



October 14th, 2014

THE AGITATOR

Newsletter of the University of Oregon
GRADUATE TEACHING FELLOWS FEDERATION



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Mark Your Calendar!

Wednesday, October 15

GTF Appreciation Day
EMU Fishbowl, 11:00am

Friday, October 17

Emergency GMM
South Eugene High School, 5:30pm

Friday, October 31

Halloween

Sunday, November 2

Daylight Saving Time ends ("Fall Back")

Tuesday, November 4

Election Day

Saturday, November 15

Last day to choose a Primary Care Dentist
pacificsource.com

Saturday, November 22

CGE Brew-off
Corvallis, OR, 5:00pm



GTFs listen intently at the GTFF General Membership Meeting on October 3, 2014.

Welcome Back GTFs!



While GTFs are excited to begin a new academic year we are simultaneously burdened by the anxiety of working another month without having reached a deal with the administration regarding our collective bargaining agreement (CBA). We have been bargaining for nearly a year, and at next Friday's Emergency GMM members will be called upon to make a final decision on whether to accept the University's final proposal, or instead to call for an impasse and authorize our bargaining team to call for a strike.

On the first Friday of the term, members of the GTFF packed the meeting hall of the Northwest Youth Core to inform the membership, new GTFs in particular, of where contract negotiations left off. Since last year the GTFF bargaining team has been working hard with the University to

reach an agreement on a couple of issues that the Administration has continued to drag its feet on. One of these has been the issue of a wage increase that would allow some of our poorest members to keep up with what the University's Financial Aid office says is the cost of living for Eugene. While their bargaining team came close to meeting our proposal, they waited until summer to offer their counter proposal (knowing fully well that we would not have enough of our members around to ratify the contract). Meanwhile, the GTFF Health and Welfare Trust went out last year to bid on a new insurance plan, and were able to expand vision and major dental at no additional cost to the University. Essentially, the Administration affixed to their wage proposal the money that was saved by your Trust.

The second main ... cont'd pg. 2



Welcome back GTFs (continued)

from pg. 1 . . . sticking point has been the issue of paid leave, both for bereavement and parental. We feel that bereavement is crucial to provide a sense of security and safety to GTFs and their family members, who may become seriously ill and are not able to work. Last year our members shared testimonials at the bargaining table about having to work despite serious injury and/or doctors advising that they take extra time off to recover. We also feel strongly about parental leave and consider it an issue of gender equity. The burden of doing research and having a child discourages many female GTFs from pursuing professional track positions and starting families. Likewise parental leave allows for the partners of those with children to share in valuable household work. In an attempt to work with the University we limited our proposal on paid leave to only two weeks for the entire year. Averaged out, this would give us a maximum of 20 hrs, or 2 ½ work days.

These are not radical proposals. They are issues that our members have spent a great deal of time and effort fighting for over the past year. The University has argued that it takes a minimum of around \$1,500 per month to live in Eugene. For members working a maximum of 20 hrs at a .49 FTE, many of our members routinely come up short. We are simply proposing a small

percentage raise of 5.5% over the next two years to start closing the gap experienced by some of the worse off among us.

It was because of the hard work on the part of the bargaining team and contract campaign that we voted last spring with double the necessary quorum in favor (98%) for a strike authorization. At the Emergency GMM next Friday we will have to decide among ourselves whether we still feel these issues are worth fighting for and if the University's final proposal is enough.

As we prepare for the difficult conversation ahead of us we are strongly supported by our allies on campus and abroad. This summer the president of the Oregon Education Association, representing 42,000 employees in the state, wrote us a letter of support, which was echoed by the executive council of Faculty and Professionals at Portland Community College. On campus, the President of United Academics, which represents UO faculty, and the executive board of SEIU 085, representing classified staff on our campus, has written strong letters of

support for the GTFF. We have also been joined in solidarity by our ASUO president, Beatriz Gutierrez.

While we have strong external support going into next Friday's meeting the final decision must be made internally, through the hard work of critically thinking and discussing among ourselves what the appropriate path forward is. The political anthropologist Victor Turner once described all societies as consisting of "structures" that were institutional and geared toward hierarchy, versus "communitas" which encompassed the egalitarian and communal spirit. As the GTFF faces off with the structure of the UO administration, I have no doubt that whatever we decide on Friday will be the fullest enactment of our communitas, and that will move the structure of the UO in a positive direction for the whole University community.

*Joesh Henry
President - GTFF
Department of Anthropology*



The four Presidents. From left to right: Michael Dreiling (UA), Joe Henry (GTFF), Carla McNelley (SEIU), and Beatriz Gutierrez (ASUO) at the GTFF General Membership Meeting on October 3, 2014.



