

2017-18
GTFF
Steward's Handbook



Graduate Teaching Fellows Federation
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Stewards: The backbone of the union!

Congratulations for being chosen as a GTFF union steward! Stewards are the backbone of GTFF. They are the link between the membership and all the union's functions and they are our members' first line of defense. As a steward, you make our collective bargaining agreement meaningful by helping your co-workers to implement and defend their rights on a daily basis. You are in the best position to understand your fellow GEs' concerns and priorities, organize them to take action, and communicate their priorities to other union leaders. You are also in the best position to educate co-workers about the union and its goals.

Stewards are elected members of the GTFF Executive Council and have a key voice in decisions affecting members and the union's day-to-day operations.

Stewards build the union through organizing, communicating, educating, solving problems and being a leader. **Strong, active stewards are the key to a strong union.**



As a GTFF union steward, you are a(n):

Organizer

Your most important job as a steward is to build a united, active membership in your department. GTFF's ability to defend and improve conditions will always depend on the collective power of its membership.

- **Welcome new employees and ask all GEs to join the union.**
- **Plan conversations with existing non-members to recruit them to join.**
- **Seek out ways to involve members in the activities of the union** such as solving workplace problems, supporting negotiations, joining a caucus or committee, or participating in political actions and social events.

Communicator and Educator

The most effective form of communication is a one-on-one workplace discussion. Flyers, newsletters, emails, and meetings are all important, but the best way to inform members, get feedback, and recruit participation is through face-to-face conversations.

- **Listen and learn** about fellow GEs' problems and concerns.
- **Educate co-workers about the union**, their rights under the contract, bargaining goals, or political efforts that relate to their particular interests.
- **Always challenge members to help win improvements**—be specific in your requests for involvement.

Problem-Solver

Stewards should have a range of strategies for solving problems. Some workplace problems are grievances, some aren't. Some only affect one person, others affect a group. Different problems require one or more of the following:

- **Mobilizing members to solve problems as a group.** When issues affect large numbers of workers and have provoked strong worker reactions, they may be best handled through a group action such as a petition, a "march on the department head", or a button-wearing day.
- **Holding informal discussions with management**, the steward and affected workers.
- **Using the grievance procedure** to address violations of the contract.

Leader

Action speak louder than words — a steward sets the example as a good worker, a good union member, and a unifying advocate for workers' rights.

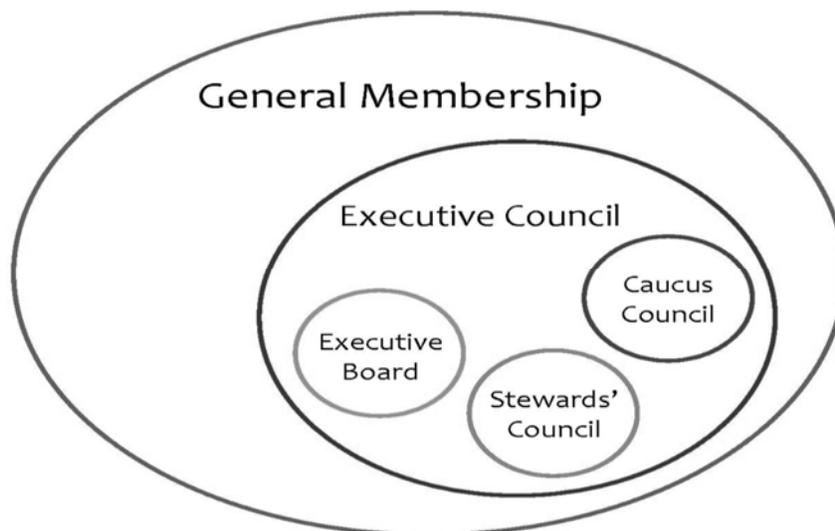
- **Build unity:** find common ground on problems that threaten to divide your co-workers.
- **Be an active participant in union decisions and actions:** attend General Membership and Executive Council meetings, contract campaigns, new employee orientations, social events, rallies, conventions, political action, and organizing efforts... and **always bring a co-worker along!**



GTFF Structure

The Members Run This Union!

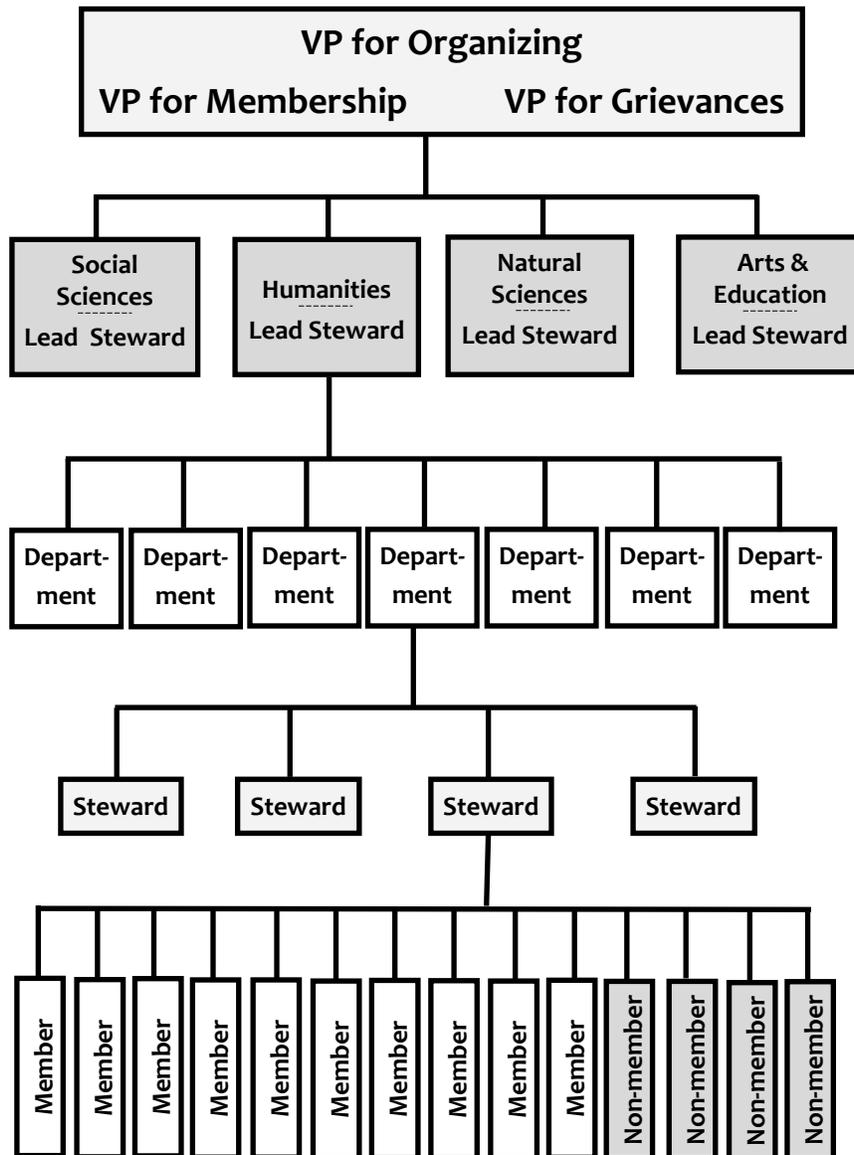
GTFF is a **democratic, rank-and-file union** meaning we, the graduate employees, run the union and make all the decisions. Here is how our union is structured.



