



# THE AGITATOR

Newsletter of the University of Oregon  
 GRADUATE TEACHING FELLOWS FEDERATION  
 870 E 13th., Eugene, OR 97401 (541) 344-0832 <http://gtff.net> [gtffnewsletter@googlegroups.com](mailto:gtffnewsletter@googlegroups.com)

## IN THIS ISSUE

- 1 Standing Together as One
- 2 Standing Together (continued)  
Rolling Crit
- 3-4 Better Know Your eboard
- 5 Canvassing 101
- 6 About the GTFFF!

## Mark Your Calendar!

### Thursday, June 12

UO Board of Trustees Meeting  
 Global Scholars Hall - Great Room 123  
 8:30am

### Friday, June 13

GTFFF End of Term Picnic  
 Alton Baker Park, 5:00pm



**Decision 1a:** After ruining the Agitator, getting embroiled in a sex scandal, and abusing your power, you're impeached.

**Decision 1b:** Miami's campus is really pretty. What do you want to major in? Make decision 2b to study political science or decision 5b study physics.

**Decision 1c:** You can't run 20 yards without being winded. This isn't going to work. Make a new decision 5a.



## Letter from the President: Reflections on a Contract Campaign in Progress

As another academic year begins to wind down, it is important to take a moment to reflect on the unique changes affecting the GTFFF, while thinking about the road ahead. From my conversations with some of the old hands in the union, there is something new and inspiring that has taken root in the GTFFF that differs from previous years. There is an energy that has developed among our members, one that comes out of realizing our collective strength. Where does this come from? Why now?

While the GTFFF goes to bargain with the administration every two years, the circumstances in which we bargain have changed (and will change again). For the first time in our history as a union, the administration hired a lawyer,

at a rate of \$295/hr. While this is certainly a factor, I think it is what we are fighting for this time that has really galvanized our movement. Some of our most important issues that we voted on this fall included: a raise that keeps up with the cost of living; major dental to help us cut down on debt accrued from medical fees; and paid leave so that we are not forced out of graduate school when we have children or are afflicted with a serious illness or injury. The university has been stubborn in not responding to our proposals and has gone the extra step of proposing caps on our health insurance that would shift the extra cost onto our members. They have also proposed instituting percentage-based student fees.

As a result, GTFs ... cont'd pg. 2



## Letter from the President...

from pg. 1... from various departments, in buildings across campus, have come together in the same struggle for a fair contract. This was evidenced by the large voter turnout that resulted in a 98% vote to authorize a strike. That kind of support doesn't come out of thin air, and is has been the result of major organizing by our members. Our contract campaign has existed because a small, diligent group of campaigners have taken it upon themselves to knock on doors, talk with members and get people out to rallies. The campaign has also been crucial in getting our message out to media and social media outlets. When the GTFF was forced to hold an emergency GMM to discuss a strike authorization vote, our campaign didn't miss a beat and was out that week talking and getting people to the meeting. Our stewards, also played a critical role in mobilizing their departments by organizing department meetings and having real conversations with their colleagues about their needs and concerns.

The hard work and leadership of the old eboard also played an important role, creating a framework that eased the transition of the new eboard. Your new officers quickly stepped up into their positions during a critical moment of a strike authorization vote. When most eboards are first

elected, the first major event they plan is the end of the year party; this was not the case for your new officers. While the old eboard began our current fight for a fair contract, it will be up to the new eboard to finish it.

*There is an energy that has developed among our members, one that comes out of realizing our collective strength.*

Already in the halls of the Graduate School, it is rumored that the GTFF is more militant this year. We should not let them confuse

our disappointment and frustration with anger and confrontation. It would appear that their actions at the bargaining table have aggravated an already existing contradiction between the university and the GTFF. While our work as GTFs contributes to the surplus profit of the university, we are deprived of a fair share.

As we move into summer, we must remember the energy and momentum that we have built throughout this year. If we are forced to strike during the next academic year, we will be facing a new cohort of GTFs who will need our help in being informed on these crucial issues. It is up to all of us to organize and mobilize our colleagues so that we may win a fair contract.

