



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

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Mark Your Calendar!

Tuesday, Oct. 8

First meeting of Bargaining Committee
 All Full Members Welcome
GTFF Board Room, 4 p.m.

Wednesday, Oct. 9

Executive Council Meeting
EMU Gumwood Room, 4-6 p.m.

Friday, Oct. 11

Fall Term General Membership Meeting
*Northwest Youth Corps Building
 2621 Augusta St.; 5:30 p.m.*

Thursday, Oct. 17

International Caucus Meeting
Rennie's Landing, 6 p.m.

Friday, Oct. 25

Banner-holding for Eugene Womenspace
 Contact president@gtff.net for details
 4-6 p.m.



Organizer Dispatches: E-Council Retreat

This September, the GTFF held its annual Executive Council retreat in Yachats, Oregon. Although a smaller crowd than previous years, the group worked especially hard to brainstorm and prepare for this bargaining year.

As we have seen, campus unions have made large strides this year partly due to the participation of their members. Consequently, the theme of this year's retreat was "Union Activism." Together, we workshopped ways to get more involved around bargaining including new poster campaigns, organizing drives, video testimonials, and department meetings.

Groups discussed both internal activism within the University

or Oregon and external political action within the larger Eugene community. We also met with the GTFF's field representative, Rodolfo Palma, from AFT-Oregon to discuss bargaining issues and strategies. On the last day of the retreat, we practiced rallying tactics such as writing effective chants, constructing efficient picket signs, playing with the bullhorn, and running a vibrant rally on the beach at Yachats.

GTFF President David Craig and Economics steward Colin Corbett wrote and performed a hilarious rendition of the Beatles' "Help" with pro-dental coverage lyrics. And, perhaps most significantly, we finalized a tentative bargaining platform to bring to the ... *cont'd pg. 2*



Letter from the President: Bargaining Philosophy 101

Every two years, the GTF enters into formal negotiations with the University of Oregon. The result of such negotiations is an updated collective bargaining agreement (CBA) reflecting whatever changes both the GTF and the University bargaining teams mutually agree upon. These biennial bargaining cycles are periods of intense activity for the GTF. And though a great deal of time and work is always involved, they are the preeminent occasion where the GTF executes its principle mission: to strive to improve the wages, benefits, and working conditions of GTFs campus-wide.

Unlike more “traditional” labor unions with leaders who may be involved for decades-long stretches of time, our union faces the predicament of having a swift and near-total turnover of both members and leaders over stretches of even a year or two. This means we have the disadvantage of entering bargaining with a team that has had mixed or little direct memory of previous bargaining

cycles. It also means, though, that we have the advantage of entering bargaining with a team full of fresh ideas, not strictly wedded to “the way things have been done before.”

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As someone who was not directly involved in the last bargaining cycle, but who is charged with playing a central role in this year’s bargaining, I intend to play up the advantage of our predicament to the utmost. That is, I am interested to draw out, coordinate, and put into effect all of the fantastic and fresh ideas that those members participating in bargaining this year (officially gathered into the “bargaining committee”) can generate. Thankfully, we are not totally bereft of experience this

year either, for, among other factors, Steve McAllister (GTF, Biology) has graciously agreed to once again serve on the bargaining team, as he did two years ago.

The bargaining cycle officially begins mid-October, and some very promising preparations for the cycle are already well underway. As a way of updating the membership on the events of bargaining, but also as a way of sharing some of the theoretical (or, as I would put it, philosophical) questions that will continue to arise along the way, I shall roll out my regular contributions to the Agitator around the theme of “bargaining philosophy.” Hence, be on the look out for the 200-level entry in November. And hold onto to your hats (and umbrellas): for the bargaining cycle to come promises to be a stormy one.

Best wishes,

*David Craig
President
Philosophy*

Cont'd from pg. 1: Active participation vital to bargaining

General Membership Meeting.

The goal of the retreat was to prepare for this bargaining year and to generate energetic participation from members, stewards, and officers. As we enter this bargaining year, it will be increasingly incumbent upon our members to get active in the union. Posters from

the last bargaining session read “I Support My Union.” This time, I want the message to read “I Am My Union.”

We cannot accomplish anything as GTFs unless we are all willing to do something to create the University environment we want to have. The things we love about being GTFs

at the University of Oregon are the things we worked together to achieve. It is time that we stopped thinking someone else will do it for us.