- **General Membership** - the membership is the highest decision making body in the union. There is a General Membership Meeting each term.
- **Department Stewards** - representatives from each department (1 for every 10 full members)
- **Executive Council** - the stewards and executive board meet monthly to make decisions, stay informed about the union's operation and hear about the needs of its members
- **Executive Board** - a president, treasurer and eight vice-presidents who meet weekly to manage the running of the union
- **GTFF Caucuses** - GTFF is a diverse organization. Members with similar interests, concerns or backgrounds can take part in a variety of caucuses. Supported by GTFF funding, the caucuses hold meetings and events to support their members, fund-raise and volunteer for issues they believe in, work together, and socialize. (See back cover for caucuses).
- **Staff** - GTFF has two full-time staff members. Michael Marchman is our Staff Organizer. Glenn Morris is our Benefits Administrator. Michael and Glenn are here to help the GTFF and are a resource for all members.

The Stewards' Council

This year (2017-18) GTFF is implementing a new Stewards' Council structure to make our organizing efforts more efficient and effective. Here's the new structure.



GTFF 3544

The Members Run This Union!

Who are we?

GTFF is the labor union representing over 1400 graduate employees (GEs) who teach approximately 1/3 of courses and provide valuable research at the University of Oregon. GTFF was chartered by the American Federation of Teachers in 1976, making it one of the oldest graduate employee unions in the country. **GTFF is an affiliate of the American Federation of Teachers, Local 3544, AFL-CIO.**

Our Mission:

“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.”

Our goals:

1. improve the quality of life for GEs in areas of salary, workload and working conditions through collective bargaining and contract enforcement.
2. fight for an adequately-funded educational system, accessible to all.
3. help create a revitalized, socially-aware union movement, which is a positive force for change for the entire community.

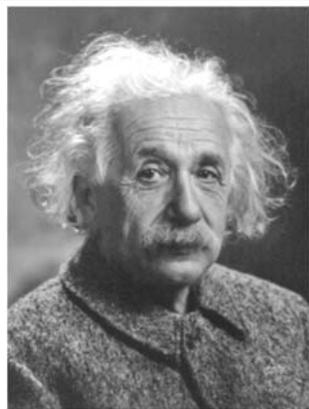


GTFF Membership

GTFF is run by the members. This means that the members shape the unions' priorities and make all the union's decisions.

Only FULL MEMBERS have the right to attend membership meetings, run for office, participate in committees and caucuses, vote in union elections, set union priorities, shape the union's budget, vote in contract ratification, decide whether or not to go on strike.

Full members also have access to free printing and copying in the GTFF office, get free union swag—such as t-shirts and hats. All members of GTFF are also members of the American Federation of Teachers and have access to AFT National member benefits, including discounts on hotels, car rentals, movie tickets, cell phone plans, and more.



“I consider it important, indeed urgently necessary, for intellectual workers to get together, both to protect their own economic status and, also, generally speaking, to secure their influence in the political field.”

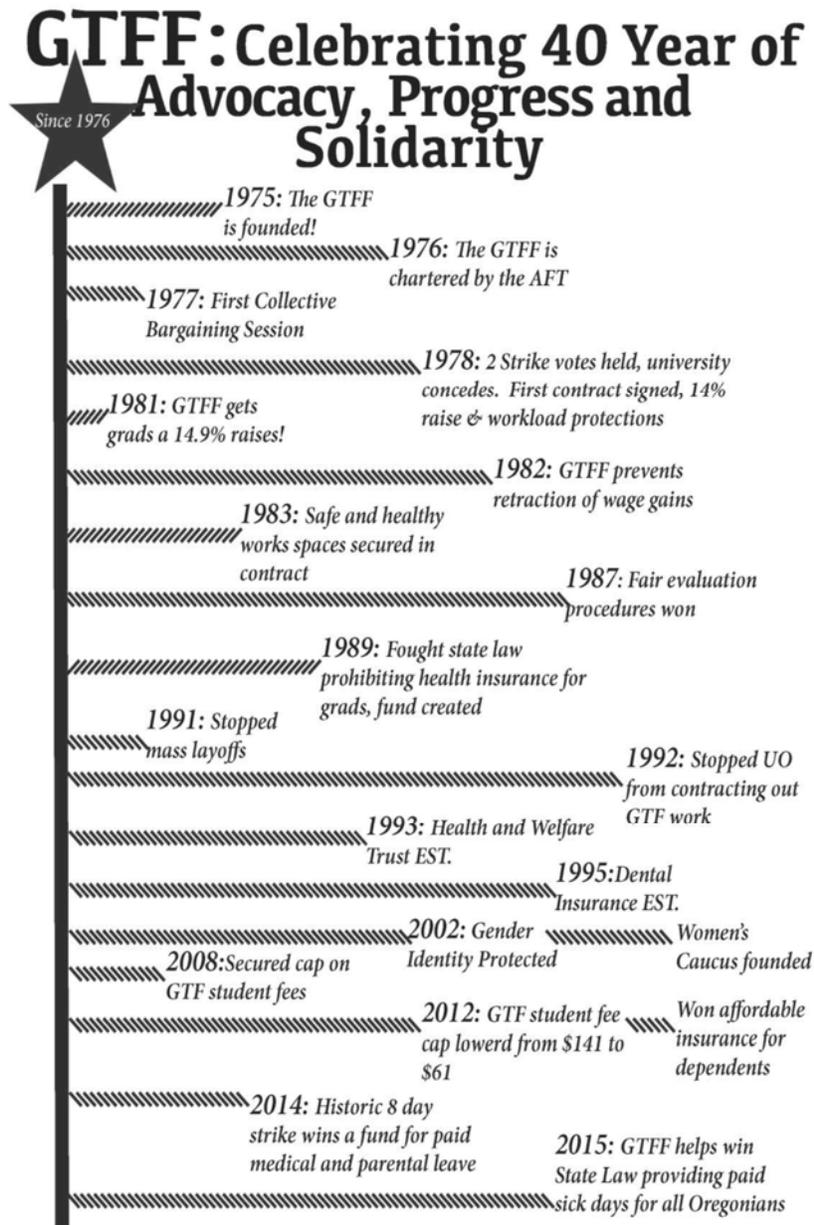
- Albert Einstein, Charter Member
AFT Local 552, Princeton University