Joe Henry  
President  
Anthropology

## - Rolling Crit -

Hello! This is Multiclass, a former E-board member and current steward in the physics department. On June 7th at the Rink Exchange in the Lane Events Center there will be two epic derby battles.

The first will be between the local juniors team the Reservoir Dolls and Portland's Rosebuds. This bout was supposed to occur in January but was snowed out by Snowmageddon! It is long awaited and will have some intense action as the juniors are always full of energy.

The second bout is between your Lane County Concussion and Portland's home team the Holy Roll'N Empire. Last year it was an intense bout between these two teams, with fresh faces (myself included) LCC hopes to bring new energy to the fight to collapse the Holy Roll'N Empire.

**Where:** The Rink Exchange, 796 West 13th Avenue, Eugene, Oregon 97402

**When:** Doors open at 5:30pm, First game slated to start at 6pm

**Why:** Great time supporting local sports!

**Cost:** \$15 at the door or \$13\$ in advance online (details on Facebook)

Check out Lane County Concussion on Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/lanecountyconcussion>

Multiclass  
President, Lane County Concussion



Also known as  
Herbert Grotewohl  
Steward  
Physics

**Decision 2a:** Why would you move to the South? Come on. Really? Reevaluate decision 5b.

**Decision 2b:** Intro Political Science isn't so fun, but Quantum Mechanics seems pretty cool. Reconsider decision 1b.

## Better know your e-board

Joseph Henry  
*President*

I am a 3rd year graduate student in anthropology and my research focus has been on the production of inequality, especially as it regards working class/poor communities in Oregon and the U.S. Before being elected President of the GTFF, I had had the opportunity of serving on the last board as VP of External Relations, and was a department steward the year before that. Outside of school and my work in the union, I enjoy candle lit dinners and long walks on the beach...No wait! I really meant that I like reading novels (when I can), and cooking up food for friends and family. Let me know if you have any great summer recipes!



Heather Marek  
*VP External Relations*



I am a concurrent student in Sociology and Law, training for public interest research and advocacy. Specifically, I focus on civil liberties, and work with groups in the community on these issues.

But that is on my free time. Day to day, I am a runner, accordionist, and servant to two ill-mannered scruffy dogs.

I greatly value my time spent working in the community. As VP of External Relations, I am really looking forward to building strong ties between the GTFF and outside organizations.

Jonathan Turbin  
*VP Organizing*

Jonathan Turbin is a third year PhD student in Cultural Anthropology. He focuses primarily on the intersection of culture and history, particularly with regard to how memories of the Atlantic slave trade are embedded in roles, rituals, narratives, and aesthetics in Atlantic World sites. A transplant from the Northeast, Jonathan previously earned an MA from Brandeis University as well as a Masters in Public Administration from Syracuse University. Nonetheless, he can barely feed himself. As VP of Organizing next year, Jonathan hopes to increase steward activism, particularly among those who feel their voices are not being heard by the union. After all, we do have all these perfectly good caucuses lying around . . .

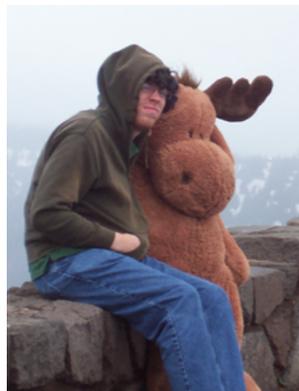


**Decision 3a:** Working with the GTFF is fun! You make decision 1a to become VP of Member Communications.

**Decision 3b:** Oh, this is terrible. Everyone is horrible. Think about decision 5a more.

Richard Wagner  
*VP Member Communications*

You've graduated high school! Make decision 1b to go to Miami University or decision 5c attend Ohio State.





## Better know your e-board (continued)

**Brianna Bertoglio**  
*VP Operations*

Brianna Bertoglio is a first year PhD student in Critical and Sociocultural Studies of Education. She is thrilled to be back in OR after a two year stint teaching in the UAE. Her goals as VP of Operations are: more pizza, cuter union shirts, and responsible and advocating for GTF needs on the Health Care Trust.

