



SOCIETY OF PROFESSIONAL SCIENTISTS AND ENGINEERS

I consider it important, indeed necessary, for intellectual workers to get together, both to protect their own economic status and also, generally speaking, to secure their influence in the political field.

Albert Einstein, from a letter dated May 1944

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Editors: Kim Yates and Kurt Glaesemann

Letter from the President

As my year as SPSE President draws to a close, I look back with some sense of satisfaction at what our organization has been able to accomplish in its efforts to make the Laboratory a better place to work for all employees. We have made a big step forward in becoming a more proactive organization by working to effect positive change. We recognized some time ago that our power to effect positive change is directly proportional to our numbers. We also realized that we could use the help of a larger union organization in growing SPSE. This was the main motivation for our affiliation with UPTE, a certified union of professional workers on all nine UC campuses and the other two UC labs. The affiliation agreement with UPTE was a major accomplishment for SPSE this past year. With UPTE's help we have embarked on a membership recruitment campaign that has already had some success this past year in increasing the membership. We have focused our recruitment campaign around what has become a major issue for employees at this Laboratory: pay equity, particularly the unfairness and continued corruption of the ranking system that has turned a merit pay system into a spoils system. The next edition of the new SPSE publication, *The SPSE Sentinel*, is devoted to the ranking issue, so I will not say anything more about this issue now. Instead, in this column I debunk the myths and misinformation that I have encountered in talking to many employees over this past year about joining SPSE.

Myth 1: SPSE has not done anything to improve working conditions at the Laboratory.

Fact: SPSE was founded nearly 30 years ago in response to the frequent, widespread, and arbitrary layoffs that were taking place here in the early 70's. Through collective action SPSE stopped layoffs at LLNL; while colleagues at our sister lab at Los Alamos have continued to experience semi-periodic RIFs right into the 90's, there has not been a single mass layoff at

LLNL since SPSE's founding. Since then SPSE was instrumental in obtaining dental care benefits for all employees, in forcing the Laboratory to release monthly salary and yearly ranking data, in winning the right of employees to access their own performance appraisals, in influencing the decision to scale back the polygraph screening program, and in a host of other actions in which we affected personnel policies. You can see more details on the "SPSE Timeline" at <http://www.spse.org>.

Myth 2: Yes, but I can get the benefits of SPSE's work and information gathering activities without joining (just like I can watch public TV without paying).

Fact: Well, not completely. One major function of SPSE is to provide representation to our members in administrative hearings and grievances. Without representation an employee stands little chance of winning when confronted with a situation in which a challenge to management is called for. Remember, the attorneys in the Staff Relations Office are there not to help you, but to protect the interests of the Lab. SPSE's record is that we win more than 90% of the cases we take on. Further, the detailed salary and ranking data, and our salary analyses, are available only to members.

December 2002 Election Results

President-Elect:	Kim Yates
Secretary:	Doug Clarke
Treasurer:	Jane Dignon
UPTE Representative:	Jeff Colvin
Executive Board:	David Aldis Lynn Lewis Anne Lipska-Quinn Jayne Tonowski
Bylaws changes:	All passed

Myth 3: Yes, but I am happy here; I would never think of filing a grievance against my management.

Fact: Of course, the overwhelming majority of our members never file grievances or any other type of complaint. They also do not expect their houses to burn down, but they do not wait to go buy homeowners insurance until the house is on fire. But being part of SPSE is much more than just buying "grievance insurance." I have found that most people who become members do so because they understand the value of coming together in solidarity with their professional colleagues to promote and protect their common interests.

Myth 4: \$22 per month is too much money.

Fact: I find little credibility in this argument coming from people who generally make in excess of \$50,000 annually and spend at least \$22 a month in the vending machines.

Myth 5: I do not want any of my dues money going to a political party or politicians with whom I do not agree.

Fact: No dues money goes to politicians or political parties. Nearly all of the dues money goes to support the operation of the SPSE Office and pay the salary of our Office Manager.