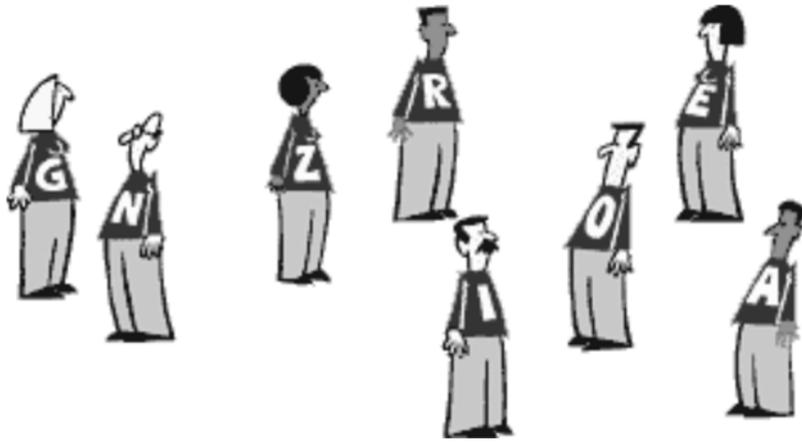
Joining as a full member

All Graduate Employees (GEs) at UO pay fair-share fees to the GTFF. These fees keep the union running—representing GEs, paying our bills and our staff. Fair-share members pay 1.79% of their salary to support the work of the GTFF but have no rights in the union. That is why **over 70% of GEs choose to become full members of the union**. Full members pay dues of 2.1%, this is only an additional **\$3.10** for each \$1000 you earn compared to fair-share dues—a small price to pay for the benefits of being a full member.

It is your right to be a member of the GTFF. There are no legal restrictions to join your union. This true for domestic as well as and international students.

History of GTFF





Stewards' Rights



As a steward, you are granted special rights and privileges under the law and our contract.

The Equity Rule (This is a BFD!)

Under state and federal law, stewards and union officers have a protected legal status. This means that when engaged in representational activities, stewards and union officers are not subordinate employees but are considered to be equals with management.

The No-Reprisal Rule

A steward cannot be punished or threatened with punishment for participation in grievance activities or because management considers grievances to be overly frequent, petty or offensively written. Nor may management threaten a steward with adverse consequences for advancing a grievance to a higher step.

The Equal Standard Rule

Stewards cannot be held to a higher performance standard than other employees. In cases involving discrimination against stewards, the union can file a contract grievance as well as an unfair labor practice charge.

Stewards also have the right to:

- Aggressively enforce and police the contract
- Vigorously represent workers in the grievance process
- Initiate, solicit, file and process grievances
- Investigate grievances or potential grievance
- Request information and interview witnesses
- Represent workers in disciplinary meetings
- Take notes

Remember, you are never alone! The union has experienced stewards, officers and staff to support you in your important work as a steward.

Your Legal Rights to Organize

As public employees, UO GEs are protected under the Oregon Public Employee Collective Bargaining Act (PECBA). PECBA gives us the right to organize and bargain collectively.

PECBA also gives employees and union members the right to :

- Talk union in the workplace.
- Sign up new members at work.
- Distribute and read union literature at work (during non-work hours).
- Engage in “concerted activities” (work actions)

Our collective bargaining agreement, gives us the right to:

- Use university facilities for meetings.
- Post material on the union bulletin board in your departmental.
- Paid time off to represent the union at official functions.

Don't be afraid to exercise your rights as a steward to talk to coworkers about the union, organize workplace actions, defend your coworkers, and enforce the contract. Not only are these your legal rights, but you are never alone. That is the power of a union!



*“As part of your long-term financial planning...
I'd recommend a carefully thought out union organizing drive.”*

Organize! Educate! Agitate!

Organizing – bringing new members into the union and activating them – is essential to building the union’s strength and effectiveness in representing members. As a steward, you should ALWAYS be organizing!

Why do we need to organize?

The strength of our union depends on a large, informed and active membership base. A large union provides more leverage at the bargaining table and an informed and active union ensures that workplace rights will be upheld and that we can successfully push for changes that we want to see on campus.

Organizing is a lot like cooking: there are time-tested recipes that anyone can learn, methods that work and others that don’t. Your results may not be perfect every time – we’re dealing with human beings here – but you will do better if you learn from the successes and mistakes of organizers who have gone before you. This section is designed to offer some help.

Portrait of a Well-organized Workplace

The union is visible on a daily basis to both members and management.

1. Stewards or union volunteers make regular walk-throughs and have relationships with all members, not just elected leaders.
2. There is a steward or union volunteer in every department. The list is written down, regularly updated, and widely available.
3. Membership meetings are regular and well-attended.
4. A union representative attends every new-employee orientation.
5. There is regular communication through newsletters, flyers, up-to-date bulletin boards, and a member-to-member network.

We defend our standards and enforce our contract.

6. Members mobilize and use collective action to solve everyday problems. Grievances are not our primary line of defense.
7. Contracts are widely available and promptly distributed, both electronically and in print.
8. Stewards are trained and empowered to resolve issues at the lowest level, including filing grievances.
9. Managers do not act unilaterally or abusively, because they know they will get blowback.

Members own the union.

10. Members feel that their union is strong and can resolve problems.
11. Through stewards, members have immediate access to resources to solve problems, without having to track down a union rep.
12. Members participate in union-wide programs and campaigns.
13. Members are glad they have a union and are proud to belong. Social events are well-attended.