Union involvement is nothing new for her as she was a member of OEA as a public school teacher and her mother was a longtime ONA steward representing the psychiatric nurses at OHSU. Many years ago as a small child attended a rally eve of a nurses' strike—but the University compromised and she hopes the outcome will be the same here at UO.



**Krista Abrahamson**  
*Treasurer*



Krista Abrahamson is a soon-to-be PhD candidate in Music Theory, right after she conquers two comps this summer. (Comps will be conquered with the help of dragons.) Her dissertation focuses on basic harmonic analysis (typically taught to freshman) and how it can be better presented and structured. She was a Steward for Music this past year, as well as helping with the Bargaining Committee and the Contract Campaign Committee. In her "free time," she likes social dancing (Argentine tango, blues), other physical activities (fencing, biking, yoga), baking (especially desserts), and apparently overusing parentheses (it's just how my brain works, sorry).

**Shawna Meechan**  
*VP Grievances*

Hello there! I am a second year Doctoral student in Political Science. My research focuses primarily on ethnic civil war and post conflict governance. A Portland native, I came to UO after getting my MA in Comparative Ethnic Conflict in Belfast, Northern Ireland and working for the US and Oregon state governments for about 3.5 years. When not doing school work and reading about genocide, I love to tap dance and read bizarre fiction. After working hard on your bargaining team this year, I am looking forward to helping out my fellow GTFs as VP of Grievances.



**John O'Connor**  
*VP Political Education*

My name is John O'Connor, and I am currently serving as the new GTF 3544 Vice President for Political Education. I am an archaeologist and a Ph.D. student in the University of Oregon Department of Anthropology. In coming to Eugene last Fall, I immediately recognized the potential and benefits of union participation among graduate students here at UO. Working with the E-board is my opportunity to help out a little bit by supporting our hardworking GTFs

and working toward the improvement of benefits, pay, and additional student support. I am interested in facilitating student outreach and addressing overlooked issues within the scope of our graduate student body. If you have issues deserving attention or an interest in helping out, please contact me and come to one of our Committee on Political Education (COPE) meetings starting up again during the 2014 Fall term.





## Canvassing: Do's and Don'ts

Throughout Winter and Spring term, a band of canvassers from the Contract Campaign Committee knocked on doors, had conversations with GTFs all over campus about bargaining, and encouraged members to participate in GTFF actions. This canvassing helped to educate and get more GTFs involved, but the GTFF needs a small army of people to reach out and communicate with the entire body of GTFs (nearly 1500). All you really need for canvassing is willingness and a clipboard, but here are some tips from two seasoned canvassers that might make it easier and more fun:

**Do: Work in pairs.** One person shows up at your door and they're a crackpot, but two do and they are reasonable people worth listening to. It makes it a lot easier to respond to questions, too, because one person can be thinking while the other is talking. Odds are between the both of you the requisite information exists. While it makes people more likely to take you seriously, it also is much better for your mental health and makes the experience more fun and thus more likely something that you'll want to keep doing.

**Do: Debrief after.** With your partner you can reflect on what did or didn't work. You can build on your successes and not get hung up on one person being rude, argumentative, or otherwise unpleasant.

**Don't: Ask if they're busy.** We have a

culture that values business and work, and this attribute is exacerbated in academia. The answer will always be yes and it forecloses further conversation. A better question is "Have you been following bargaining?"

**Do: Read the room.** Some arguments are more persuasive to different people (and entire departments), so if one is not resonating, switch to another tactic.

**Don't: Write off someone or an entire department just because they are not immediately receptive.** Canvassing is a process of building relationships over time. For some people this might be the first time they've ever thought about the things you've brought up, and they may have a lot of misconceptions. Some people will never change their minds, but we have seen people who were initially very skeptical and resistant warm up to the GTFF over time and even attend events and actions. This is a process of gradual change.

**Don't: Devote too much time to talking to that really nice person!** This is tough, especially if you've had a run of people who weren't interested in what you have to say—finally talking to someone who is down for the cause can be so great, but it's not the best use of your time. Once the important bases are covered, disengage in a friendly way like "Wow, I should let you get back to work—see you at bargaining!"

**Do: Wear your GTFF shirt or a button.** It's really helpful to identify yourself; you'll seem less like a random person and more legitimate.