Senators Merkley and Warren On Rising Student Debt in the U.S.



On Monday, October 6th, I attended a rally held for Senator Jeff Merkley (D-OR), who was joined by Congressman Peter DeFazio (D-OR) and Senator Elizabeth Warren (D-MA). The event was held on campus in the EMU Ballroom, and the room was packed with a crowd ranging in age from infants to senior citizens by the time the rally began at 11:30 am. The overarching message of both Senator Merkley and Senator Warren's addresses was twofold: first, that no corporation should be above the law in the United States; and, second, that access to affordable higher education should be a right rather than a privilege granted only to an elite few.

Senator Warren's remarks on the state of education in the U.S. hit particularly close to home for me, as a student, a teacher, and a member of the GTFF. Throughout her address, she interwove personal anecdotes with more nationally-focused statistics and research. She spoke of how much more accessible a college education was 40 years ago, drawing on examples from her own life to personalize her point. She herself dropped out of college and got married at the age of nineteen. When she chose to return to college to become a teacher, she was able to do so without taking out excessive loans and without entering into significant debt. In 2014, this is nearly impossible to imagine. Today, it costs the average U.S. middle-class family 57% of one year's salary to send a child to one year of college.

In her concluding remarks, Senator Warren outlined the goals she and Senator Merkley share as they look forward toward November's elections and the coming year. Here are the highlights:

- to create more Pell Grants with lower interest rates;
- to continue their partnership focused on consumer agency work;
- to approve tougher regulations for Wall Street, and to end tax breaks for overseas jobs;
- to support investments in medical research and the building of infrastructure;
- to revive retirement support for seniors;
- to fight for equal pay for equal work, particularly in terms of gender equality;
- to endorse marriage equality for all U.S. citizens;
- to ensure that no one who works full-time lives in poverty; and
- to empower students to be able to attend college without facing unreasonable student loan debt.

"This [fight] is about the kind of country we build," Senator Warren declared at the end of her address. "We believe in education because it builds a future for all of us!"



With only 3 weeks left until November elections, I encourage you to register to vote or to update your voting address on file. For more information on voter registration on the UO campus, or if you'd like a voter registration volunteer to visit a class you teach, please contact me at political.education@gtff.net.

Erin Moberg

VP-Political Education

Department of Romance Languages

Wicked Easy Goat Cheese and Green Onion Scones

Ingredients:

- 2 c all-purpose flour
- 1T baking powder
- 1t salt
- 1/4 to 1/2 t cayenne pepper
- 4 oz goat cheese
- 3 green onions, thinly sliced
- 1 egg
- 3/4 c half-and-half

Preheat oven to 375F. Stir together flour, baking powder, salt, and cayenne in a large bowl. Using a pastry blender or fork (a fork works fine for me), blend in cheese until the mixture resembles coarse sand. Stir in the green onions.

In a small bowl, beat the egg until blended. Stir in the half-and-half, mixing well. Stir the wet ingredients into the flour mixture, mixing gently just until a soft dough forms. Divide the dough in half. On a lightly floured surface, shape each piece of dough into a ball. Flatten to a 3/4-inch thick round. Place on a baking sheet. Cut each round into six or eight wedges. Separate the wedges about 1/4-inch, enough to allow them to rise while still remaining in one round.

Bake about 25 minutes or until gentry browned. Do not let the bottoms burn. Cool scones for about 10 minutes and serve warm. Makes 12 to 16.

Note: These scones can be served by themselves, or with butter. They can also be served with tomatoes, cold cuts, tempeh, and spread with mustard. I have in the past substituted two medium yellow onions for the green ones. It's more labor intensive, but the result is a thicker, tangy, more "onion-ey" scone. In a pinch milk can be substituted for the half-and-half.

Parenting as a GTF

This letter is part of a GTFF effort to increase visibility of GTF parents and the unique challenges of balancing a family with work and academics.