The Organizer's Attitude

1. Organizing is an attitude

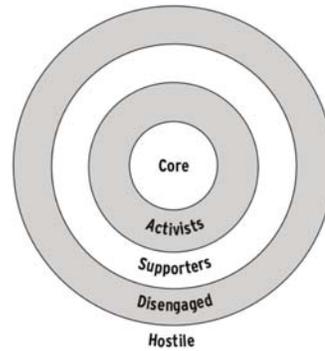
Organizing is first of all an attitude – the attitude that you and your coworkers can do something to make things better. It's the attitude that action is better than complaining.

2. Apathy isn't real

It might sound at times like your coworkers are apathetic or just don't care but that's never really true. Everyone cares about something at work. When people don't act, it's more likely that they're scared to act or they feel powerless. Organizing is the antidote to fear and powerlessness.

3. Aim for the bullseye

From the organizer's point of view, it is useful to think of your fellow members distributed on a dartboard.



4. You're different and that's ok

Most of your coworkers won't become super dedicated union volunteers. That's ok. Don't send the message that to be involved in the union, people have to be like you. Help everyone to find their own level of involvement.

5. Don't be a hero

Guard against the impulse to put yourself at the center of everything. A good organizer taps into the righteous anger in others, motivates them to take collective action, and gives them the experience of bringing about change together.

6. There are no shortcuts

You can't wave a magic wand and instantly get power on the job. That only comes by doing the patient work of building relationships, identifying issues, and organizing campaigns. Avoid solving problems by yourself—get coworkers to come along—, always relying on the same leaders, shutting down bad ideas, or using Facebook to “invite” people to a union activity rather than having a personal conversation.

7. It's all about power

In any workplace, the underlying issue is power: who has it, who wants it, and how it's used. Yet many people are uncomfortable with power. People sometimes shy away from the conflict and unpleasantness it implies.

Qualities of an Effective Organizer

- Effective organizers are **good at their jobs and respected** by their coworkers.
- They have the **trust of their co-workers**. Their opinions carry weight. When they offer advice, people listen.
- The best organizers are motivated by a **strong sense of justice** and clear principles.
- They're **responsible, honest, and compassionate**.
- They're confident, even **courageous**.
- Organizers are **good listeners**. They know you don't have to be the most vocal to have the biggest impact.
- They **bring people together**, welcoming new co-workers and looking for ways to involve every member.
- They **move people to collective action**. They don't solve problems alone—they equip their co-workers to solve problems together.
- They put the **interests of the group first**.
- They don't operate as lone rangers. They **respect group decisions**.
- Organizers are **knowledgeable about their contract**, but not afraid to admit when they don't know the answer.
- They can stay **cool under pressure** and handle stress and conflict.
- They're willing to **stand up to management** – and they can inspire others to stand up for themselves as well.



Approaching New GEs

Q: When should you approach new hires?

A: Immediately and often!

Behavioral science research finds that people's earliest impressions and experience with an organization are the most influential.

One-on-one engagement is the core of all organizing and is the basis for how movements grow. There are no shortcuts for building the real, trusting relationships that we need to be a strong union.

One-on-one discussions should happen early and often. Ideally, a union steward should greet a new employee during their first day on the job. Overall, research demonstrates that the more **frequently** new employees have positive discussions with union activists, the greater their commitment to the union.



Studies show that **quality union orientation** programs and **frequent one-on-one discussions** with union members each have a measurable impact on increasing new employees' commitment to the union. Even if you've reached new hires in orientation, it is essential to follow up in person

New Employee Orientations

Stewards are usually involved in new employee orientations in their departments. When presenting at orientations, you want to provide useful information, but don't just lecture!

Ask questions and leave time for new employees to ask questions.

- Who are we? Introduce GTFF
- Union vs non-union graduate employee workplaces
- Contract highlights (salary increases, health care, tuition waivers)
- Why become a full member?
- Insurance basics
- Questions? Contact information.

One-On-One Conversations

There are 5 basic steps in an effective organizing conversation.

1. Introduction

Tell the person why you are talking to them. Be friendly and direct. *Don't ask if it's OK to talk.* If they can't talk, they'll say so. Say something like:

"Hi, I'm ____. I'm a GE in ____ Dept and a member of GTFF. I'm talking with GEs about our union and contract. Are you familiar with the GTFF?"

2. Listening—Get their story

You want to find out more about your co-worker. Use the 80/20 rule — 80% listening/20% talking. This is about *them*. Ask questions! Empathize. Don't get defensive if they raise concerns or critiques of the union.

"What is your GE position? How long have you been in the dept? How's it going so far? How have you managed the balance of GE versus academic work? If you could change one thing about work, what would it be?"

3. Agitation and Education

After the person you're talking to has identified some of their concerns or you have spoken about an issue, you'll want to relate the issues to what we are doing as a union. Perhaps you need to tell them a little about the union's history or structure—but don't overdo it.

"That's great that things are good in your department. I understand the challenge of balancing work and academics. Luckily, our union contract protects us from being overworked and guarantees us rights and a say on the job."

4. Commitment (Ask them to join!)

Now you want to get them to do something—sign a blue card, attend a meeting, come to a social event. ALWAYS HAVE AN ASK! After you've connected their concerns to the need to have a strong union, ask them to join.

"It's been great talking. Can we count on you to help keep our union strong by joining? Signing this card makes you a full member and gives you a voice in the decisions that affect our working conditions and experience as GEs."

5. Inoculation

Given the possibility of negative Supreme Court rulings and the likelihood of more right-to-work fights, we want to forewarn union members about the possibility of negative changes on the horizon and 'inoculate' them against the right-wing messages that are sure to come. Your goal is to help them frame how to understand it so they are less likely to drop their membership.

"Have you heard about the most recent attack on workers' rights? It's designed to weaken unions like ours by allowing people to get the benefits of the union without supporting the union. The goal is to make unions less effective at protecting workers. We have to pull together to stay strong."

Answering Tough Questions

Sometimes members or non-members raise difficult questions.

Keep the focus on your message. When people are riled up, a good way to respond is “Affirm, Answer, Redirect.”

Affirm: Let them know you’re listening and their feelings are valid. Your workers may be scared or upset by something they’ve heard. Don’t get mad at them. It’s management’s fault, not theirs.

Answer: Give a truthful, concise answer to the question. Don’t be evasive. If you don’t know the answer, don’t guess. Tell them that you’ll find out and get back to them. Make sure you follow through!

Redirect: Once you’ve answered the question, don’t get bogged down in too much back-and-forth about it. Instead, be ready with a question that brings the conversation back to your message. Remind your co-workers of the issues that inspired them to organize in the first place.