Solidarity,

*Matt Hannah
VP Organizing
English*

*Want to contribute to your union newsletter? Submissions of all sorts are welcome!
Contact member.communications@gtff.net for more information!*



Notes from AFL-CIO Convention: The Oregon Way

Last weekend I went as a voting delegate to represent the GTFF at the annual Oregon AFL-CIO convention. The purpose of the convention was to have all the unions affiliated with AFL-CIO under one roof to vote on resolutions regarding which directions and which positions the union will advocate in coming years.

Many state and international labor leaders, community activists, and politicians including Gov. Kitzhaber and Sen. Merkley spoke to the achievements made by organized labor in Oregon and the possibilities this holds for the labor movement as whole. President Tom Chamberlain noted in his speech that our strategy of reaching out and working with community groups has won attention among labor leaders and politicians and has become known in D.C. as the “Oregon way.”

I know what you’re thinking, it sounds corny, perhaps a type of political branding that you might hear at a pep rally. While this may be true, we should treat seriously what has been accomplished by the labor movement in Oregon.

Starting in 2007, Oregon has been the only state to pass Card Check for public employees (a longtime dream of the national labor movement) which makes it easier to unionize and prevents companies from using public dollars to prevent unions in public work places.

More recently, the successful

passage of a law that enables undocumented workers to get drivers licenses allows many workers to get to work safely and legally. This law has been a longtime goal for the farmworkers union, PCUN, in alliance with the immigrant rights group, CAUSA, both of whom were present at the convention this weekend.

. . . [Oregon labor's] strategy of reaching out and working with community groups . . . has become known in D.C. as the “Oregon way.”

We should remember that the passage of these laws takes place during a time of austerity politics and fiscal retrenchment and follows 30 years of anti-union politics that have eroded the foundations of the national union movement. The success of this legislation may have something to do with the gradual changes to labor in Oregon and the union’s ability to respond to these challenges in more creative ways.

This was reflected to some degree in this year’s resolutions; we supported all of them (save for one) and they were passed by an overwhelming majority. These resolutions included supporting partnerships with community-worker coalitions and “Pride at Work,” which is a voice for LGBTQ workers. The convention

also passed anti-discrimination resolutions such as action against healthcare exclusions for transgender workers, as well as advocating for gender-neutral bathrooms in all union offices.

I must admit that I went expecting the convention to be more conservative. Indeed, despite the fact that several key leadership positions are now occupied by women, the union as a whole is still male-dominated.

I am also aware of the limitations underlying any state’s ability to fully secure progressive labor legislation, and the fact that the AFL-CIO is not a “radical union.” However, is it not possible that unions in Oregon might be doing something right?

Already money from Loren Parks, a Nevada millionaire, is being used to support conservative groups in Oregon trying to overturn the Immigrant License Law. Perhaps more pressing, out-of-state corporate donors, including Parks and the Koch Brothers, have helped finance a right-to-work ballot initiative for the November election—the specific conditions of which have long been advocated by local anti-union activist Bill Sizemore.

Despite the challenges that lay ahead of us, organized labor in Oregon may provide new possibilities and models that will help build a larger labor movement.

Joe Henry
VP External Relations
Anthropology

Union Solidarity: Why would GTFF support SEIU strike?

Right now there are no picket lines on campus. No chants permeating the walls of our classrooms. No rallies during lunch hour. But it was a near thing. The classified staff union (SEIU) on campus was days away from a full-blown strike when negotiations with the Oregon University System finally found an agreement.

But before that agreement was reached, the GTFF executive board and staff were working around the clock to make sure our members knew their rights and responsibilities if the strike occurred. Along with information about working contracted hours and suggestions for discussions with our advisors, the board also encouraged its members to show solidarity with SEIU anytime they weren't under contract as GTFs.

Since then, several people have asked me why the GTFF encouraged its members to show solidarity. It's a good question. We weren't the ones going on strike, and a strike would have caused most GTFs hardships: the uncomfortable experience of crossing a picket line for contracted work, a dreaded conversation with an advisor about work time and changed responsibilities, a nightmare of trying to balance an already hectic life without the children's center. So why did the board think it was in our union's interest to encourage solidarity?

There are personal moral, altruistic, and practical reasons

to show solidarity. But from an organizational viewpoint, I believe solidarity was all the more important because the strike would have directly affected us.