I began graduate school when my first-born was five months old. I had no idea what to expect when I accepted my offer of admission, as my child was not yet born. I hoped for the best. I can say without a doubt that being a graduate student parent was a challenge. I was offered a GTF position my second term in the program. Gaining as much teaching experience as I did over the 8 years that I was a graduate student teacher will hopefully prove beneficial for my job prospects. However, being a parent will not. Academia continues to be one of the most challenging places to be a parent. Even such, I raised three children while pursuing my PhD. My second was planned out to coincide with summer term and the end of my Master's program. Because I did not have the benefit of maternity leave, this was the choice I made, knowing I wanted another child. If I would have

had other options, I may have made different choices. This is a benefit that many others have in their careers. Granted, I was not pursuing a career as a graduate student, but I taught many essential courses and would have liked to have benefits available to me that reflected my usefulness to the university. Luckily my (unplanned) third child followed suit and was born at the end of spring term. This year was especially tricky, as I was conducting my doctoral research AND my department needed me to teach as instructor of record. I actually had a student send a letter to the president of the university thanking him for "allowing" me to work while pregnant because of how grateful she was for my teaching. I thank my department, but more than anything, I thank my fellow graduate students who were assisting me in the course for being willing to cover the grading that fell after the baby was born.

*Angela Montague
UO Adjunct Faculty
PhD at UofO June, 2014
Department of Anthropology*

GTF Parents and Kids at the Science Factory



We had an amazing turnout at the the Science Factory on October 11th, hosted by the GTFF Parent's Caucus! There were about 60 people there--20 GTF parents along with their partners and children.

After a morning of hands on science, everyone crowded into a side room for snacks, pizza and lemonade (and coffee for the parents!). Over lunch there was a brief update on bargaining and some brainstorming on how to move forward with the Parent's Caucus.

A couple of things came out of this fun and exciting event. First, we will try to hold at least one Parent's Caucus event per term, so that families have a chance to hang out together and GTF parents have an opportunity stay up to date on union activities. Second, we want to make sure that parents know that subsidies are available for childcare during GMMs. So, if you're a parent and need child care to make it to a GMM, be sure to check in with Amber at the GTFF office or one of your e-board members to make sure that happens.

Thanks to everyone who came and helped make this event happen! Be on the lookout for for more Parent's Caucus activity in the future.

*Jon LaRochelle
VP External Relations
Department of
Philosophy*




A future GTF enjoys the visit to the Science Factory.



GTF Parents and their families enjoy lunch while visiting the Science Factory.

The Challenges Faced by Pregnant GTFs

The following letter was submitted anonymously to the Agitator. We were moved by her courage to share her story.

fter being recruited by a professor with an NSF grant, I started my PhD program at the University of Oregon in 2009. The NSF research dovetailed exactly with my research, and I was initially supposed to spend two summers in the field with my advisor and be funded on the grant for three years. In the summer of 2010 I spent two months living with my advisor and her family and I occasionally looked after her children while she was conducting interviews. When fall quarter commenced, she asked me if I would serve as an emergency contact for her children's daycare, so that I would be authorized to pick up her children if she was unavailable and her husband was traveling. In this way, our personal and professional relationships were very intertwined and I was OK with that.

One year later, in October 2010, I discovered I was pregnant. My husband was already committed to working a job that would require him to be out of state during winter quarter. When I told my advisor that I was pregnant, and asked if she would be willing to keep me as a research assistant on the grant while not in residence, she refused. I offered to travel back to Eugene throughout the winter quarter, but felt that it was essential that my husband and I were together while I was pregnant. At this point, the majority of my work on the NSF project was transcribing interviews and preparing for the next summer's field work. After

many conversations between my advisor and I about keeping me on winter quarter, her final justification for not keeping me on the grant was that she valued face to face interaction and me being away for the majority of winter quarter was unacceptable. Essentially I was forced to take a leave of absence without pay and health insurance for the quarter. She told me that while it was painful for her to put me in that position, she felt she needed to separate her personal feelings from her professional feelings. Several other professors in my department were disturbed by the situation and, though supportive of me, they were not able to do anything about it. When I returned to Eugene spring quarter, I was again placed on the NSF grant at the request of my advisor.

This experience very nearly caused me to drop out of UO. The support of other professors and particularly fellow graduate students was really the only thing that stopped me from doing so. As a graduate student that was well respected by both the department and my advisor (and clearly doing a good job on the research given that I returned to the project spring quarter), I should never have been put in a situation that compromised my standing and ability to pursue my PhD, not to mention my health and safety during my pregnancy. Is that the type of atmosphere we want to cultivate for graduate students at the UO? Is that the type of message we want to send to soon to be professors who already feel pressure to choose between career and motherhood?



Why Fight for Paid Leave?



I have yet to meet the GTF who thinks new parents, the ill, or the bereaved shouldn't have paid leave. This was demonstrated by that fact that in Spring 2014 we decided to stand by our principles and make two weeks paid leave a part of our bottom line. I was proud of our Union – there we were, a collection of academics from a diverse set of disciplines and countries uniting behind a common cause. Now we find ourselves again at a similar fork in the road and we once again need to present a strong, united front. If we can again strengthen our resolve to stand by our principles, we can gain the right to paid leave and will all be better off for it.