Myth 6: Unions are corrupt, have too much power, and are too adversarial.

Fact: SPSE is not the Teamsters. *We*, the scientists and engineers at LLNL, are the union. SPSE is a democratically run organization, all the leadership is elected, and policies are set by the members locally, not by any union officials who do not work here at the Laboratory. As for having too much power, we could only wish that were true. As for being adversarial, our objective is to work with management, where possible, to make the Lab a better place to work for everyone. Having said this, we recognize that in some respects the fundamental objectives of employees and managers are in conflict. A legally constituted union is the only way for employees to have *legal parity* with management in achieving our objectives of fair pay for satisfying work in a secure and safe working environment.

Now that you know the facts, isn't it time for you to decide to join?

— Jeff Colvin

Salary data available

SPSE has emailed the November 2002 salary data to SPSE members. We provide the data in Excel format, allowing easy sorting by job class, salary, hire date, percent raise, et cetera. Non-members wanting access to this file may obtain a copy simply by becoming a member of SPSE.

— Kurt Glaesemann

Polygraph: SPSE gets UC's attention

SPSE is concerned about the implementation of proposed DOE rule 10 CFR 712, which would consolidate the existing Personnel Assurance Program (PAP) and the Personnel Security Assurance Program

(PSAP) into a single program (see http://www.access.gpo.gov/su_docs/fedreg/a020717c.html, DOE Human Reliability Program section for details). SPSE voiced this concern to UC President Atkinson and Vice President McTague. McTague responded in support of SPSE:

"Thank you for your letter of October 9, 2002, to President Atkinson and me, pointing out the concerns of the Society of Professional Scientists and Engineers regarding the Department of Energy (DOE) Proposed Rulemaking, 10 CFR 712. The University also has expressed its concerns and has urged the DOE to give more time for discussion and to give strong consideration to the comments submitted by both Livermore and Los Alamos laboratories."

Thank you to lab management

Thanks are due to Lab management for actively publicizing the Energy Employees Occupational Illness Compensation Program Act. This act provides compensation to DOE employees and contractors that have experienced health problems resulting from their employment. If you were unable to attend the sessions and feel that you may qualify, you can get claims assistance by calling 866-697-0841. More information is available at <http://tis.eh.doe.gov/advocacy/>.

Oakland operations office to close.

The NNSA has announced that the operations office layer of oversight is being eliminated. An NNSA Service Center in Albuquerque will be providing support services directly to LLNL. This office will be established using the expertise of the former operations offices. Consolidation of personnel will be completed by the end of FY '04, after which the Oakland office will close and the Nevada office will be reduced in size and concentrate on management of the Nevada Test Site. For further information, see the December 18 press release at <http://www.nnsa.doe.gov/>.

— Kurt Glaesemann

UC privatizes retirement equity fund.

UC Regents at their November 13, 2002 meeting approved Treasurer Russ's suggestion that the University transfer the internal management of its U.S. equity investments to multiple external managers. To initiate this transition, the University has transferred all of its U.S. equity investments into the Russell 3000 Tobacco-free Index Fund under the management of UC's current passive index manager (State Street Global Advisors). Subsequently, UC will hire additional

external managers to complete the diversification. The UC Board of Regents, through the Treasurer's office, will retain full control and authority over these investments and external managers. Transferring the management of equity investments externally will result in the closing of UC's internal equity portfolio management division. This will, unfortunately, mean the reduction of nine positions within this group. SPSE will be watching this issue carefully, because the strong retirement benefits of UC is a crucial issue for our members. For more information about UC investments, visit www.ucop.edu/treasurer/.

— Kurt Glaesemann

Ranking reeks?

SPSE has been hearing a lot of heartfelt discontent from members and nonmembers who are fed up with LLNL's ranking process, which is perceived as arbitrary and unfair. We'll have more to say about that in the next issue of this Newsletter.

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