Handling the “Yeah, buts...”

Why should I become a full member when I get the benefits anyway?

Actually, when you are not a member, we all get less. Only members have the right to vote, run for union office, and make important decisions that affect you. You already pay fair share dues (1.79% of salary). Full membership is only 2.1% but if you’re not a member, you have no say in your union.

I can’t afford to pay dues.

Dues are essential to have an effective union so we can win better pay and conditions. They are also an excellent investment. The benefits you gain as a result of our union-negotiated contract are much greater than the costs of your dues. This year we’re getting 3.5% raises, for example.

We don’t have any problems in my department, everything is fine.

That’s good to hear—the union works hard to maintain and improve our conditions and treatment. It’s because of our contract and strong membership that we’re able to do this effectively. Plus, the union gives us a voice in decisions that our departments don’t control, like pay, benefits, and company policies. Do you think we should have a say in these things?

I’m not interested. I don’t have time to worry about the union.

It only takes a minute to join. Other members are working hard to ensure good conditions for all of us. The least we can do is support their efforts.

Unions are corrupt. I don’t trust the leadership.

Unions are just collections of workers banning together for mutual protection and benefit. GTFF is a democratic union, run entirely by grad employees like you and me. As a full member, you have a say in the union’s actions and decisions. You can even run for office yourself!

Activating Members

A union's source of power is an active membership.

As a steward, it is your job to be a leader. If your co-workers are not participating in the union, don't complain — figure out ways to get them involved!

1. Know your co-workers.

The more you understand about your co-workers and the conditions of your fellow departmental GEs, the better you will be able to perform all aspects of your steward role.

2. Systematically recruit non-members and new GEs.

Speak often and positively with GEs in your department. The following pages have tips on having effective conversations with GEs. **Ask them to join as a full member.** If they hesitate, ask them what their concerns are.

3. Whenever possible, involve co-workers in solving problems.

The very best time to get people involved in the union is when a workplace problem personally affects them. If a problem affects a group of workers, consider organizing them to take part in collective actions that might help bring about a victory (petitions, buttons, group meetings with management). If the problem does not lend itself to collective action, consider recruiting the grievant to participate in union committees or caucuses related to their concern.

4. The more you involve members, the easier it becomes.

There are endless opportunities to involve members in the union. The same member who won't attend GMMs, might be willing to do office visits or write an article for The Agitator. If a member has one positive experience with the union, she is far more likely to get involved in the future. For example, involve members in:

- **Organizing**—talking to non-members and new employees
- **Political Action**—political elections, attending solidarity events in the community, signing postcards in support of pro-worker legislation, or attending town-hall meetings with elected officials.
- **Negotiations**—contract surveys, petitions, rallies, or other actions show support for the negotiating team; distributing updates, educating members about changes in the contract.
- **Representation**—involvement in GTFF committees and caucuses, mobilizing around grievances.
- **Social events**—union social events are a great way to meet people from other departments. They also help build solidarity and trust.

Organizing Around an Issue

Here are some guidelines for having a fruitful conversation with a co-worker that you want to join in an action. Think of this outline as a tool, but talk with people like human beings! Your job is mostly to ask questions. You want your co-worker to realize:

- She cares about a problem.
- There's a decision-maker who has the power to fix this problem.
- If she really wants this problem fixed, she has to join her co-workers in taking action. You want her to say it herself.

1. DISCOVER THE ISSUES

Begin by asking questions—and listening to the answers—to learn what your co-worker cares about. Make your questions open-ended, especially when you're getting to know someone. The point is for your co-worker to remind herself how she feels about a problem, before you ask her to act.

How's it going?

What are you teaching?

How's your course going?

What's your workload like?

Wow. How long has that been going on?

How do you feel about that?

How is that affecting you?

2. AGITATE

React to what she tells you, and ask follow-up questions. By reacting, the organizer can help the other person feel she has permission to be angry. The goal is to get her to take some action so you want her to understand that her anger is justified.

3. LAY THE BLAME

Get her talking about who's responsible. Many times we feel our problems are just "the way things are." Realizing that bad conditions didn't fall from the sky can be empowering. If someone made the decision that caused this mess, that someone could also unmake it.

Why do you think we're having this problem?

Who made that decision?

Who is in a position to fix this?

A bunch of people are angry about this. What should we do?

How can we make sure this gets fixed?

What if had a collective meeting with the chair?

4. MAKE AN ACTION PLAN

Now that your co-worker is angry, it's time to offer some hope. Hope comes from your power in numbers and a winnable plan. You'll have an easier time organizing if you choose issues that are widely and deeply felt. But what you can say is that power in numbers is our only way to get a say on any issue.

5. GET A COMMITMENT

Ask the member to be part of the solution by taking a specific action. If someone is fearful, acknowledge that her fears have real reasons behind them. But still, things won't get better unless she gets involved. Your job isn't to convince her that she's wrong about her fears, but that she needs to act anyway. Helping her through it will be a lot easier when you're inviting her to act on what she's already said—not pushing an action you're trying to “sell.”

Will this get resolved if we don't do something?

Will you sign this petition and come with us to deliver it on Thursday?

Will you wear a button on Tuesday?

6. INOCULATE AND RECOMMIT

What do you think the chair will do/say when we do this?

Yeah, he might get upset. If he does, how should we respond?

Are you still with us?

Now your co-worker is committed—but does she know what she's getting into? Ask how she thinks management will react to the action. If there's a likely risk she hasn't thought of, warn her about it. Talk through the possible outcomes. Then ask whether you can still count on her participation. This part might sound like you're undermining your organizing. But like inoculating against a virus, the idea is to help her develop an immunity to management's attacks—by giving her a small dose before she's exposed to the real thing. This way, when management reacts, she won't be thrown by it.

7. SET A FOLLOW-UP PLAN

As Fred Ross put it, “90 percent of organizing is follow-up.” Agree on the next step, and when you'll check back in. You're not just trying to pull off this one action. You're also trying to draw people gradually closer to the center and build an ongoing network of communication. You're trying to make standing up, in an organized way, a normal and natural part of workplace life.

Will you ask Emma to sign the petition? Great! I'll pick it up tomorrow.

Let's talk again on Friday to see how it went.



Charting & Mapping Your Department

What do you need to know about the GEs you represent?