**Do: Ask meaningful questions.** Find out what people value. Maybe wages isn't a big deal for them, but maybe healthcare is your entry point into conversation. Or, maybe parental leave is what they care about the most. If nothing we are fighting for seems to move them there is always the bottom line of tuition waivers.

**Do: Carry a clipboard.** This is for your fliers, blue cards, GTFF posters, and keeping track of where you've been. Carry it even if you don't need it—there's just something about a clipboard that empowers you and makes others take notice.

**Do: Know that canvassing is a skill that improves with time.** Your first canvassing experience might not be perfect but it is truly something that you will get better at with more practice. Contact [organizing@gtff.net](mailto:organizing@gtff.net) and Jonathan will pair you with an experienced canvasser to help you learn the ropes.

*Brianna Bertoglio  
VP Operations  
Education*

*Natalie Brenner  
Steward  
Romance Languages*

**Decision 5a:** You are mostly content in Oregon, but want more human contact than you get sitting in a lab. Make decision 3b to go bar hopping, decision 3a to get involved with the Union, or decision 1c to join a community sports team.

**Decision 5b:** Physics is Phun at Miami. You decide to continue to graduate school. Make decision 5a to go to Oregon, decision 2a to attend Arkansas or decision 5d to study at New Mexico.

**Decision 5c:** Ohio State is too big, Make decision 1b to transfer to Miami.

**Decision 5d:** Everything is dull brown in Albuquerque. Think harder about decision 5b.



## From the Editor

The Editorial Committee for The Agitator is very pleased to have received so many submissions to the newsletter. Keep them coming to [member.communications@gtff.net](mailto:member.communications@gtff.net)!

If you do submit, we ask that you submit up to 300 words in a Word document with standard formatting. Also, don't forget to include a title!

## Staying informed & connected is easier than ever!

- We want feedback! Tell us what you think about the newsletter at: [member.communications@gtff.net](mailto:member.communications@gtff.net)
- Come to membership meetings and social events! (see calendar on pg. 1 for times and locations)
- Join the Facebook group: GTFF
- Follow on Twitter: @GTFF\_3544
- Check out the website: [www.GTFF3544.net](http://www.GTFF3544.net)

### GTFF OFFICERS & STAFF

**PRESIDENT**

Joseph Henry  
*Anthropology*

**TREASURER**

Krista Abrahamson  
*Music*

**VP EXTERNAL RELATIONS**

Heather Marek  
*Sociology*

**VP GRIEVANCES**

Shawna Meehan  
*Political Science*

**VP ORGANIZING**

Jonathan Turbin  
*Anthropology*

**VP MEMBERSHIP COMMUNICATIONS**

Richard Wagner  
*Physics*

**VP OPERATIONS**

Brianna Bertoglio  
*Education*

**VP POLITICAL EDUCATION**

John O'Connor  
*Anthropology*

**STAFF ORGANIZER**

Amber Cooper

**HEALTH INSURANCE ADMIN**

Glenn Morris

### Editorial Committee

**EDITOR-IN-CHIEF**

Richard Wagner  
VP Membership Communications  
*Physics*

*Want to contribute to  
your union newsletter?*

*Submissions of all sorts are  
welcome!*

*Contact your  
VP Membership  
Communications at  
[member.communications@  
gtff.net](mailto:member.communications@gtff.net) for more  
information!*



## About the GTFF

Our Mission Statement:

*"The Graduate Teaching Fellows Federation, a union of the graduate employees of the University of Oregon, commits to creating a strong, safe, and diverse community of educators and scholars for the purpose of protecting and promoting the interests of its membership."*

The Graduate Teaching Fellows Federation (GTFF) is a labor union representing over 1300 Graduate Teaching Fellows and Research Assistants at the University of Oregon in Eugene, Oregon.

Our goals are:

- to improve the quality of life for GTFFs in the areas of salary, workload and working conditions through collective bargaining and the enforcement of our contract,
- to fight for an adequately funded educational system, accessible for all people, and
- to help create a revitalized, socially aware union movement, which is a positive force for change for the entire community. Volunteers and activists are welcome!