



Graduate Teaching Fellows Federation

American Federation of Teachers, Local 3544, AFL-CIO

March 20, 2020

Dear President Schill,

The Graduate Teaching Fellows Federation recognizes the profound disruption and uncertainty that the COVID-19 pandemic has generated in the University of Oregon community and beyond. We also acknowledge the extreme complexity and difficulty that UO administrators face in making decisions that will have major impacts on all members of the UO and wider community. The University has enormous obligations to its students, its employees, and the taxpayers of the state of Oregon at this moment, when so much is thrown into question. The response of the administration to this pandemic will demonstrate to all these groups the priorities of this institution. The GTFF is committed to working with the University to ensure the physical, mental and financial health of its students and employees, while protecting UO's long-term ability to fulfill its mission of public education, research, and service.

To these ends, the GTFF strongly encourages the University of Oregon to take the following steps:

1. **Guarantee full pay and benefits for all employees at least through spring term.** A repercussion of the pandemic is that the entire country's economic future is at risk. The University of Oregon can contribute both to the economic health of the state, and to the physical and mental health of its employees, by guaranteeing maintained compensation for its workers. No one should see a loss of income or badly needed benefits, particularly health insurance and sick leave, at this moment.
2. **Remove all limitations on paid sick leave.** UO should do everything in its power to discourage people from making decisions that put their own or others' health at risk because they are worried about losing pay. Many employees at UO have accrued very few sick days, and even those that have "full" sick day banks do not have enough to cover the time necessary to care for themselves and loved ones should they experience symptoms of COVID-19.
3. **Immediately develop a set of policies that protect employees from overwork.** Shifting teaching, research, and other activities to remote and online formats is extremely time-consuming, and the tremendous uncertainty of the moment means that workers' abilities to maintain concentration on work tasks are diminished, leading to reduced efficiency. UO should acknowledge and accommodate this and make clear to all employees that they are not expected to work beyond their FTE levels or, in cases where this is necessary, that FTE levels and pay will be adjusted accordingly.
4. **Issue strong, clear guidelines for supervisory employees.** UO should do everything it can to ensure that it is preparing and directing supervisors to provide appropriate supervision in this confusing moment. No employee should feel obligated to perform duties that are counter to the goal of ensuring the health and safety of employees and students. UO ELR should establish and publicize a procedure for employees to report and appeal inappropriate requests or orders (or indirect pressure) from direct supervisors.
5. **Issue an immediate rent moratorium on all University housing.** Absolutely no University of Oregon student should be at risk of losing their housing at this moment. Extensive efforts should be made to ensure that UO housing remains safe and accessible for students and the employees that service and maintain student housing.



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6. **Help UO students and employees trapped abroad return to the US.** This includes providing financial, legal, and political assistance to ensure these members of our community can get home to their families as quickly as possible.
7. **Immediately provide maximum support for all international students and employees.** International students, including GEs, occupy a particularly precarious position as migrant students and workers, and this pandemic reveals and heightens this precarity and adds an additional level of stress and uncertainty beyond that experienced by domestic students. International students should have full confidence that their physical, mental, and financial well-being is a top priority of this university.
8. **Reduce tuition for Spring Term.** There can be no doubt that educational quality will suffer as a result of the current upheaval. There can also be no doubt that financial disruption has already begun for many students and their families and will only increase in the coming months. Maintaining full-cost tuition and fees will lead many students to opt to stop or postpone their studies and further erode tuition revenue for UO.
9. **Make unequivocally clear that no employee shall be required to come to campus unless absolutely necessary.** Additionally, the UO should not ask immuno-compromised and other at-risk employees to make a potentially life-threatening decision to work on campus.
10. **Immediately issue requests to all large donors to UO to double their donations for the express purpose of protecting the physical, mental, and financial well-being of UO's students and employees.** Now is a time for those who have the resources and who profess to care deeply about the UO, its students, and its employees to dig deeply and selflessly to assist the UO community in this time of crisis.
11. **Immediately ask all UO employees and contractors earning more than \$150,000 per year to donate 20% of their salaries for the express purpose of protecting the physical, mental, and financial well-being of UO's students and employees and to protect the educational mission of the University.** In a time of profound crisis, it is incumbent upon those treated most generously by the UO to return this generosity by donating significant portions of their salaries to ensure the health and safety of those students and employees who spend most or all of their pay on basic necessities, unable to save money for even a small disaster.

We look forward to working with the University in addressing these issues.

Sincerely,

The GTFF Executive Board