

Graduate Teaching Fellows (GTFs) need Paid Leave

GTFs who are injured, come down with serious illnesses or have recently added a new child to their family have **no form** of paid leave. They are expected to return to work and find time in their already full professional and academic schedules to make up the work, often returning to work before suggested by their doctors.



German and Scandinavian Grad Student Eva Hoffman returned to her teaching duties before she felt well enough to do so after being hit by a car while walking. She was worried she could not make up the time if she continued to miss work to heal. GTFs who miss work due to illness or injury and cannot make up their time are in danger of pay cuts, loss of tuition waivers and loss of health insurance.

GTFs teach 1/3 of instructional hours at UO. A quality education can *only* be provided by instructors who are healthy - mentally and physically.

Some Universities which offer Paid Leave to their Graduate Employees

All University of California Schools
Penn State University
Rice University
Stanford University
University of Florida
University of Illinois
University of Iowa*
University of North Carolina*
University of Michigan*
University of Southern California
University of Virginia*
University of Washington*
University of Wisconsin
Washington State University

*UO's AAU Comparator Institutions (UC Santa Barbra is also in this group)

GTFs desire at least 2 weeks of paid medical and 2 weeks of paid parental leave. The estimated annual cost to UO is: **\$35,000**

UO's new proposed mission statement calls for *progressiveness* and *inclusion*. Discouraging current parents and those desiring to become parents from being graduate students is neither progressive nor inclusive.

A GTF recently wrote a guest piece for the Register Guard on the importance of paid leave. His letter is included in this packet.

University budget items that compare to \$35,000:
1/27 of a <i>Presidential Severance Package</i>
Half of the \$70,000 UO has paid an <i>outside law firm</i> to fight against GTF paid leave
Twice what UO paid for <i>engraving services</i> in the first half of FY14
1/10 of what the President's Office paid annually from FY09-FY11 for an <i>Autzen Stadium Skybox</i>
0.007% of the FY14 Education and General (E&G) Fund Revenue
0.3% of the \$11M <i>surplus</i> in the FY14 E&G Fund

This is an expense UO can afford.

President Coltrane agrees that paid parental leave is important for everyone:

"I think the underlying message is it's not a worker rights issue. It's more like this is the reality of family life today, and businesses that want to be successful will develop the policies needed to allow employees to balance family and work."

-Scott Coltrane in *Around the O*, June 9, 2014

GTFs (and the University) need a Living Wage

GTFs are college educated, highly skilled professionals teaching 1/3 of instructional hours at the University of Oregon.

The UO Financial Aid office estimates it costs a graduate student **\$1591.33/month** to attend the UO (see left). These are expenses associated with rent, utilities, academic supplies, groceries, healthcare, and other necessities.

GTFs working a maximum GTF appointment (0.5 FTE or 20 hours/week) are paid a minimum of \$1383/month, more than **\$200 below the cost of living**. 17% of GTFs (250 graduate students) are hired at the minimum rate but under 0.5 FTE. The average monthly pay of these GTFs is \$936/month - *not even enough for rent, utilities and food*.

2014–15 Graduate Cost of Attendance

	Residents
Tuition and Fees	\$15,552
Based on full-time enrollment (9–16 credits per term)	
On or Off-Campus Housing	\$10,932
Monthly costs: rent and utilities \$855; food \$360	
Books and Supplies	\$1,050
Cost varies depending on requirements for enrolled courses	
Personal Expenses	\$2,340
Cost varies depending on personal spending habits	
Estimated Total	\$29,874

GTF cost of living: \$14,322/ academic year
 Figures directly from UO's Financial Aid website

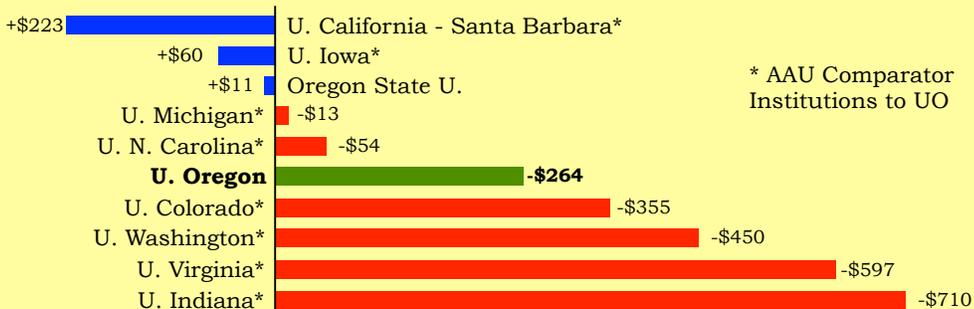
In Fall 2013, 56% of GTFs were paid a *gross wage* below the University's own estimated cost of living.

A living wage allows the University to attract the best students from around the world. UO regularly has top prospective graduate students turn down offers for better financial stability elsewhere.

This sentiment was shared by the Graduate Directors of the Departments of History and Philosophy at the bargaining table in March. It is *real* danger to the University's success.

GTFFF members have voted for an increase in *minimum* pay rates of **5.5%** for two years in order to close the wage-cost of living gap within 5 years. The Administration's proposal leaves the gap open for an extra 4 years - 4 years of UO falling further behind in graduate student success, quality of undergraduate education, and academic stature.