I'm not arguing that we should on emotion alone rush into a position which may lead us to strike. But after careful consideration, there are three reasons why I believe we should fight for paid leave.

1. **Negotiating Power:** The University administration has actually made very little movement, and not standing by our bottom line hurts our ability to make credible commitments in the future. Increases in dental and vision coverage were due to our healthcare trust being successful in renegotiating our healthcare contract with the insurance company. The University has barely moved its positions, while our side has made significant movement. The costs of providing paid leave are tiny (around \$35,000 / yr). Furthermore, in Spring 2014 we voted to authorize a strike if our bottom line which included paid leave was not met. If we are not able to follow through ... *cont'd pg. 8*



Know your leadership

Erin Moberg

VP Political Education

My name is Erin Moberg, and I'm a PhD Candidate and fifth-year GTF in the Department of Romance Languages. I teach language and literature classes (in Spanish), and my dissertation centers on representations of gender and sexuality in Chicano theater and performance in the U.S.

As VP of Political Education, my responsibilities include (1) encouraging members to run for office or serve on committees of State/National affiliated unions; (2) chairing the COPE (Committee On Political Education); (3) informing members of relevant political issues and events; (4) and communicating with and lobbying for pro-union officials who support the GTFF's objectives and members.

With November elections fast-approaching, I've been working with the Oregon Students Organization to encourage GTFs (and their students) to register to vote. I've also generated a list of GTFs interested in participating in this year's COPE. If you'd like to get involved or learn more, please send me an email (political.education@gtff.net) so that I can invite you to our first, informal meeting to take place during Week 4. Finally, I'd love to collaborate with the GTFF caucuses active this year, in order to educate our members on the issues and causes that affect and matter most to our diverse membership.

I look forward to getting to know and working with many of you in the coming year!

Shawna Meechan

VP Grievances

Hello! I'm Shawna Meechan (pronounced Me-In), a third year doctoral student in Political Science and your VP of Grievances. I am here to help you out with any problems you might encounter with your GTF whether they be related to getting paid late, being overworked, being asked to perform duties for your supervisor not related to the GTFF, or any other issues that may arise. I will help you to understand your rights under our contract, explain your options for resolving any issues, and provide any support you need. I also work closely with your stewards to help ensure that individual problems are not also systemic ones within your department. Please always feel free to contact me with any questions you have or just to chat at grievances@gtff.net.

Jon LaRochelle

VP External Relations

Hello everyone! I'm Jon LaRochelle, your interim VP of External Relations. I'm a third year PhD student in the Philosophy Department, and I've been a member of the bargaining team over the last year, focusing especially on our Paid Leave proposal.

As your VP of External Relations, my primary responsibility is to cultivate and maintain relationships with other labor organizations, university and community groups, ensuring that we are not working alone, but are part of a network of folks dedicated to improved working conditions, higher education and other related issues of

Brianna Bertoglio

VP Operations

I am a second year PhD student in Critical and Sociocultural Studies of Education, and I study STEM education particularly as it relates to elementary schools teacher preparation. In my role as VP of Operations I have three main responsibilities:

1. I manage the paid staff members and do things to improve the office like hire cleaners. Recently fellow officers and I thoroughly cleaned out and rearranged the office and I purchased an industrial coffee maker.
2. I organize events like GMMs and end of term parties.
3. I sit on the GTFF Health and Welfare Trust. The Trust is highly coveted in the world of academic unions—it allows us to make decisions based on the needs of the membership.


social justice and democratic life.

One of my major projects this year is to promote graduate employee participation in shared governance on the University of Oregon campus. In the early activity of the new Board of Trustees, we have seen GTF concerns slip through the cracks. I will be working to ensure that our voice is heard, and that we—along with faculty, staff and students—can help guide the UO in a positive direction in the coming years.


I'm looking forward to a great year of union work! Feel free to get in touch with my for any reason. I'm more than happy to be a resource for any and all GTF needs.