There are some obvious facts that are important to know:

- **Who are they?** Names, contact information
- **Where do they work?** Work department, office
- **What is their appointment?** Type of GE (teaching, research, etc.), FTE
- **Are they full members?**
- **Have they been active with the union in the past?**

Less obvious but very useful information worth knowing:

- **What are the problems or goals that interest them at work?** Knowing what your co-workers care about helps you connect them to the unions' efforts in ways that are meaningful to them. For a parent, childcare might be the main concern. For someone with a chronic illness, health insurance might be the priority. For others, it might be all about the pay.
- **What is their current opinion of the union?** It's worth knowing how each non-member feels about the union. Focus on people who seem to be undecided, rather than those who are vocally opposed to the union.
- **Who do they socialize with?** If someone hangs out with co-workers who are very critical of the union, it may be difficult to get them involved. If they spend time with GEs who are positive about the union but haven't yet gotten involved themselves, talking to them should be a priority.
- **What organizations or activities are they involved with outside of work?** If a co-worker is active in her community or church or with social justice groups, she might be willing to coordinate community outreach in support of a union goal or activity.

How do you keep track of all this info and use it to create an organizing plan for your department?

Organizers often use charts to create a clear visual plan for organizing. Member lists can provide you with basic information—who is a full member and who is fair-share, but not much else. However, by charting membership status, rating whether fair-share members are undecided or anti-union, and identifying activists and friendship networks, you can see which areas are good targets and which conversations should come first.

Chart your own department on **page 58** on this handbook!

Creating an organizing chart for your department

1	Member Activist	3	Fairshare
2	Full Member	4	Hostile/Anti-union

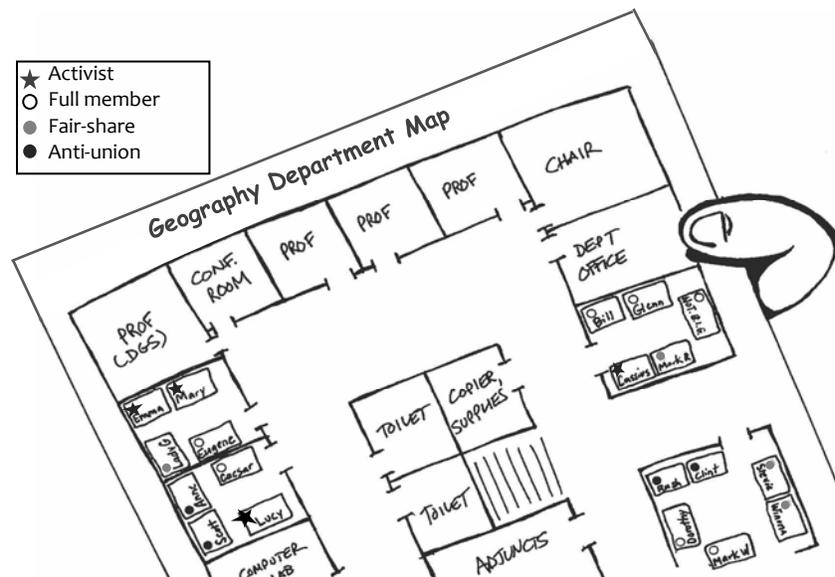
Geography Department Chart
(grouped by friendship networks)

1	Emma Goldman	1	Mary Harris Jones	2	Cassius Clay
2	Lucy Parsons	2	Caesar Chavez	2	Glenn Morris
2	Mark Ruffalo	2	Dorothy Day	1	Notorious B.I.G.
1	Eugene Debs	3	Stevie Nicks	2	Lady Gaga
3	Mark Wahlberg	2	Winona Ryder	4	Anne Coulter
3	Scott Baio			4	Rush Limbaugh
3	Clint Eastwood				

13 Full/ 5 Fair = 72%

Mapping your department

Drawing a map of your department can help you find out who is where, who interacts with whom, who is isolated. It can help you visualize which areas (or offices) would be most useful to target for organizing. Mapping is especially useful in large departments or those that are not well organized. Do it together with fellow GEs, include union rankings, and make sure you have everyone!



Holding a Department Meeting

Department meetings are a crucial element of GTFF’s process of collective, democratic decision making. Unlike E-Council meetings and General Membership Meetings, department meetings are a venue where there is time for members to talk through an issue thoroughly. Department meetings are where members have an opportunity to see where their colleagues stand and to decide together when and how to take collective action. **Every department should have at least one GTFF meeting each term.**



Eight steps for putting together a rockin’ department meeting

1. Plan

Get together with core department activists to assign tasks and set the agenda. This meeting could include stewards, department contacts, people who serve on GTFF committees, membership meeting attendees, and anybody else who might help out.

2. Agenda

The agenda should usually be a mix of campus wide GTFF business and business specific to your department. Make sure to set times for each item. It’s also usually a good idea to make space on the agenda for attendees to bring up issues that weren’t anticipated when the agenda was set -- sometimes this can be accomplished by having an “open discussion” item on the agenda. If your department is large enough that not everyone knows one another, then be sure to start the meeting with introductions and an ice breaker.

3. Schedule

Pick a time and date and reserve a room. Ask your department admin staff how to reserve a room. Things to keep in mind: (a) Folks are unlikely to make a special trip to campus for the meeting, so pick a time when people are usually around; (b) Be aware of conflicts (popular classes, lectures, reading groups); and (c) You’ll need some time to organize turnout.

4. Advertise

Post flyers and distribute quarter sheets – GTFB has templates available. There are **official GTFB bulletin boards around campus** you can post fliers on, but feel free to use your own office doors if possible. Be sure to mention important agenda items when advertising the meeting. Use email lists to send out notices. If your department has an events calendar, get the meeting on it. Mention the meeting at the end of class you have with other grads.

5. Organize!

Spend the time leading up to the meeting to **talk to every GE in the department** and **ask for a commitment to attend**. Be sure to divide the work among the core activists. Track commitments, and be accountable to one another – it's important that organizers communicate with one another about who has been talked to and who hasn't. Be sure that every person who says 'YES' or 'MAYBE' gets a reminder the day before the meeting. GTFB has templates for keeping track of commitments to attend. Feel free to use our template or just make up a sign-up sheet that includes phone number and email so you can remind them.

6. Food

Pizza is usually easiest, but sometimes the masses demand hummus. **GTFB may be able to cover food costs**, but get approval ahead of time for this. There are reimbursement forms at the office. Fill one out and turn in **itemized** receipts! Make sure the receipt says what food items it paid for.

