

GTFF Bargaining Summary and Look Ahead – April 22nd, 2014

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The GTFF-University of Oregon Administration bargaining session on April 18 mostly consisted of 3 focused debates between the teams. While the debates were heated at times, they were hopefully helpful in making sure both sides understood the stance of the other. There was a little success in two articles being TA'd. Article 8, discrimination, was accepted by the Administration, giving new protections in a variety of areas including color, familial status, HIV antibody status, parental status and pregnancy status. The Administration offered a counter proposal addressing GTFF concerns on their drug testing policy. After some debate, both sides came to agreement on language that allows GTFs who fail a drug test to be referred to local counseling services that are covered by the GTFF Health and Welfare Trust in addition to the university health center. This allowed the article to be TA'd and allowed for the closing of another article opened by the administration.

Debate One: Cleaning

With the exception of one tiny line, both sides have come to an agreement on article 10 – health, safety and the work environment. The Administration has given some ground in accepting that kitchens are important resources for GTFs, internet connections are necessary for GTFs to perform some of their work duties, GTFs should not be forced to work in unsafe spaces, and agreeing that the University must provide alternative work spaces if a GTF's standard workspace is unsafe for any reason. While some of these are not completely what the GTFF was hoping to accomplish, we are happy to see the Administration recognizing our concerns and working with us to deal with them. The point of contention at this session came out of a counterproposal that the Administration made, that the GTFF largely accepted.

Early in the discussion on article 10, the Administration wanted to include language that makes it explicit that GTFs have a responsibility, as do all campus employees, to try to keep their work spaces clean. Both sides seem to be in agreement on what kinds of activities this is meant to entail, such things as cleaning dishes a GTF uses rather than leaving them in a communal sink or emptying overly full trash cans in a GTF's office. The GTFF accepted this proposal, but wished to include a note that cleaning duties done by a GTF should not be in violation of another section of the CBA (article 21) which outlines the time investment GTFs are expected to make as per the FTE time they are being paid. That is, the union wants to make sure the case does not arise that the new language proposed by the Administration results in GTFs being asked to invest an exorbitant amount of time cleaning things without being compensated for it.

The Administration's concern was that, by referencing the time investment portions of the CBA, they would open themselves to risks of new grievances. The Administration's lead negotiator explained that they view the time investment portion of article 21 as guidelines for what departments think a typical GTF would invest in an assignment. That is, if a department thinks it would take a typical GTF 88 hours a term to complete all the work associated with a position, a GTF assigned to that position would be paid at a 0.20 FTE. It is understood that GTFs have different abilities and it may take some GTFs more than 88 hours to complete the work for that position. For some GTFs, it may take less than 88 hours. The Administration was concerned with what they saw as a hard line drawn by the GTFF in time commitment for a position. They were concerned with a GTF filing a grievance over spending an extra 10 minutes removing trash from their offices over the course of a term. This was not the type of situation the GTFF was concerned with.

The GTFF offered two nice examples of where it saw a problem could arise. In a laboratory setting, cleaning equipment is often necessary on a weekly or even daily basis. With the new language that states GTFs have a responsibility to try to keep things clean, the GTFF does not want important laboratory cleaning to be "reclassified" and no longer be part of a GTF's paid workload. Doing so could result in a GTF investing another 20 or 30 hours a term cleaning without pay. The GTFF also suggested the situation where a GTF is already being over worked, but then asked to do another duty such as cleaning the department refrigerator. If the GTF is already considering a grievance over workload, adding another area over which the GTF can grieve is only going to harm the Administration. Including the short line that makes sure GTFs are not being asked to do extra cleaning duties that are not part of their typical FTE workload protects both GTFs and the Administration.

After some frustrated debate, it seemed that the Administration began to understand the GTFF's point of view. The GTFF and Administration were worried about too very different time scales. The GTFF already agreed to the language that GTFs should help keep their work spaces clean, but wants to make sure this language related to cleaning doesn't result in GTFs being exploited in the future. If departments see that GTFs now have a responsibility help keep things clean, the GTFF wants to make sure they are aware this is not a license to push cleaning responsibilities onto GTFs for free. The Administration stated that their language change was not an attempt to do so and the Administration's lead negotiator offered to work to find new language that reflected the desires of both sides on this issue.

Debate Two: Fraction Calculation Sheets

Both sides wished to discuss fraction calculation sheets at this session, and this debate was closely related to the

first. The GTFF bargaining team was joined by Evan Paul, who shared his story of a workload grievance with the School of Music and Dance. During the Fall term, Evan found himself investing much more time in his work than outlined by his FTE level. Evan attempted to find a way to restructure his time in to meet all of his responsibilities within the time he was being paid for, but was unable to find a way to do so. After receiving advice from his supervisor that amounted to little more than to just suck it up, Evan filed a grievance through the GTFF and ultimately received an increase in FTE for the extra time he invested working for the department. Having fraction calculation sheets could have helped Evan in a variety of ways. Before a term started he and his advisor would have had a conversation about the workload he was taking on and both would have agreed on a way to complete all of his work without Evan needing to do work he was not being compensated for. Requiring this conversation to happen before a term started can help normalize discussions of possible overwork between a GTF and their supervisor. This conversation and the agreement that resulted from it would have made an easy starting point for future conversations between Evan and his advisor. Additionally, the fraction calculation sheet proposal allows for a review process for GTF workloads that would help future GTFs avoid the types of issues that Evan encountered. The GTFF bargaining team thanks Evan for his willingness and courage to speak publicly about his situation.

