unsafe, you are required to follow a superior’s instructions. There will be times when you think the suggestion (order) is not a good idea for some reason and you communicate that to your superior, but are told to do it anyway. These situations should be memorialized in writing by sending e-mail or hard copy to the superior and filing your own copy.

For example: “In our conversation of Fri. the 13<sup>th</sup>, you told me to download e-mailed files onto the new computer in the dept. office. I suggested that we wait for

*continued on page 4*

# To Your Health

## The Art Studio as Laboratory

Hazardous chemicals and other toxic materials are commonplace in the art studio and darkroom. The health hazards which exist are similar to those found in chemistry and biology laboratories. The safety equipment needed and the preventive and curative maintenance programs followed in all the above laboratories, have much in common. In effect, the visual arts are laboratory sciences, albeit the most creative.

In disciplines such as painting, design, photography, printmaking, ceramics, metalworking, and wood working, hazardous chemicals are used such as:

- Flammable solvents, markers, paints and paint removers.
- Corrosive acids and bases.
- Toxic solvents, vapors and dusts.

The OSHA Hazard Communication Standard (HCS) was employed by management to inform all staff members who are exposed to chemical hazards in their workplace about the chemicals they are using and about the risks they face. Proper chemical labeling and knowledge of, and access to, material safety data sheets (MSDS) are centerpieces of this training program.

On January 31, 1990 OSHA adopted the Laboratory Standard, 29 CFR 1910.1450, which requires employers to strengthen safety and health programs covering laboratory personnel. It defines a laboratory as a facility where relatively small quantities of hazardous chemicals are used on a non-productive basis. Therefore its contents apply to art

studios and darkrooms as well as in other laboratories.

The provisions of the HCS have been incorporated into the Laboratory Standard (for laboratory staff), which also requires that a Chemical Hygiene Plan (CHP) be generated and implementation by management. Some requirements of the CHP are:

- a) Describe procedures to be followed during routine handling, storage and disposal of chemicals, as well as those required in the event of fire, spill, explosion or medical emergency.
- b) Explain how protective measures are taken— how fume hoods, ventilation systems, safety showers, eyewash stations, explosions-proof spray booths and refrigerators, and fire extinguishers function and are maintained properly.
- c) Describe how gloves, goggles, respirators and other safety and health equipment will be made available to employees.

### **Art Studios Need to be Included in the Chemical Hygiene Plan.**

Even a cursory examination of any acceptable generic chemical hygiene plan makes it obvious that art laboratories and darkrooms should be included. Art department personnel, due to the nature of their work, and the materials that they use, require the type of training and safety maintenance programs inherent in the plan.

**Ezra Seltzer**

## Put It In Writing

*continued from page 2*

the anti-virus software to be installed to ensure protection of the current data. You then said do it now. I did it.

“This is my recollection. If think there are inconsistencies, please send me your amended version.”

You may say that all this writing and paper pushing is a waste. BUT, many a CLT has been helped by good paper and many hurt by the lack of it.

Shelly Mendlinger

## Names and Numbers

### CLT Executive Committee

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Ask to be subscribed to psc-clt.

**PSC MASS MEETING**  
**Thursday, Sept. 29 6:00 PM**  
**Great Hall, Cooper Union**  
**E. 7th St. and 3rd Ave.**  
  
**Learn The Facts**  
**Speak Your Piece**  
**Act in Unison**



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