




# Graduate Teaching Fellows Federation

AFT/AFL-CIO, Local 3544

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November 11, 2014

VIA ELECTRONIC MAIL 

Jeffery J. Matthews  
Harrang Long Gary Rudnick P.C.  
  
Eugene, OR 97401

Re: GTFF Local 3544 and University of Oregon  
Administration's Strike FAQ

Dear Jeff,

The Graduate Teaching Fellows Federation, Local 3544 hereby demands that University of Oregon cease and desist from unlawfully coercing graduate teaching fellows (GTFs) from exercising their statutory rights under the Public Employees Collective Bargaining Act (PECBA). Threats that international students could lose their visa status for striking have intimidated GTFs from exercising their right to strike.

On October 24, 2014, the University posted "Engaging with Graduate Students: FAQs for Faculty/Staff Supervisors of GTFs" to their website. The list of FAQs includes the following: "Q11. How does a strike affect international GTFs? International GTFs should be aware that their work visa status may be impacted depending on the duration of a strike. Individuals should become informed about their own situations by consulting the appropriate authority." International students became aware of the statement soon-after it was posted and feel the University is threatening deportation should they engage in organizing, striking, and/or other union activities.

Employer interference with, restraint or coercion of employees in the exercise of protected activities is an unfair labor practice under ORS 143.672(1)(a). If the natural and probable effect of an employer's actions would tend to chill protected activity, that action constitutes a violation of the PECBA. *AFSCME Council 75 v. Umatilla County*, 23 PECBR 108 (2009). Protected activity includes the right to plan and participate in a lawful strike. *ONA v. OHSU*, 19 PECBR 590, 598, *remedy order*, 19 PECBR 684, *ruling on request for recons.*, 19 PECBR 696 (2002).

No matter their country of origin, all GTFs are public employees protected under the law to engage in organizing and strike activities. The University's statement

threatens and intimidates international students and has a chilling effect on their exercise of concerted action. The actual result is that some international students feel they must choose between remaining silent and keeping their student visa or exercising their rights and risking deportation. This is exactly the type of coercion the legislature sought to prevent when it enacted the PECBA.

The University's actions constitute an unfair labor practice in violation of the PECBA. If the University does not cease and desist from intimidating GTFs and issue a public retraction of the above noted post, the GTFF is prepared to file an unfair labor practice charge.

If you would like to discuss these issues please do not hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Amber Cooper".

**Amber Cooper**  
**Graduate Teaching Fellows Federation**