



TECH TO TECH

Newsletter

of the College Laboratory Technician Chapter of the PSC/cuny

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No. 1

What's Missing is YOU!

BE READY TO STAND AND TO BE HEARD

Did you march in the Labor Day Parade? Were you at the Adjunct equity rally? At the NYS Assembly hearings for CUNY's capital budget? These are just a few of the occasions that the membership was called upon for a show of solidarity and strength.

With contract negotiations under way, it's just a matter of time before we will need to make evident to management our resolve to win a fair contract.

GET INVOLVED

The only way for you to be sure your workplace rights are protected and your job is reasonable and secure is to be out there telling and showing management that these things are important to you.

I'm sure you have a sore point or two to share with the Chancellor and the Board. (Management's raises alone should get you going!) It does no one any good to gripe to yourself or co-workers. Have your voice heard at marches, pickets, and rallies.

Pick your pet peeve: lack of promotions, need for livable wages, protection of job titles, financial support to the Welfare Fund, etc. Create a sign/poster expressing your point of view. Wear it/hold it up proudly and loudly the next time we gather.

NUMBERS & NOISE

To demonstrate just how fed up we are with the perpetual droning for "increased productivity and accountability," the membership, i.e., you and I, need to be actively and forcefully telling the Chancellor and the Board that under the present working conditions, productivity is already at the max. A change of their attitude is what's needed!

Be willing to communicate your dismay at the disrespect shown to us by CUNY management. Be ready to mobilize and voice your support for the PSC negotiating team.

This is how we will succeed.

FROM THE CHAIR

By Shelly Mendlinger

This academic year has started with some good news for CLTs.

- **Professional Development Fund** - Although it's been a year since our contract expired (don't worry, the provisions are still in effect,) the PSC and CUNY management have finally completed negotiations on the CLT/HEO Professional Development Fund.

Kudos go to the PSC leadership and the negotiating team, especially HEO Iris De Lutro, V.P. for Cross Campus Units, and our own Steve Trimboli,

Cross Campus Units Officer, for their stalwart opposition to management's relentless compulsion to control us and every aspect of the process, and for the team's adamant insistence that we are indeed professionals and that broadly developing our skills and knowledge actually helps CUNY.

By now, all CLTs should have received at home a packet containing a Professional Development Fund application and cover letters. Hopefully, many of you have applied for funds before the October 31 deadline. Good luck!

To the rest of the CLTs: apply next semester; the deadline is January 3, 2004.

"You've got to be in it to win it."

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Tech In the Spotlight

Stephen Keltner, Sr. CLT, is the sculpture technician of the Art Department of Brooklyn College. He has been in this position since 1979. Stephen received a BFA degree from Roanoke College and an MFA in Sculpture from Pratt Institute. This interview took place in November of 2003. –Ed.

T2T- How did you get to be a CLT at Brooklyn College?

SK- When I came to NYC to do my graduate work, I had already been the resident artist for the state of Virginia. I had a couple of National Endowment for the Arts grants and Arts and Humanities grants.

I hung around feeling it was my obligation to get involved in art a little bit more, before I went off and taught. I guess I got stuck here.

After graduate school, I went into in the advertising field. I was responsible for crafting stuff like the Seagram's 7 silver crown or the brass VO letters that photographers needed for ads. Or companies would call and say, "We need new, modern lettering or logos fabricated."

Despite my credentials,

I can't get promoted to Chief!

I used all kinds of media and tools to fabricate what was needed. I remember mixing plaster and acrylic to imitate marble.

The person in charge of the sculpture area at Brooklyn College asked my mentor at Pratt if he knew someone that knew everything about tools. I was recommended and they pretty much hired me on the spot. I told the Chairman, "You'll never find anyone else who knows as much as I do about media and tools." After working here for a while, he said to me, "Why aren't you teaching somewhere?"

Actually, I have taught courses at Baruch, SUNY Purchase, and the College of New Rochelle. I've been Artist In Residence in other states

for short workshops and I've also taught here at Brooklyn.

T2T- As a sculpture tech, you need expertise with a number of different media, tools and equipment, can you enumerate them?

SK- Well, there's quite a bit. Why don't I break it down by the rooms I work in? We have a wood room, a metal room, and a ceramic room.

We have a respectable batch of equipment for a school that doesn't really major in Art. In the welding room we have an arc welder, an oxyacetylene torch, a spot welder, a MIG welder— that welds in a non-oxygen environment, grinders and a great selection of benders.

Then your typical wood tools: band saw, table saw, jigsaw, scroll saw, sanders, a joiner and a lathe. Of course, drills, hammers, screwdrivers, chisels, gouges, stains, glues.

I'd really like to see us go into pneumatics tools as much as possible, because they have much less tool wear— no motor, gears or belts. Our tools are so old! We're trying to upgrade them as much as possible, but with the present budget, it's tough.

I comb the campus for usable stuff. I recently found discarded heavy-duty electrical wire and rewired the table tools. That was a lucky find! It's my responsibility to maintain and repair just about all of the sculpture tools and equipment.

In the ceramics room we're working with an electric kiln, a computerized kiln, and kick and electric potter's wheels. We do a lot of casting, mostly with plaster. Sometimes we use two-part mixtures with epoxy, alginate, acrylic or what-have-you.

