

January 2014 SPSE-UPTE Monthly Memo

LLNL Skilled Trades Picket January 15, 2014: West Gate 3:30-5:30 pm

The Society of Professionals, Scientists and Engineers, Local 11 of the University Professional and Technical Employees-CWA 9119, AFL-CIO (SPSE-UPTE) Skilled Trades unit employees are currently bargaining their third contract with management. Progress is slow because management has yet to negotiate in earnest. To bring attention to our issues and to help mobilize unit members behind their bargaining team, we held an informational picket at the Laboratory and the downtown Livermore Office of Lawrence Livermore National Security, LLC, (LLNS) on January 15, at which we distributed the following flyer to passers-by.

Who we are, and why we are picketing today

We are Lawrence Livermore National Lab's maintenance workers—full-time employees of Lawrence Livermore National Security, LLC, (LLNS) and members of UPTE-CWA Local 9119, AFL-CIO.

We are skilled craftspeople whose job it is to keep the Laboratory's infrastructure running safely and efficiently. We are now negotiating our next contract with management.

We are journeyman air conditioning mechanics, locksmiths, boiler mechanics, carpenters, electricians, heavy equipment mechanics, laborers, maintenance mechanics, painters, plumber/pipefitters, riggers, sheet metal workers, trades helpers, and welders.

We routinely work around hazards that our counterparts elsewhere never or rarely face: radioactivity, biohazards, high explosives, and contamination from beryllium, lead, depleted uranium, asbestos and heavy metals.

Since LLNL privatized in 2007, we have seen our ranks drop by approximately 50% as LLNS, the newly-formed company attempted to impress DOE and win \$ millions in management incentives by cutting, among other things, the maintenance budget, deliberately allowing the Lab's infrastructure to fall into disrepair. Management's new motto was "Run to Fail, then Maintain."

This misguided policy has led directly to several safety incidents and many more close calls. Accidents and faulty equipment affect all Lab employees and could also endanger the surrounding community.

"Running to fail" makes no business sense either; repairs are more expensive and more disruptive to Lab operations than preventive maintenance to equipment and facilities.

We are dedicated and responsible employees who take pride in being part of the history and heritage of the Laboratory. Without us, the Lab could not function. We see the Lab's accomplishments as ours too.

In recent years we have seen our wages lag behind prevailing wages in our crafts. We want our new contract to close this gap.

We also want an end to the relentless push to do more with less. We have deep pride of ownership of the equipment and facilities that we maintain. Management sometimes exploits that pride to get things done "on a shoestring". As a result, some of us are overworked.

We want a fair contract and to do our part in restoring the Lab to greatness.

UPTE-CWA reaches historic agreement with the University of California over wage increases, preserving single-tier pension

University Professional & Technical Employees, CWA 9119 has ratified an agreement with the University of California on a contract for the system's 15,000 researchers, technical employees and health care professionals.

The ratified contract includes cost-of-living increases of 11.5 to 13% plus step increases over four years, and preserves UC's quality retirement system on a single-tier for UPTE-represented workers through an additional contribution from employees.

"The historic agreement is a commitment to preserving the University of California as the world's premiere academic institution," said UPTE's president, Jelger Kalmijn. "Our bargaining team made a responsible proposal to contribute an additional 1% to the pension fund in exchange for the UC agreeing to keep all members on a single plan, and UC has agreed."

UC management had initially proposed a two-tier pension system that would have dramatically reduced benefits for current and future employees. UPTE-represented workers poured out onto picket lines, wrote letters and even went on strike in solidarity with other hospital workers last spring to make it clear they rejected UC's plan.

The union argued that quality retirement and health benefits were the corner stone of recruitment and retention of the best research, technical and professional staff at public institutions such as UC. "Finding cures for cancer or heart disease, creating the next version of the internet or understanding global warming, require long-term dedication of knowledgeable staff, and retirement security is a crucial part of what draws these staff to UC," said Wendi Felson, UPTE's chief bargainer and herself a former UC health care professional.

"We hope this ground-breaking agreement sets a new pattern for labor negotiations and brings to an end the years of attempted management take-backs despite healthy bottom-lines at UC's research and medical facilities," said Kalmijn. "A four-year agreement will provide new UC president Janet Napolitano with a period of labor peace," he added, in which he hopes "we can work together to remedy much of the damage that was done by difficult budget times and acrimonious employment strategies of her predecessor."

[University Professional & Technical Employees, CWA 9119](#) represents UC health care professionals in job titles such as Clinical Lab Scientists, Nuclear Medicine Technologists, Social Workers and Pharmacists. In the research unit, UPTE represents titles such as Staff Research Associates, Spectroscopists, and Museum Scientists, and in the technical unit, titles include Lab Assistants, Computer Resource Specialists, Animal Techs, Scene Techs, Editors and Writers.

Join Us

For four decades we in SPSE have worked to make our Laboratory a better place to work by helping fellow employees and demanding fairness and transparency from Lab management. Our effort has never before been more important, and if you share this belief please go to <http://spse.org> and click on "Join Us."