



THE AGITATOR

Newsletter of the University of Oregon
GRADUATE TEACHING FELLOWS FEDERATION
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Mark Your Calendar!

- Thursday, Dec. 5**
Executive Council Meeting
Peterson Hall 103, 5-7 p.m.
- Thursday, Dec. 12**
Fall End-of-Term Party
*Blairally Vintage Arcade, 245 Blair Blvd.
6-9 p.m.*
- Friday, Dec. 13**
GTFF/UO Bargaining Session
EMU Ben Linder Room, 2-5 p.m.



GTFFs Pack Opening Bargaining Session

On Friday, Nov. 22, your bargaining team met with University of Oregon representatives to present the GTFF's contract proposals for 2014-'16. More than 50 GTFFs and allies attended the session, showcasing the broad involvement and support of the union's membership in developing these proposals, which were presented by Lead Negotiator Amber Cooper in four categories:

1) Working Conditions

The GTFF proposed contract language guaranteeing upkeep and cleaning of GTF work spaces, provision of basic kitchen facilities, and the introduction of family and paid leave for GTFFs, who to date have never had access to paid leave of any kind.

2) Hiring and Job Security

The GTFF proposed contract language guaranteeing that paychecks be delivered on time, and that offer letters promising a certain duration of GTF funding be considered binding. The GTFF also proposed eliminating layoffs due to inadequate enrollment, a practice that forces GTFFs to shoulder a risk that should be carried by the University, as well as working with the University to clarify GTF job duties for specific appointments.

3) Health Care

The GTFF proposed increasing the vision benefit from \$200 to \$400 per year (the first such increase in over 10 years) in order to provide ... *cont'd pg. 7*



Bargaining Philosophy 301: Hope For Best; Prepare For Worst

The saying “hope for the best but prepare for the worst” can be expressed in many ways. The underlying idea seems to be that it is prudent to be *both* optimistic *and* realistic. Or, put differently, one should allow room for optimism, but not at the expense of realism.

If I had to suggest an “existential space” for GTFs to occupy as regards the present state of bargaining, it would be “hope for the best but prepare for the worst.” As Steve McAllister recounts in his article on the front page of this issue, the GTFF put its best foot forward on Nov. 22. We introduced a range of well-articulated proposals each justified with solid reasoning and an appeal to basic principles like fairness, respect, achievement, and success—principles that, *in principle*, are valued equally by the GTFF and the University.

Looking ahead to the session on

Help Wanted!

Are you interested in becoming more active in your union? The GTFF is seeking help in maintaining a strong bargaining campaign as our VP Membership Communications performs research abroad in the Winter Term. If you or somebody you know is interested in helping keep our campus and community informed throughout the bargaining season, please contact Ian Pilgrim at member.communications@gtff.net!

Friday, Dec. 13 (2–5 p.m. in the EMU Ben Linder Room)—when the University will offer its formal response to our proposals—we have *in principle* every reason to be optimistic. I fully believe that we deserve every proposal we have put forward, and that the University could *in principle* recognize this deservedness and so work with us to reach a new agreement that is fair, respectful, and so on.

But if the “best foot” of the GTFF is accompanied by reasoning and principles, then what will accompany the “best foot” of the University—the foot to be put forward on the 13th? Here is where realism is warranted. For, if the record of the University in past bargaining cycles with the GTFF and, more recently, with United Academics, is any indication, reasoning and principles—no matter how clear or well-articulated—simply do not have the same weight for the University as they do for us.

And so, as we hope for the best—the University recognizing that we deserve what we claim we deserve and working with us to achieve it—we should also prepare for the worst—the University responding that we deserve very little or nothing of what we claim we deserve, so that, in fact, they propose to undermine and diminish what we currently have. Which of these possible outcomes will come into actuality? *Prepare* for the session on Friday the 13th to see for yourself . . . I hope to see you there.

David Craig
President
Philosophy

Organizing Drives Mobilize GTFs

The Contract Campaign Committee led an organizing drive across campus to gear up for the first bargaining session between the GTFF and the University of Oregon held on Friday, Nov. 22. GTFs from a variety of departments volunteered to walk through buildings handing out fliers and talking to GTFs about the upcoming sessions.

Paul Guernsey (Philosophy) and Dan Platt (English) covered the Prince Lucien Campbell Hall afternoon crowd on Thursday; Nicole True (Political Science) and Eleanor Wakefield (English) swept through PLC again the next day; Kelsey Cummings (Journalism and Communications) worked through Journalism and Communications; Matthew Hannah (English) went through Friendly, Columbia, and Pacific Halls; and Ian Pilgrim (Physics) and Rick Montgomery (Physics) tackled Klamath Hall and LISB.

We owe a special thanks to this fine group of campaigners and plan to organize another drive on Wednesday, Dec. 4 from 3–4 p.m. to get ready for the next session. Even if you can’t make it to our organizing drives, keep reminding your friends and colleagues to come to bargaining sessions. These are where we show our strength.

