



TECH TO TECH

Newsletter

of the College Laboratory Technician Chapter of the PSC/CUNY

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LOOK BACK LOOK AHEAD

From The Chair

The Spring semester is over. Summer is here. It's a good time to catch our breaths, reflect on the events of the recent past and think about future action.

The Contract: Whew! It's finally here. The three and a half years of negotiations were long and grueling, because we had to battle against the anti-public-education and anti-public-employee mentality of the Governor, the Mayor and the Chancellor.

That the negotiating team kept persisting, kept insisting and kept resisting the easy way out, is a tribute to their stamina, their tenaciousness, their acumen and their dedication to the membership. They deserve a heartfelt "THANK YOU" from all of us.

Thanks also goes out to all of those CLTs who demonstrated, marched, chanted, sent faxes and letters, and stood in solidarity with the PSC. Your actions, your presence made a difference—remember management's first offer of 1.5% over four years?

While CLTs seemingly are receiving "only" the "straight" contract, we need to look closer to see how we fared. First consideration is the fact that the \$800 to be added to base salary in September 2007 will be a bigger percentage increase for CLT salaries than for the higher salary scales. For instance, those at the lowest CLT ranks, receiving \$32,500 before the increment will jump to \$33,300, an increase of 2.46%. Even the highest CLT salary, Chief at the top of the line, will receive \$69,707, an increase of 1.16%.

[Do not think that this in any way condones the low salaries we receive for our work. The leadership of both the CLT chapter and the PSC will continue to press management for equitable pay for CLTs. Your

input and participation are essential.]

There seem to be a lot of confusion about the retroactive pay we are to receive, so now it's math time: we'll go through some sample calculations. It might be helpful if you go to the PSC web site (psc-cuny.org), click on salary scales and find the scales for CLTs.

Example 1- For those who still have salary steps to climb, look at the lowest salary for CLT just before the first increase, i.e., one earning \$29,960 on April 30, 2004 (and not newly hired).

Heartfelt Thanks

To The Negotiation Team

On May 1, 2004 the new schedule kicks in, so slide to the right to \$30,709 (2.5% increase). For the 8 month period from May 1, 2004 to Dec. 31, 2004 the CLT should have earned \$30,709/yr. However, earnings were only \$29,960/yr. for those 8 months. (Calculators ready.) $8/12(\$30,709) - 8/12(\$29,960) = \$499.33$, the difference owed.

On Jan. 1, 2005 go up a step, the old salary goes to \$31,014, the new to \$31,789. For the 4 month period Jan. 1, 2005 to April 30, 2005, the difference in pay is (calculator again): $4/12(\$31,789) - 4/12(\$31,014) = \$258.33$.

For the year 5/04-5/05, the first increment yielded $\$499.33 + \$258.33 = \$757.66$ in retro pay. Howev-

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er, 80% of that goes into the Welfare Fund, leaving \$151.53 for that period. Put that amount in memory.

On to the second increment: On May 1, 2005 slide to the right for the 2.75% incremented salary, \$32,664. The old salary is still \$31,014. Now, for the 8 months until Dec. 31, 2005 the yield is $8/12(\$32,664) - 8/12(\$31,014) = \$1,100.00$.

On Jan. 1, 2006 we go to the next step up, \$33,820 on the new schedule, but actual earnings to \$32,112. So, for the 4 months through to April 30, 2006 we have $4/12(\$33,820) - 4/12(\$32,112) = \$569.33$

A year after the second increment, the money owed is $\$1,100.00 + \$569.33 = \$1,669.33$, untouched. Add that to memory.

On May 1, 2006, we slide right to the third incre-

Love Those Pay Steps

ment of 2.75%, \$34,835, and the old salary remains \$32,112. Now comes some speculation. We will assume that we will actually get the retroactive pay on Sept. 1, 2006, 4 months after the increment. For those four months, the difference in pay is $4/12(\$34,835) - 4/12(\$32,112) = \$907.67$. Add that to memory.

Finally, the total retroactive pay equals $\$151.53 + 1,669.33 + \$907.67 = \$2,728.53$.

Don't forget: there's another step up on 1/1/07 and an \$800 increment on 9/1/07. The example's final salary would be \$37,050, which is a 23% increase over the life of the contract. Ya gotta love those steps!

Example 2: A tech who is at the top of the line, with no steps to climb. Use the Sr. CLT earning \$51,830. May 1, 2004, the first increment, the salary goes to \$53,126. For the year through April 30, 2005, the difference is $\$53,126 - \$51,830 = \$1,296.00$ of

which 80% goes to the Welfare Fund. Put \$259.20 in memory.

On May 1, 2005 the salary jumps to \$54,587. For the year through April 30, 2006 the difference in earnings is $\$54,587 - \$51,830 = \$2,757.00$; add that to memory.