7. Meet

Right before the meeting is going to start be sure to walk through your department and let people know you're headed to the room for the meeting and tell them how good the food will be or not be. Have someone take notes. Be sure to bring membership and involvement cards, copies of any current GTFB literature, and plenty of GTFB bling (buttons, t-shirts, AFT loot). Distribute a **sign-in sheet**. Most importantly, conduct the meeting in a way that **ensures that all voices are heard and respected**.

8. Follow-up

The next step after department meetings is usually to turn out members for a general membership meeting or other GTFB event. If departmental issues are brought up at the department meeting, take steps to act on those issues. Have 1 on 1 conversations with people who expressed interest in joining a GTFB project, committee, or helping you out in departmental GTFB tasks like newsletter distribution and office visits. Check in with everyone to make sure that they feel that the meeting was productive and that all voices were heard.

Organizing a Department Campaign

A department campaign is a series of concerted actions undertaken by the members in a department for the purpose of achieving a shared goal.

Members engage in department campaigns for a variety of reasons. Sometimes a campaign is aimed at getting a department to follow the contract. At other times the purpose of the campaign is to push for better treatment of grads on issues that aren't covered by the contract. **Department campaigns help build the union because GTFF is made stronger whenever grads take responsibility and work together to improve their conditions.**

Step 1: Build an Action Team

Start with whoever you know, or whoever has come forward with an issue. Organize a small group, (3 to 10 people) who will serve as your *Action Team*.

Step 2: Strategize to take Action

As a group, discuss the following questions:

- 1) What do we want?
- 2) Who is the target or decision maker who can give us what we want?
- 3) What tactics might work?

Brainstorm all possible options and then pick what is most likely to get you what you want and a strategy that you feel good about using. Make sure the plan is developed in a way that makes everyone feel ownership and investment in carrying the plan out. See the previous page for ideas of possible actions.

Step 3: Assess your Department

Bust out your department list and map out who are supporters, on the fence, and hostile/negative. Divide up the list among the action team. Each person is in charge of reaching out to his or her designated people. You can divide up the list by area of specialization, lab/office location or floor of building, by cohort, or some other set of social networks.

Step 4: Build a community to take action

Establish a network of people committed to taking action and build a sense of community and solidarity among them. Hold a social event or two where people can build stronger relationships. Have lots of one-on-one conversations.

Step 5: Take action!!!

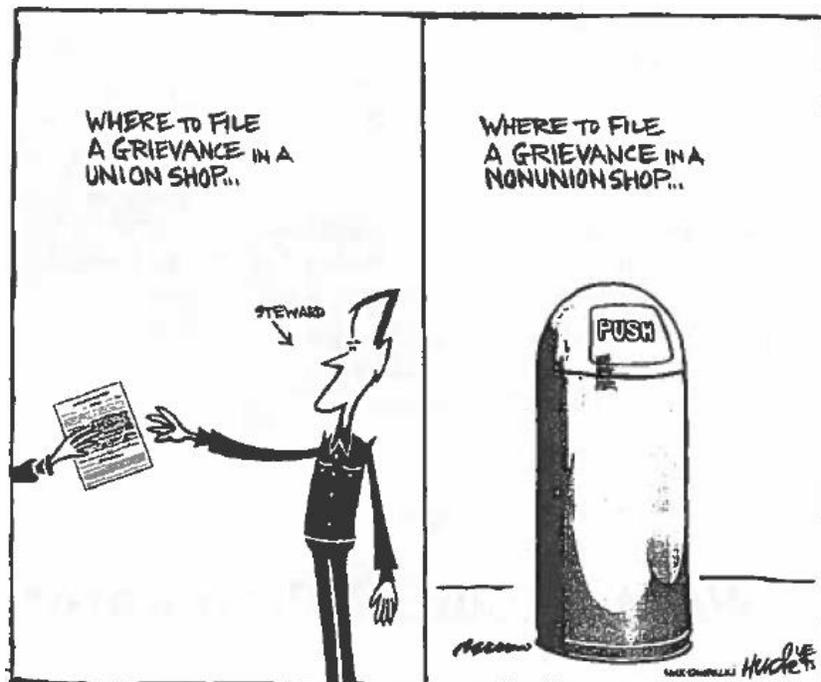
Carry out your strategy for winning what you want. This may not be just one action, but rather a series of actions that escalate. First wear buttons, then sign petitions, then hold a confrontational meeting with a key decision maker, and then if you still don't get what you want...

Step 6: Reassess and (maybe) go back to Step 2

If you don't win what you want right away, don't give up! Reassess what you want, who the target is, and what tactics might work. You may need a different target. You may need allies outside the department. Talk at the E-Council with other stewards about what has worked for them. Take a moment to look at what you have accomplished even if it wasn't what you set out to do. Did the department make any improvements at all? Did you build a stronger community of people who will fight in the future? Did you change the power dynamics in your department?



Defending the Contract!



Quick Guide to the CBA

This is a highly condensed overview of the contract. ALWAYS consult the full contract when investigating issues.

Article 2—Union Recognition

Recognizes GTFF as the sole and exclusive representative for all Graduate Employees (GEs) at the University of Oregon.

Article 3—Union Rights

Lays out our rights as a union, including but not limited to the right to communicate at all times with members and members of the bargaining unit.

Article 4—Dues Deduction/Fair Share

Allows union dues (including fair share dues) to be deducted from GE's paychecks. Instructs the university to send those dues to the union monthly.

Article 5—Union Use of Facilities

Allows the union to use university facilities for meetings. Instructs the university to make bulletin board space available for the union in every department.

Article 8—Nondiscrimination

Affirms the University's dedication to equal opportunity and freedom from unlawful discrimination.

Article 9—Work Agreement / Work Assignment

A long article that lays out hiring procedures, work rules, statements of duties (including GDRS), workload allocation, working during academic recesses.

Article 10 –Health, Safety and Work Environment

Identifies facilities and resources that are to be made available to GEs, such as work spaces, meeting spaces, supplies. Outlines health and safety measures.

Article 11—Personnel Files

Requires University to maintain personnel files for all GEs. Outlines rights of GEs to access their personnel files and have union representative present. Affirms that no reference to a grievance shall be placed in a personnel file nor shall reference to a grievance be considered in evaluation of a GE.

Article 12—Evaluations

Outlines policy for evaluating GE job performance and addressing deficiencies.

Article 13—Grievances

Defines grievances, affirms grievants' rights to consult with the Union at any time during a grievance. Establishes and outlines the grievance procedure.