We work with everything: wood, plastics, paper, acrylics, and ceramics. Fiberglass is used for both a surface material and for casting. And, of course, plaster, over mesh or cloth, or as a solid.

T2T- What do you like best about working as a tech here?

SK- The challenge. It's different every day. Being able to answer new questions, attack and solve problems brought by students and faculty.

It goes back to my experience in advertising; I used all this equipment and materials to get the desired result. Now, it's taking the tools of my trade and teaching the techniques to art students.

What I like about art here is that it's always challenging, like what medium you would recommend to get the most economical or durable or efficient results.

T2T- What do you like the least about working here?

SK- The lack of time, for one. But, it's the lack of respect from the college community in regards to CLT work that really hurts. Few recognize our talents or what we're responsible for.

My credentials are every bit as good— maybe better— as any professor of Art in CUNY, but I can't get promoted to Chief CLT! When the Chief title first came, I applied and was told it was only for science techs. Now that some Art techs have gotten Chiefs, they tell me I've been doing the job so long as a Sr. CLT that it is obviously not a Chief line. There's no recognition of skills or talent.

T2T- An MFA is the terminal degree in your field, isn't it?

SK- Well, if you want to guild the lily, you could get a doctorate in Studio.

T2T- You have an MFA in Sculpture, is that in one specific medium or as broad a range as you work here?

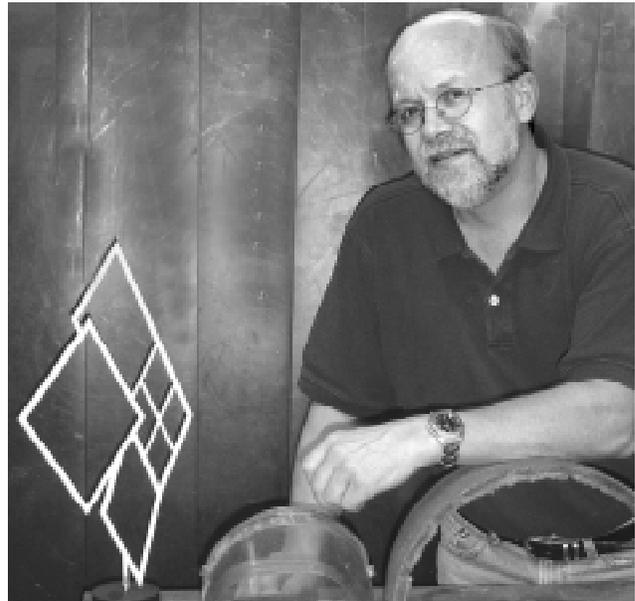
SK- When you get a graduate degree in sculpture, it's broadly sculpture; but there would be one medium that you would work more intensely than the rest. The main medium that I work in is steel.

T2T- Now, when you say the medium you prefer is steel, how do you work it?

SK- I like welding it. You usually can't cast it without having Bethlehem Steel helping you out!

I have made jewelry in the past, casting silver, but I'm mainly a constructive sculptor. I start out with steel rods that I cut, bend and weld.

Welding was always a fascination of mine. I did an independent study in welding as an undergraduate and I've been hooked ever since.



Stephen Keltner with his perceptually changing sculpture of steel and paint.

I tell my students that welding turns you into a god: you turn steel into a liquid, then into gold. It's like a form of alchemy.

As much as I like welding, I'm thinking about applying for a CLT Professional Development Fund grant to learn about casting metals— foundry work.

T2T- Are there local foundries?

SK- There is a foundry at SUNY Purchase and one of our past instructors is very popular there. I'm not looking forward to the trek up there, but to the learning, the camaraderie and the fine facilities.

T2T- Do you have any other professional accomplishments?

SK- Yes. I was president of the International Sculptors Guild, down in Soho, for six years and V.P. for two years before that. I was instrumental in shows at the International Sculpture Center and gave many talks on sculpture in various cities.

I've received 3 CUNY/PSC grants for computer assisted sculpture design.

I just had a show this summer in Westchester County, which was very successful: sold a work, sold a print, got a write-up in the N.Y. Times.

FROM THE CHAIR

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- **Contract Negotiations** - Yes, the parties are talking, regularly. In fact, they have exchanged printed lists of demands. They have presented the broad goals each is seeking in these negotiations.

PSC Demands of interest to CLTs include:

- * Secure all instructional computer titles for the PSC bargaining unit.
- * Bring CLT back to a true promotional series.
- * Sub-CLT work to go towards tenure.
- * Pay differential for weekends and nights.
- * Combine the five- and seven-year longevity steps and create a new, higher step.
- * Change the name of our title: something broader than Laboratory; more current than Technician and less associated with menial and subordinate than CLT.

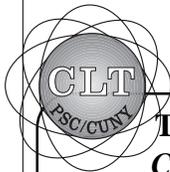
Of course, there's the usual demands for a salary increase, safety and health issues and dollars to The Welfare Fund.

The PSC has a carefully constructed set of remedies and strategies designed to strengthen and enrich our employment at the University and the University itself.

As is stated in the lead article of this newsletter: **GET INVOLVED!** Our- your- future may be decided by how many PSC members are willing to "put it on the line."

Gather with us when the call goes out.

That's the time to talk the talk and walk the walk!



TECH TO TECH is the newsletter of the *College Laboratory Technician Chapter of the PSC/cuny.*

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