Monthly cost of living gap (at 0.5 FTE)



Affording GTFs a living wage would directly improve UO's competitiveness with its AAU comparator institutions, bringing in grads who might otherwise opt for better pay or more prestige elsewhere.

The Board of Trustees should have a seat at Bargaining

In the 36 year history of the GTFF, our collective bargaining agreement has always been an agreement between the State Board of Higher Education and the GTFF. All previous CBAs have explicitly listed the State Board of Higher Education as the ratifying body. It has *never* been an agreement with the office of the President and the GTFF.

No graduate student union we know of has their collective bargaining agreement ratified by their university's President.

Collective Bargaining Agreements reflect, very publicly, the values and priorities of the University. The Board of Trustees, the leaders of the University, should have a say in how they are implemented.

Ratifying bodies for other Graduate Union CBAs:	
University of Michigan	Board of Regents
California State University	Board of Trustees
University of California (all)	Board of Regents
University of Florida	Board of Trustees
University of Illinois - Urbana-Champaign	Board of Trustees
University of Iowa	Board of Regents
University of Kansas	Board of Regents
University of Illinois - Chicago	Board of Trustees
University of Rhode Island	Board of Governors
University of Massachusetts - Boston	Board of Trustees
Southern Illinois University	Board of Trustees
University of Massachusetts - Lowell	Board of Trustees
Florida State University	Board of Trustees

Ratification power does not require the Board to directly handle negotiations. The Board of Higher Education has always delegated negotiations to other parties (often University Presidents) but has retained the power to ratify the agreements, guaranteeing they are in line with the long-standing mission, goals and values of the University.



In May, the members of the GTFF, which represents 1500 graduate students, voted 98% in favor of striking without a contract that provides paid medical and parental leave and a wage that makes strides towards closing the between wages and the cost of living. Without swift action, these employees will soon return to campus without a contract that meets these needs.

The GTFF can be contacted through our President, Joe Henry, via president@gtff.net

These documents, along with references to information contained within, are available online at: <http://gtff3544.net/board-of-trustees-information/>

Further Information on the GTFF is available at our website <http://www.gtff.net>

UO's grad employees deserve parental leave

By Jon LaRochelle

Since November 2013, the Graduate Teaching Fellows Federation has been bargaining with the University of Oregon administration in order to receive a living wage, much-needed improvements to health care coverage and limited forms of paid leave.

In a sign of good faith, the GTFF Healthcare Trust went out to bid on GTF health care, obtaining the requested benefits while saving the University \$500,000 over the next contract cycle. In spite of this major accomplishment, the administration has called for mediation, refusing to meet GTFF demands on wages and digging in its heels on paid leave — especially paid parental leave. Mediation is scheduled for Thursday.

Paid parental leave is vital for improving graduate employee well-being, increasing the accessibility of graduate school and continuing the excellence of undergraduate education at the UO.

Graduate employees work up to 20 hours per week while taking a full course load and managing the increasing demands of professionalization and individual research. There is social pressure on grad students, and grad employees especially, to “put life on hold” while pursuing their studies. Grads are advised to “dissertate before they procreate.” GTFs are told, “Wait until you finish your degree. The timing isn't right to have a kid in graduate school.” Similarly, junior faculty are often expected to postpone having kids until after they gain tenure.

By this logic, no time is a good time. Young academics should not have to wait 10 to 15 years to finish a degree and get tenure before starting a family.

Consider, for instance, the teacher who teaches for five to 10 years before returning to school to get an advanced degree. Now in her late twenties or early thirties and a skilled professional, she should not have to change her plans to start or expand her family because her employer tells her to wait until she finishes her degree. The university should not be involved in family planning. A skilled professional who is elevating the quality of undergraduate education at the university has the right to start a family.

The expectation that grad employees will put their life on hold is unacceptable when grads teach about a third of the instruction hours at the university, and thus bring in about a third of tuition revenue. Grad employees make a substantial contribution to the quality of education at the UO. The stress of delaying life plans and the financial burden of starting a family without institutional support are unacceptable.

These conditions are especially problematic for women who want to have children by natural means. The risk of decreased pay and loss of health care during pregnancy, childbirth and the months following are deeply problematic. There may be no time during graduate school when women's health and finances are more at risk, yet this is the time when the administration insists on failing them.

The policy is equally important for male GTFs. As parenting expectations change, men are taking on greater responsibility for child rearing. By providing parental leave to both mothers and fathers, the university can encourage and enable sharing of parental responsibilities and ensure the success of all parents in the GTF community.

The administration recently announced an expansion of parental leave benefits for unrepresented faculty and officers of the administration. That policy mirrors the requested leave for GTFs. Now is the time to extend that same benefit to GTFs.

Scott Coltrane — interim president following President Michael Gottfriedson's resignation and head of the committee overseeing the administration's bargaining team — has refused to entertain any form of parental leave for GTFs. Ironically, in a recent visit to the White House as an expert on parental leave, he argued that paternity leave is important for both working parents and their employers. He said in a recent interview that “... businesses that want to be successful will develop the policies needed to allow employees to balance family and work.” In his new position, we hope that he will take his own advice.

In May, GTFs voted overwhelmingly to authorize a strike in the fall. It is our sincere hope that the administration will work with us to prevent such a strike. We are deeply invested in undergraduate education at UO, and would much rather teach our classes than walk the picket line this fall.

Jon LaRochelle is a Ph.D. student in the philosophy department at the University of Oregon and a member of the GTFF's bargaining team.