

## Memorandum

**TO:** Dr. Hassan Bazzi, Director of Special Laboratories,  
State University Agricultural Research Institute,  
Hadley Hall, Room 1401

**FROM:** Caroline Wrenn, Laboratory Technician,  
Insect Diagnostic Laboratory,  
Agricultural Science Building, Room 3

**DATE:** September 28th, 2020

**SUBJECT:** Dr. Sampson(Director of the Soil Science Center) Expects Our Department to Pay for The Maintenance of Equipment Staff Borrow (Which is Currently A Balance of \$100)

**CC:** Jim Beal, Research Associate,  
Insect Diagnostic Laboratory,  
Agricultural Science Building, Room 3

Dr. Al Sampson, Director of the Soil Science Center,  
Agricultural Science Building, Room 106

### **Background Information:**

Due to the Insect Diagnostic Laboratory being a relatively new addition to our university, our department has not had the opportunity to purchase all of the necessary equipment. However, this is typically not an issue when departments share and exchange equipment. As of today, Dr. Al Sampson (Director of the Soil Science Center) clarified that he wanted our low-budget department to pay for the maintenance of any equipment that we borrow regardless of whether our staff were the ones to damage it.

### **The Incident That Caused The \$100 Fee:**

1. On Monday morning, I had to borrow a Holtzmann pH meter from the Soils Lab.
2. Martha Jones, the principal assistant to the Soil Science Center director(Dr. Al Sampson) responds to my request to use the pH meter for a buffer solution with “Fine, nobody here is using it now; come on up.”
3. When I arrived upstairs in the Soils Lab, I turned the knob on the meter from standby to pH. Unfortunately, the meter did not register a change.
4. After reassuring myself that the battery was undamaged, I found that, while the fluid level was acceptable, there was a hairline crack.
5. The electrode was broken and was not functional when I gained possession of it. The meter would not work before I arrived in the lab.

6. As I departed from the lab, I informed Martha Jones, the principal assistant to the Soil Science Center director(Dr. Al Sampson) that the pH meter did not work because the electrode was broken. Her only response was, “Oh, really?”
7. Ms. Jones did not ask me any further questions or clarify how the damage could have occurred.
8. An hour later, Dr. Sampson informed me that Martha Jones reported that I use the pH meter a lot. This is true. It is necessary for me to complete my work.
9. Dr. Sampson stated that because they “didn’t know it was broken until I used it, our department should “share in the maintenance of the equipment you use regularly, especially when you break it” and that our lab “should pay for [the electrode],” which is approximately \$100.

### **My Main Concerns With Dr. Sampson’s Shared Maintenance Expectations:**

- I am very sure that the electrode was not functional when I gained possession of it in the lab.
- How will events like this affect our department’s budget when we can’t be sure that all of the equipment is being properly maintained. For example, I’m not sure that the electrode’s fluid was being periodically replenished.
- Electrodes, and other equipment, have a limited life. Will this new standard be a game of luck? Whoever is using the equipment when it expires must pay for it?
- Will the Soil Science Center be paying for the maintenance of the equipment that they borrow from us?

### **Response To This Incident:**

I wanted to bring this situation to your attention since it may be a recurring event. I know that you maintain a strict budget for our department. Therefore, I felt this \$100 fee(and the promise of further fees for equipment that does not belong to our department) warranted your attention. I know your authority and experience will help us to find a practical solution to this issue. After all, the borrowing system allows all of the departments to access the equipment that they need. It would be unfortunate if our lab lost access to necessary tools and became less respected and attract negative attention from the administrators.