SEIU's cause is not independent of our own. Fair labor practice for others makes it easier to have fair labor practice for ourselves. Strong unions throughout the state and country can help support each other, working in communities and giving us a voice in government to make sure workers aren't exploited. Closer to home, the desire to be compensated fairly for work is something the GTFF and its members routinely deal with; it is a core issue of our union. I think these are all things our union supports, and it's not unreasonable to encourage our members to show solidarity with a struggle that will have direct consequences on our lives.

But it also would have been easy to vent our frustrations over our hardships at the strikers. They would have been the faces we'd see blocking our entry to work.

They would have been the voices disrupting class and breaking our concentration. By acting in solidarity, we'd be acknowledging the source of these hardships was not the SEIU members walking picket lines all day—without pay and away from their families—in the hopes of a better future.

But when I talk about solidarity, what do I mean? To me, standing in solidarity means choosing to bear some of the hardships of the other union. It's not pleasant or easy, choosing to join a picket line during non-contracted time, to educate others about the strike, or to talk with

our advisors about ways to be supportive. And sometimes we don't get a choice in the matter. Had the strike gone forward, the children's center would have closed and every GTF who relies on it would have been caught between caring for their family and prepping for the start of the term.

So yes, asking our membership to stand in solidarity with another union was an uncomfortable thing. The strike never happened; classes started without picket lines, chants, or rallies; and GTFs didn't have to make a difficult choice on showing solidarity. But, I think encouraging our members to show support was in line with the point of our union, and I believe our union will only benefit from SEIU's success.

Kyle Lynch-Klarup
Treasurer
Physicist



LESS-T reaches non-profit status

The League of Educators and Students Slashing Tuition (LESS-T), a coalition started by graduate and undergraduate students at the University of Oregon to unite students, faculty, staff, and community members, has incorporated and is now registered as a non-profit. LESS-T members were involved with protesting President Gottfredson's Investiture, testified at multiple Oregon University System meetings on tuition, met with legislators, and petitioned for an instant tuition freeze. Though such a freeze was not reached, the legislature did reintroduce a tuition plateau instituted at 3.5%. This is only the beginning of what we hope will be a successful campaign to freeze and eventually lower tuition.

LESS-T has also worked with UO administrators and the President of the ASUO, Sam Dotters-Katz, to restructure student involvement in the tuition setting process. As of Fall 2013, there will be an ASUO Tuition and Fees Taskforce housed under the Executive Office of the ASUO. Two co-chairs of this Taskforce will also sit on the UO Tuition and Fees Advisory Board, which makes recommendations to OUS/the new UO Institutional Governing Board. We are hopeful that this will strengthen the connection between

students and the tuition setting process and increase transparency.

LESS-T is also connected to the National Student Debt Campaign. This body does research on current student debt in addition to tuition and fees. If you are interested in becoming more involved with the campaign against high tuition and student debt, please don't hesitate to find us on Facebook or e-mail lesst@gmail.com.

Upcoming events include:

October 11

"Dance away Tuition" Fundraiser at Cowfish (come after the GMM!)

October 12

AFT-Oregon Student Debt Table in Portland (contact Judith or Dana if interested)

October 30

"Punk away Tuition" Concert at UO Amphitheater (stay tuned for more info)

Dana Rognlie

*VP-at-Large AFT-Oregon
Philosophy*

Judith Lechner

*Interim Chair LESS-T
German and Scandinavian*

Fourth Annual Civil War Brew-Off

Mark your calendars—the 2013 Civil War Brew-Off is slated to take place on Saturday, Nov. 9 from 7-11 p.m.!

This year marks the fourth iteration of this homebrew competition, which takes place annually in Corvallis as a fund-raiser for the Linn Benton Food Share. Oregon State University's Coalition of Graduate Employees (CGE) has taken home the Best Beer trophy for the past two years—the GTFF needs your beers, your attendance, and your votes to give the victory to GTFF brewers!

Interested in submitting a homebrewed beer for this year's competition? It's not too late if you start now! Our team is looking strong, but there's plenty of room for more participants.

Whether or not you bring a beer to compete, I hope you'll consider coming up to Corvallis to support your friends, mingle with fellow unionists, and sample the fruits of our labor—all for a good cause. Last year, the Brew-Off raised nearly \$3400 and collected more than 500 pounds of food!

Stay tuned for details regarding transportation options—the GTFF is looking again toward buses for our members—and admission fees, which will likely be between \$15-\$20. And of course, please feel free to contact me with any questions at member.communications@gtff.net.