Know your leadership


Krista Abrahamson
Treasurer

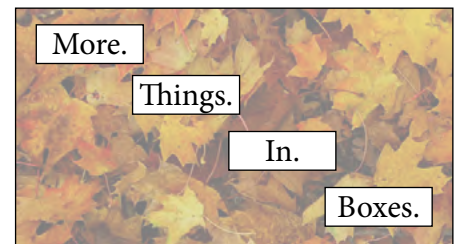
rista Abrahamson has been a grad student since 2009 and a GTFF since 2010 and is in the beginning stages of a dissertation in Music Theory. As the Treasurer, her job is to make sure the GTFF spends your dues money efficiently and effectively. Currently, the budget is running smoothly and saving money for a rainy day if the political climate should change drastically. Recent improvements include more money for caucuses to help encourage various communities, office upgrades and new computers for our hard-working staff, and more support for bargaining efforts including the funding of department meetings. If you ever have any questions about money, reimbursements, or dragons, let me know!

Jonathan Turbin
VP Organizing

s Vice President of Organizing, my primary responsibility is to facilitate E-Council meetings and help foster connections among various stewards. I hope to do so in a way which gives everyone an equal voice in how our union is run, particularly those who have not typically been well-represented in our union (such as people of color, parents, and those with physical or learning differences). The Contract Campaign Committee is also a high Organizing priority, this term in particular. Under our previous Organizing VP, Matt Hannah, our Contract Campaign Committee emerged as a dynamic grassroots organization. I hope to continue this grassroots campaign in order to have as much member turnout at GMMs, votes, and other events. Increased turnout is vital as we contemplate our next action regarding the administration.

Richard Wagner
VP Member Communications

s your VP of Member Communications, I have just one goal for this year: taking The Agitator from being the 2nd best laid out AFT newsletter to being the best nationally. I'm coming for you Local 2373! How do I plan to do it?




Seriously. Look up their newsletters. So many boxes.

I also hope to streamline email communication (did you like those appendices?), add new sections to our website for caucuses, make some sweet posters and handouts, update general GTFF literature and bring more of my fellow natural science graduate students closer to the union.

I plan on doing all of this while keeping my tongue planted firmly in my cheek.

Joseph Henry
President

s president it is my responsibility to chair the weekly executive board (e-board) meetings comprised of all of our officers. You may also recognize me from the role I place in chairing our General Membership Meetings (GMMs). I also chair the GTFF Health and Welfare Trust which is a membership run health plan. Aside from calling meetings to order and helping to set the agenda, the chair's role is to help facilitate meaningful discussion and, when necessary, move the body towards

making a decision. I also serve as an executive officer on the Lane County Labor Council, which represents all labor unions in Lane County that are affiliated with the AFL-CIO.

**Happy
Halloween
from the Agitator!**





Reasons to Fight for Paid Leave

from pg. 4 . . . on our commitment to strike, it makes future action less credible.

2. Our Principles: Paid leave is a right afforded to individuals in every other industrialized nation. If not now, when will we get this right? If not us, who will get it for us? It is unlikely that any Federal or State action will provide the right of paid leave to part-time workers in the foreseeable future. It is absolutely shameful that the University does not provide paid leave, and as an institution does not reflect our beliefs. It is wrong to oblige the sick, grieving and newly parented to work. As individuals with a stake in the university, it is our responsibility to speak up.

3. Our Interest: Paid leave serves as insurance in case the unforeseeable occurs and helps ensure we can continue to produce high quality work. No one plans on being

injured or having family pass away. Having paid leave is an insurance policy we all benefit from when we face the most difficult times – putting forth a bit of effort benefits all of us. Furthermore, many of us suffer financial hardship and cannot take unpaid leave. As GTFFs it is unfair to the students we teach to have to perform work when we are at our worst. Undoubtedly the quality of our work suffers, and the university should not make us choose between receiving a paycheck and taking necessary time off.

I'm not suggesting we strike indefinitely for this right, and put our academic futures in jeopardy. In fact, I hope not to strike. The cost

of providing paid leave would be so small and our position so justifiable, that the university pushing us to a strike would be outrageous. However if we must, let us plan to strike for a length of time that it costs the university more than providing us paid leave for two years. This wouldn't require a long

commitment (how long until the university loses \$70,000?), would limit our exposure and would send a strong message.

Thibaud Henin
Ph.D.
Candidate
Steward for
Political Science

“Paid leave is a right afforded to individuals in every other industrialized nation. If not now, when will we get this right? If not us, who will get it for us?”

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! Submissions of all sorts are welcome.

If you do submit, we ask that you submit up to 300 words in a Word document with standard formatting.

Staying informed & connected is easier than ever!

- Come to membership meetings and social events! (see calendar on pg. 1 for times and locations)
- Join the Facebook group: GTFF3544
- Follow on Twitter: @GTFF_3544
- Check out the website: www.gtff3544.net



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 1500 Graduate Teaching Fellows and Research Assistants at the University of Oregon in Eugene, Oregon.