The Administration had a few concerns about fraction calculation sheets they wished to discuss and the GTFF had a GTF who wished to speak to his view on the importance of fraction calculation sheets. The Administration had 2 main concerns on fraction calculation sheets

1. administrative overhead involved in implementing fraction calculation sheets, and
2. how fractional calculation sheets would work for GTFs who have research positions

On the first concern, the GTFF stated that fraction calculation sheets are already implemented in a number of departments around campus and don't result in a lot of overhead. Many forms are already collected and stored by staff for every department on campus, adding an extra form would not be a major obstacle. These forms are worked out between GTFs and their supervisors, so the GTF/supervisor would only need to leave signed forms with administrative staff of a department. On the second concern, a lot of ideas were offered for what a fraction calculation sheet for what a research position would look like. Everything from just a statement of the time commitment needed for a position to an outline of the research topic to be addressed to a more detailed list of various duties expected to be performed were offered by the GTFF. What finally ended up on the forms would depend on the discussion held at the beginning of a term between a GTF and their supervisor. The GTFF offered to bring sample fraction calculation sheets for the Administration to look at in order to get a better idea of what they might look like. The Administration was excited to see what these forms might look like in future sessions.

Debate Three: University Finances

The GTFF was hoping to see counters from the Administration on economic proposals, but that did not happen. When pressed on this topic, the administration basically pushed forward with their original proposals: **no paid leave, 10% cap to healthcare premium increases, no vision or major dental coverage, wage increases the barely keep up with inflation, and changes to graduate student fee contribution that are percentage based rather than fixed values.** The Administration stated that the funding situation for the University for the next academic year is still unknown and they can only offer funds that they know they can cover. The GTFF is receptive to this idea (although if this were entirely the case, how did the Administration complete bargaining with the other unions even earlier in the fiscal year), but believe that the Administration can afford more than they are offering.

The Administration pushed the point that the University is already budgeted to increase their expenses from the E&G Fund by \$21 million dollars for the 2015 fiscal year over the 2014 fiscal year. They, again, neglect to mention that for the 2014 fiscal year this fund turned a profit of \$27 million. So if nothing changes from now until when the budget is approved, the fund is only expected to turn a profit of \$6 million for the 2015 fiscal year, a clear indication that the University is in serious financial trouble. This, of course, ignores expected increases in out of state tuition, student fees and \$9.5 million dollars infused into the 2015 budget from the 2014 budget. This paints a much rosier financial picture for the University than the Administration is letting on, resulting in the University still turning a profit well in excess of 10 million dollars. If the Administration needs to find money, they can do it. For example, the GTFF bargaining team lead negotiator pointed out that the University Police Department recently had their budget doubled without any financial difficulty. If the Administration is really committed to something, they have the financial means to make it happen, regardless of which pool of money they need to raid to find it.

During the debate, the Administration revealed that a major goal of theirs on finances is to establish a cap on increased insurance premiums. It was stated that the Administration sees this as a first step towards making progress on the financial packages at the bargaining table. The Administration desire a 10% cap on University contributions – any premium increase over 10% must be picked up entirely by GTFs. The GTFF bargaining team resists a 10% cap for a number of reasons. The 10% cap is very low. From the trust report presented at the previous bargaining session, a 10% cap is just barely above the average premium increase over the past decade. Additionally, it was pointed out by GTFF bargaining team member and GTFF Health and Welfare Trust board member Steve McAlister that if the GTFF accepts this proposal, if there is a 20% increase in premiums, as seen at the beginning of this academic year, this would result in GTFs tripling the amount

of money they pay for health insurance. This would be a major financial burden to GTFs. Trying to save GTF members money by forcing the premium increase to stay under this very low cap is likely to result in major fluctuations in the benefits afforded to GTFs on a yearly basis. This is neither a good nor responsible way to manage a health plan.

The 1,500 University of Oregon GTFs have already been at work for 3 weeks without a contract. As the academic year wears on and we approach the summer, frustration and uncertainty is growing amongst those proud 1,500. We look to show the Administration how unhappy we are with their lack of desire to support their graduate students by massing at a **Rally outside Johnson Hall at noon on Friday, April 25th**. The Rally will be followed by a forum on another important issue to the GTFF, student debt, at 1pm in Allen 221, which we encourage you to attend. Then another bargaining session will be held at 3pm in Lillis 112. Your continued support of the GTFF's bargaining team is critical for them to finish their push to get you a contract that actually protects the interests of GTFs across campus.