Solidarity,

Matthew Hannah
VP Organizing
English



An Update from the Committee on Political Education

The Committee on Political Education (COPE) has been working on some exciting initiatives this year, including offering continued support to GTFs with families, advocating for international students' rights, and organizing around upcoming Right to Work legislation.

At our last meeting, we discussed ways to move forward with these political priorities, including:

- collaborating with local non-profits that are campaigning for paid sick and parental leave for all workers, especially those with families;
- drafting a guide for international students to communicate information about scholarship opportunities, visa policies, and campus resources at UO; and



The 2013-'14 GTFE Committee on Political Action gathers in the GTFE board room

- initiating an awareness campaign for the campus community about anti-union Right to Work measures that will likely be on the 2014 ballot.

The COPE is always looking for politically engaged, enthusiastic

members to join in with any of these projects! Feel free to e-mail Anna at political.education@gtff.net if you have skills or ideas to contribute.

*Anna Sloan
VP Political Education
Anthropology*

Glenn's Health Insurance FAQs!

Q: Hey Glenn, so I am looking at my student bill and noticed a \$388 charge for insurance on it. What's up with that? I thought the GTFE insurance was only \$58.77 a term!

A: Hello yourself! An excellent question, and one many of your colleagues have puzzled over. The short answer is, that \$388 is a charge for international **students**. The U.S. State Department requires all international graduate **students** to carry health insurance. Unless the UO hears you have enrolled in another acceptable insurance plan, it will automatically enroll you in its insurance (contracted through Aetna) charging you \$388 per term. As a GTFE, however, you are an **employee**. This means you get access to the employer-based GTFE Health Insurance. Which is great because it is cheaper and satisfies the State Department's standards. It gets better. If

you tell me you have been charged the \$388 in your student account, and are enrolled in our insurance, I can contact the UO and have that charge reversed! They have been super helpful and quick about getting this charge reversed.

If you have paid your GTFE insurance premiums using the handy payroll deduction form, you will see an amount taken out of your **employee** paychecks in the **employee** section of Duck Web. Remember, our insurance carrier is PacificSource, not Aetna.

Q: Glenn, I only signed up for fall coverage. I have a winter GTFE. What do I need to do?

A: Another stellar questions from our membership! If you only paid for fall, but have a winter GTFE, you need to pay me (well, not me personally of course—

you need to pay the Health Care Trust) for winter. Contact me and we'll take care of this ASAP.

Q: Glenn, I graduate this fall term, when does my coverage end?

A: Congratulations on getting your degree this fall term! Short answer: your coverage ends 12/15/13. However, if you are prepared to shoulder the full cost of the insurance, you are eligible to continue the coverage through COBRA (the federal law allowing employees to stay on an employer-based health insurance plan 18 months past their point of employment). Contact me to confirm your mailing address so we can make sure the COBRA information is mailed to you. I do not administer COBRA, you'll be working with the COBRA folks.

*Glenn Morris
GTFE Benefits Administrator*



GTFF Earns (Moral) Victory, Style Points Once Again at 4th Annual Civil War Brew-Off!



The 4th Annual Civil War Brew-Off saw over 500 attendees and raised over \$5500! Photo by Eric Buist/Hopstories.

If you're going to leave Eugene to drink beers in another city, you better have a damn good reason. With new bars, breweries, bottle shops, tasting rooms, and growler dispensaries opening on a seemingly monthly basis, it's hard to think of a type of beverage or particular ambiance you can't find in this town.

However, the 4th annual Brew-Off between the GTFF and OSU's graduate union, CGE, was one such good reason to drink outside the city limits. There's beer, friendship, and you know all the money you spend is going to charity. This year, over 70 GTFFs traveled up to Corvallis for an evening of homebrew fueled socializing, most of those on a charter bus that removed the need for a DD. Some went for the unlimited refills of excellent homebrew. Some went to make new friends with graduate students in both unions. And a few

were there to try to make sure the GTFF won the cup this year.

Those going for the beer had their wishes fulfilled, with over 30 homebrews to sample (eight from the GTFF), several donated kegs from local breweries, and a final fallback of PBR for the few still needing drink at the end of the night. Many of the beers were excellent. Most were better-than-anything-you-can-get-in-the-Midwest. And a few...well...a few will make excellent stories once you've managed to forget the taste.

And it's hard not to make new friends when you're constantly bumping into new faces, the live band is at an enjoyable (but not earsplitting) volume, and there's such a ready supply of conversation starters:

"Oh. My. God. You have to try the Avoided Crossing IPA. It is

amazing."

"No really, they put meat in it."

"It's called 'Ryely Cyrus: An Inappropriately Good Ryed.' What's your beer called?"

"He named it: 'It's fine. It's beer.' ... physicists make lousy poets."

So the socializers were happy, too.

When the smoked cleared...we hadn't won. While we weren't shut out completely—The Metolius Imperial Porter (Jon Marshall & Kory Plakos) and Avoided Crossing IPA (Ian Pilgrim) shared a three-way tie for third place—CGE once again kept the Brewmaster trophy in their union. Some may say that after we dominated the first Brew-Off, the scoring system was changed to favor the union with the most members at the event. But the GTFF held itself with dignity while



Kory Plakos serves up his award-winning Metolius Imperial Porter, brewed in partnership with Jon Marshall. Photo by Eric Buist/Hopstories.