The third increment comes May 1, 2006, going to \$56,224. Assuming a pay date of Sept. 1, 2006, we get $4/12(\$56,224) - 4/12(\$51,830) = \$1464.67$ to add to memory. We have a grand total of $\$259.20 + \$2,757.00 + \$1464.67 = \$4,480.87$ in retroactive pay.

For completeness, the final salary at the end of the contract would be \$57,024, a 10% increase over the life of the contract.

While the calculations without steps are easier, the percentage increases are much greater with steps. That's why the PSC keeps fighting to retain them.

CLT Leadership Workshop: In March of this year, the chapter conducted a leadership workshop/general membership meeting. The idea was to familiarize the membership with the operations, practices, contacts and politics that the chapter leadership employs to run the chapter, and to recruit interested members for leadership roles.

You may be aware that the two top officers of the chapter will be retired by the next chapter election in April 2008. Other positions may also be vacant. We thought it vital to the chapter to start grooming futures leaders, so they will easily and adroitly carry on chapter affairs for you.

Sadly, only about 25 CLTs showed (out of 500 members). Some were already active in chapter business. Some were there to find out about the latest contract news - which was not on the agenda and thus not discussed.

On a positive note, a CLT signed up to be a grievance counselor. Contract enforcement, the actual work of a grievance counselor, is one of the most important functions of any union. It is how we maintain our workplace rights.

Again, the present CLT grievance counselors are an

To Your Health

HOME SAFETY

According to the Home Safety Council, there are an average of nearly 20,000 deaths and 21 million medical visits due to unintentional injuries suffered at home per year. It is hoped that the members can glean some important information from this presentation which will enable them to be safer at home.

I —Carbon Monoxide

Carbon Monoxide (CO) is an acutely toxic gas made more hazardous because it is colorless, odorless and tasteless. There are no warning properties, and unanticipated overexposure to this highly dangerous gas readily occurs. According to the U.S. Products Safety Commission, this poisonous gas kills nearly three hundred people in their homes each year.

Carbon monoxide is produced by fuel-burning appliances and equipment in our homes. If you have heating, cooking or power equipment that uses fuel such as oil, natural gas, coal, wood, propane, gasoline, etc., then your house is at risk for potential carbon monoxide poisoning. Homes with attached garages are also at risk because vehicles left running in the garage can cause carbon monoxide to seep into the house.

Carbon monoxide is a chemical asphyxiant that exerts its effects by combining preferentially with hemoglobin, the oxygen-transport pigment in the blood, thereby excluding oxygen. Toxic effects are evident within minutes.

Symptoms of exposure to CO at 500 to 1000 parts per million (ppm) include headache, palpitations, shortness of breath, dizziness, weakness, confusion and nausea. Be careful-early symptoms of CO poisoning can be similar to those of the flu. Loss of

consciousness and death may result from exposure to concentrations of 4000 ppm and higher. High concentrations may be rapidly fatal without producing significant warning symptoms.

Exposure to this gas may aggravate heart and artery disease and may cause chest pains in individuals with preexisting heart disease. Pregnant women are more susceptible to the effects of carbon monoxide poisoning.

In the event of a release of carbon monoxide, evacuate the area immediately. Remove exposed individuals to an uncontaminated area and seek immediate emergency help-usually by your local fire department or 911. Keep victims warm, quiet and at rest, and provide assisted respiration if breathing has stopped.

Carbon monoxide poisoning can be prevented by proper care and use of household equipment. Smoke alarms and CO alarms have different functions. **YOU NEED BOTH TYPES.** Combination CO and smoke alarms are available.

Reference cited:
Home Safety Council
Safety Guide: Carbon Monoxide
April 25, 2005

Ezra Seltzer

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aging group. Come the next chapter election (or earlier), there need to be a few techs to replace them, so you will continue be protected from management's penchant for punitive actions. Bare in mind that counselors need training and practice to be effective—this is not a position that can just be stepped into.

Looking Ahead: Believe it or not, it's time to plan for the next contract; it's only a year away! What issues would you like to see addressed? What are you willing to do to ensure a better contract? How much time and effort are you willing to give to the Chapter? To the PSC?

The stronger the chapter and union are, the better served you are. The twist here is that you are the chapter and the union, so what you put in is what you'll get out.

Think of what is important to you as a CLT and a PSC member and communicate it. Be ready to stand and be counted, our future depends upon it.