Ian Pilgrim

*VP Membership Communications
Physics*





An introduction to grievances: questions and answers

When I first came here four years ago, it was my first time being part of an active union. There were many things that I learned quickly and a few items it took me longer to learn about. It was not until recently that I became familiar with grievances and what they mean for the union. I found them to be very important and decided it was worth becoming the VP of Grievances for the GTFE. So I hope to illuminate the general idea of a grievance and what can be done. I've always been a fan of Q&A, so I'll ask myself a few questions, then answer them.

So what is a grievance? For us in the GTFE it is something that goes against our Collective Bargaining Agreement (CBA) or a departmental contract. This can occur for many reasons. A few quick examples are working too many hours for your assignment, doing work outside of your appointment, and workplace requirements and safety. Mainly, if something feels off about your appointment, it could be a grievance.

Ok, so something is weird, what do

I do? The main thing to consider is that you are not alone. Your stewards are a good contact to see if they have any previous experience with your case. Whether you talk to a steward or not, you have myself (grievances@gtff.net) and Amber (amber@gtff.net) to help. By contacting us and giving us as much information about the situation, we can help look through the CBA and tell if its a grievance or not. Once it is identified as a grievance or not, we will also help move through the process of figuring out a solution. It is also important to bring it to the attention of the department. You can do this yourself, or talk to us about notifying the department for you.

This seems like this could be a lot of work and paper work. Well, that is not a question, but here is a response. A lot of the time, it is an oversight of someone not being aware of our rights in the CBA. When brought to the attention of the graduate school and department many grievances are completed quite quickly. If the grievance is quite egregious, it might be some

work. But when it is large grievance like this, it is extra important that we do file a grievance. We can not let our rights under the CBA to be violated. And remember: Amber, your stewards, and I are all here to help!

My grievance isn't covered by our CBA, but it really should be. What can I do about that? A good question, if I do say so myself. BARGAINING! Every two years, we bargain for changes to our CBA. This year we are headed into bargaining. If you know of things that needed to be added to the CBA, this is the time to act. Things are gearing up and it is a great time to get involved.

Thanks! What if I have more questions about grievances that were not covered here? E-mail me at grievances@gtff.net. I'd be happy to talk to you about it. I just hope it's not me emailing myself more questions.

*Herbert Grotewohl
VP Grievances
Physics*

Meet the 2013-'14 GTFE Executive Board!

Clockwise from lower left:

Herbert Grotewohl, *VP Grievances*
Joe Henry, *VP External Relations*
Anna Sloan, *VP Political Education*
Kyle Lynch-Klarup, *Treasurer*
David Craig, *President*
Ian Pilgrim, *VP Member Comm.*
Eva Hoffmann, *VP Operations*

Not pictured:
Matt Hannah, *VP Organizing*





So like, we should totally go to the union meeting! It's gonna be pretty badass. I wanna hang with all you cool cats Friday night!

I heard we'll get to vote on the final bargaining platform for the upcoming negotiations. First 200 people there, get a totally sweet canvas GTFF Tote bag! And there's free pizza and tasty beverages. Mmmm Oreos. Vegan and gluten free options too. And Raffle prizes!

Dude. You had me at Tote.



GTFF

GENERAL MEMBERSHIP MEETING

FRIDAY OCT 11TH 5:30PM-8PM

CAUTION MEETING AT NEW LOCATION:

NW YOUTH CORPS: 2621 AUGUSTA ST

(SEE MAP: EASY CAR & BIKE ROUTES OR TAKE THE #27 BUS)

AFTER PARTY FUNDRAISER FOR **LESS-T** @CowFish 9PM

CHILDCARE SUBSIDIES AVAILABLE.

QUESTIONS? EMAIL: AMBER@GTFF.NET WWW.GTFF.NET



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!

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! Thanks :)

Staying informed & connected is easier than ever!

- We want feedback! Tell us what you think about the newsletter at: gtffnewsletter@googlegroups.com
- Come to membership meetings and social events! (see calendar on p. 1 for times and locations)
- Join the Facebook group: GTFF
- Follow on Twitter: @GTFF3544
- Check out the website: www.GTFF.net

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Philosophy

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Ian Pilgrim
VP Membership Communications
Physics

*Want to contribute to your
union newsletter?*

*Submissions of all sorts are
welcome!*

*Contact your VP-Member-
ship Communications at
[member.communications@
gtff.net](mailto:member.communications@gtff.net) for more informa-
tion!*



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 GTFs 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!