Former GTFF Staff Organizer and current AFT-OR Chief of Staff David Cecil serves his J. Easterbrook & Sons' Children's Ale to Physics GTF Caleb Holt. Photo by Eric Buist/Hopstories.

the results were read, not bowing to our base desires to cry foul and raise a bit of hell. Mostly.

Or possibly we were just happily inebriated, focusing more on the kegs than the counts. Most importantly, all money raised by the event—over \$5500!—goes to the Linn-Benton Food Share, so we were even drinking for a noble cause. And somewhere along the

way back to Eugene, the bus full of graduate

students spontaneously broke out the football (soccer) chants...which was probably a good sign that the evening ended well.

Full results and a selection of photos on CGE's website: cge6069.org/brew-off-results-and-thanks/ and at facebook.com/Hopstories.

Kyle Lynch-Klarup
Treasurer
Physics



GTFs Josh Plencner pours a sample of his Horn of Winter Baryleywine, brewed in partnership with former GTFF President Jeremy Strickler. Photo by Eric Buist/Hopstories.



A Confluence of Physicists: Physics steward Richard Wagner (foreground) and Ian Pilgrim serve a thirsty crowd, as steward and GTFF Bargaining Team Member David Grych (half off of frame to right) and steward Ian Snyder (background) look on. Photo by Eric Buist/Hopstories.

More Brew-Off Photos!



A handful of GTFFs congratulate CGE's winning brew team with a GTFF salute!



From pg. 1: Bargaining Team Fights for GTFs' Respect & Security

adequate coverage for both an eye exam and a new set of glasses or contact lenses every year, as originally intended. The GTFF also proposed adding major dental coverage to the health plan, as the lack of this coverage in an otherwise excellent plan is causing real and substantial financial and physical harm to GTFs every year.

4) Economics

The GTFF proposed formalizing mechanisms for GTFs to cover for one another (and receive payment for doing so) during leaves, a guarantee of a summer tuition and fee waiver for any GTF who held an appointment for at least one term in that academic year, and that the University pay 100% of the ASUO incidental fee on behalf of GTFs. Finally, the GTFF proposed that the University increase the GTF minimum salary by 6.1% in 2014 and another 6.1% in 2015. This would set up another 6.1% increase in the first year of the next contract, which would finally bring GTFs up to the cost of living estimate from the University's own Financial Aid Office—a cost that at present exceeds the typical GTF salary by over \$600. Every single month.

Come see the University make their counter proposals on Friday, Dec. 13, at 2 p.m. in the EMU Ben Linder Room!

Steve McAllister
GTFF Bargaining Team Member
Biology

Local Labor Groups Protest Black Friday at Eugene Wal-Mart

Every year millions of shoppers across America descend upon shopping malls and large retail stores in a ritualized orgy of consumer excess known as “Black Friday.” This pseudo-national holiday takes place the Friday after Thanksgiving and is a coordinated effort by big business to dramatically lower their prices on popular consumer items such as electronics, clothing, and other presents for Christmas.

Wal-Mart stands out more than the other large retailers as the epitome of the poor treatment of employees. This has been gradually gaining attention in the national news, for such issues as extremely low wages, union-busting, allegations of sexism, pocketing the sales tax on purchases (in states other than Oregon), and even taking out life insurance policies on their employees. Most recently, Wal-Mart has been in the national spotlight for organizing food drives for their employees who do not earn enough money to feed themselves.

Last Friday, the Eugene Springfield Solidarity Network (ESSN), local labor unions, and the Green Party joined in a nationwide effort to protest Black Friday at the Eugene Wal-Mart. Standing by the bus stop on West 11th, a small group of protestors held signs and waved at

cars that were driving by. A fellow GTFF steward who was there at the beginning told me that they were well received by passers-by who waved back and honked their horns in solidarity. I encountered something different as I arrived at the tail end of the protest. I walked into an argument with an elderly man who felt the need to chastise the remaining protestors by telling us that the “unions were probably paying us” to be there, and “to go get a job.”



As I watched the busses arrive and groups of people, risking injury as they attempted to make their way across four lanes of traffic to shop, I couldn't help but reflect on the sad state of labor. We should note that real wages in

the U.S. have been stagnant since the 1970s and that prices at Wal-Mart are commensurate to the low wages that too many of us earn. We should also remember that the majority of these items are produced at a cheaper cost in countries, like China and Mexico, where people labor under subpar working conditions, often at serious risk to their health. This shows that the only way to raise our own standard of living is through supporting actions that raise the living standard for all workers.

Joe Henry
VP External Relations
Anthropology



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!

Staying informed & connected is easier than ever!

- We want feedback! Tell us what you think about the newsletter at: 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: @GTFF3544
- Check out the website: www.GTFF3544.net

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*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 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!