Shelly Mendlinger



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President Barbara Bowen

Newsletter staff

Managing Editors Shelly Mendlinger

Randy Smith

City Editor Ezra Seltzer

Layout/design Shelly Mendlinger

OPEIU #153

Names and Numbers

CLT Executive Committee

Shelly Mendlinger Chair, Grievance coun..DA(718) 951-5600,
x2553

Ellen Steinberg Vice Chair, Grievance coun, DA.
(212) 481-5056

Lourdes Rosario Secretary, Alt DA (718) 289-5219

Steve Trimboli Cross Campus Officer, Grievance Chair. ...
(718) 960-8644

Louis Rivera Officer-at-Large (212) 220-1490

Keith Rowan Officer-at-Large (718) 982-3278

Tom Shemanski Officer-at-Large (718) 631-6271

Robert Suhoke Officer-at-Large (212) 650-6973

Barry Carr DA (212)817-2552,7336

Joy Johnson DA (718) 270 6210

Albert Sherman DA (718) 260-5837

Jackie Elliot Alt DA (718) 260-5095

Marisa Rodrigues ... Alt DA (717) 518-6548

Marion Saccardi Alt DA (718) 368-5198

Ezra Seltzer, ret. Communicator (718) 209-0416

Randy Smith, ret. ... Ex-Officio

CLT Campus Representatives

Campus	CLT Rep.	Phone
Baruch	Alan Pearlman	(646) 312-4492
BMCC	Louis Rivera	(212) 220-1490
BxCC	Lourdes Rosario	(718) 289-5219
Brooklyn	Shelly Mendlinger	(718) 951-5600 x2553
City	Derek Quinlan	(212) 650-6060
COSI	Marie Larsen	(718) 982-3967
Grad Center	Barry Carr	(212) 817-2552,7336
Hostos	Marisa Rodrigues	(718) 518-6548
Hunter	Camille McIntyre	(212) 481-5057
John Jay		
KCC	Marion Saccardi	(718) 368-5198
LaGuardia	Marge Lesser	(718) 482-5779
Lehman		
Medgar Evers	Joy Johnson	(718) 270-6204
NYCCT	Albert Sherman	(718) 260-5837
Queens	Alan Bartow	(718) 997-4181
Queensboro	Tom Shemanski	(718) 631-6271
York	Joel Gomez	(718) 262-2596

PSC/CUNY

Central Office (212) 354-1252

Central Office Fax (212) 302-7815

Credit Union (212) 354-2238

Welfare Fund (212) 354-5230

E-Info

PSC web page www.psc-cuny.org

CLT Info-list cunyclt-l@hunter.cuny.edu (to send e-mail)

To subscribe send e-mail to:

majordomo@hunter.cuny.edu

In body of message type the command:

subscribe cunyclt-l

CLT Discussion-list psc-clt@groups.yahoo.com (to send e-mail)

To subscribe send e-mail to: Ellen Steinberg at

esteinbe@hunter.cuny.edu

Ask to be subscribed to psc-clt.

EXTRA

Biggest Victory

By now, the terms of the new PSC/CUNY Agreement have been widely disseminated and discussed. There are some nice gains for specific constituencies including a new provision giving adjunct CLTs an entitlement to paid sick leave. For CLTs in general, salary increases and stabilization of the Welfare Fund are the only widely publicized victories.

Given the current state of concessionary bargaining in this city, however, the PSC also was victorious in preventing CUNY from imposing any of its concessionary demands on CLTs. For example, CUNY had on the table, at various stages of negotiations, demands for concessions such as forced vacation on the days between Christmas and New Years Day, an extension of the tenure clock (along with a suggestion that CLTs should not be eligible for tenure), a three day reduction in annual leave, and differential salary increases that would have resulted in lower increases for CLTs. Although not widely publicized, defeating CUNY's persistence on imposing these and other concessions may have been our biggest victory in this round of negotiations.

Steve Trimboli

**Our Union's Power Comes
From Our Activism.**

Don't Complain, ACT!

**Your Participation Is Wanted
And Needed.**

Activism

The contract has been settled and signed. It means that the PSC is beginning to work on setting up the basis for new contract negotiations. Now is the time for you to make your voices known. What do you want to see in a new contract—what salaries, what benefits, what changes in working conditions are important to you? Be as specific as you can. Forward these details to me, to Shelly, or to Steve Trimboli. Don't wait. We need this information now.

What I am asking you to do is part of activism. It means standing up for yourself and for others. It means making your voices known and doing something to make change happen. I find it interesting that in recent times, a few CLTs who were the most outspoken have been the ones who wanted to divide rather than unify. If we want to make constructive change for all CLTs, we must be united. We must stand together. We must be organized. You've heard the term "divide and conquer"—we cannot let that happen to CLTs.

So, what can we do? Get active, on your campus and at the PSC central. Have campus meetings of CLTs. Discuss your issues. Determine what you want in a new contract. Prioritize the list and submit it to us. We must have this list before the end of August.

Activism means doing something. And, that can be done in many ways from organizing on your campus, to working with us at the PSC, to becoming an officer of the PSC chapter, or to participating in PSC activities such as letter writing, becoming a member of a committee, participating in demonstrations, and making your needs known to us.

Act now! Don't wait for someone else to do it for you. If you don't stand up for yourself, if you don't make your needs known, no one is going to do it for you. Have a great summer, but act first.

Ellen Steinberg