Article 16—Discipline and Discharge

Affirms the University's right to discipline or terminate GEs and outlines the procedures for doing so. Affirms the principle of progressive discipline and states that no GE shall be disciplined or discharged without "just and sufficient cause". Requires departments to follow written criteria for discipline. Affirms

GEs' right to union representation in any disciplinary discussion or meeting.

Article 17—Appointment / Reappointments

Establishes procedures for departments when making appointment and re-appointments. Establishes that appointment letters are binding following a ten-day period during which the University may rescind offers.

Article 19—Summer Term

Outlines policies regarding summer term appointments.

Article 19—Teaching Beyond Specified Workload

Establishes conditions under which departments may offer appointments at levels higher than .49 FTE in exchange for an “off” term for GEs.

Article 21—Salary

Outlines salary levels and workloads for FTE levels. Identifies criteria for GE salary tiers. Sets minimum salaries for GEs. Identifies appointment dates.

Minimum quarterly salaries (by contract year) (at .49 FTE)			
	GE I	GE II	GE III
2016-17	\$4736	\$5350	\$5649
2017-18	\$4902	\$5571	\$5847
2018-19	\$5083	\$5742	\$6063

Article 22—Tuition Waiver

Establishes tuition and fee waivers for GEs employed at .20 FTE and above, excepting \$61 in mandatory fees during Fall, Winter, Spring (Summer fees work differently). Also establishes that UO will reimburse international GEs for the costs of SEVIS fees upon request and verification of payment.

Article 23—Health Insurance

Establishes that all GEs employed at .2 FTE and above are eligible for employer-paid health insurance premiums. UO pays 95% of GE insurance premiums. Establishes GTFF Health and Welfare Trust as sole administrator of the GTFF health insurance.

Article 28—Absences

Lays out policies for short and long term absences from work, Family and Medical Leave eligibility, establishes “Graduate Student Assistance Fund”.

Article 29—Childcare and Graduate Student Assistance Fund

Creates a fund from which grad students can draw financial assistance for the birth or adoption of a child, pregnancy disability, prenatal care, or to care for self, a spouse, child or parent experiencing serious medical condition.

Article 34: No Strikes, Lockouts

Establishes that “neither the University nor the Union nor any GE shall cause, engage in or sanction any lockout, strike, slowdown, walkout or refusal to work **during the term of the agreement.**” Confirms that, in the event of a strike, no GE will be required to perform the duties of a striking employee.

What's in the New Contract?

Here is a brief summary and overview of some, but not all, changes to the contract made during collective bargaining in 2015-16.

Always consult the final contract for actual language as well as additional changes not mentioned here.

- **Term of Contract:** The contract is for three years, covering the academic years of 2016-17, 2017-18, and 2018-19.
- **Graduate Employee Title:** The (former) title of “Graduate Teaching Fellow (GTF)” is officially changed to “Graduate Employee (GE)”.
- **Salary increases:** Establishes increases to minimum salaries at 3.5%, 3.5%, 3.7%, respectively, in each year of the contract.
- **Summer Fees:** UO agrees to pay 35% of summer fees (up from 0%).
- **Child Care Assistance:** GE parents can now access an additional \$575 from the Graduate Assistance Fund once any time during the child’s first 18 months of life or first 18 months in the family in the case of adoption.
- **Work Assignments:** In the event that their initial course assignment is changed after they have prepared to teach, GEs may now count more hours (up to 24) towards their next appointment.
- **GE Training:** Mandatory 4 hours paid training on cultural competency, sexual harassment and other workplace issues to be provided by the university. Teaching training will be the responsibility of departments.
- **Gender-Neutral Restrooms:** GEs shall have access to gender-neutral restrooms comparable with other employee groups.
- **Lactation Spaces:** The University now must provide appropriate access to secure, private, and sanitary lactation spaces for GEs who are nursing. The administration has also agreed to build new permanent lactation spaces, bringing the total number of spaces on campus to five.
- **Gender-Neutral Forms:** Gender-neutral forms shall (gradually) replace all non-neutral forms.
- **Disability Access:** UO must now provide a more straight-forward accommodation process for GEs with disabilities. GEs must receive information about the accommodation process and a list of accommodations available upon their first request, and cannot be denied any reasonable employment accommodation. The student and employment offices will now inform GEs of the availability of both types of accommodation, and can work collaboratively upon the request of the GE.
- **Work Environment:** GEs can no longer be assigned more than 2 per desk and must have locking office doors.

- **Appointments / Re-appointments:** Once an appointment has been accepted and a 10-day rescission period has passed, the offer is binding and cannot be rescinded. Years of funding offers are also binding after ten days.
- **Summer Appointments:** If a tentative summer appointment offer is rescinded less than 4 weeks prior to the start of the summer session, assigned GEs will receive a \$300 payment in acknowledgement of work already performed and the inconvenience.
- **Union Rights:** GTFF gets 30 minutes at the Graduate School Orientation and 30 minutes with any department that doesn't send their GEs to the Grad School Orientation to talk about the union and health insurance.
- **Unethical Behavior:** Under the new contract, GEs can no longer be barred from consulting with the professional association, legal representative or union if they feel they are being asked to do something unethical.
- **Retirement and Financial Training:** UO will offer financial training workshops for GEs every term.
- **GE Classifications:** In order to be compliant with new standards set by the Federal Labor Standards Act (FLSA) concerning overtime pay, GEs shall now be classified into three categories: Instructor; Research; Administrative. Classifications may be challenged, grieved under the CBA.
- **Strike Participation and Communication:** A Letter of Agreement was signed stating, "In the event of a legal strike by any employee group on campus, all communications to international Graduate Employees concerning the effect of participation in said legal strike on the GEs visa and/or residency status may only originate from the Office of International Affairs or Human Resources." This is to avoid confusion regarding the right of international students to participate in strike actions.



Solving Problems & Enforcing the Contract

Solving workplace problems and enforcing the union contract are two of the steward's primary responsibilities. A steward's goal should always be to **solve problems at the lowest level possible**—ideally, before a grievance is ever filed.

As a steward, it is your job to keep your eyes and ears open in your department; if you hear someone complaining about their GE or supervisor talk with the member about it and ask yourself what the union can do to help.

- Problems are often solved and grievances settled based not simply on who has the strongest case or most logical arguments, but because of the **support and strength the union has in the workplace.**



- **If you see or hear of a problem or possible contract violation**, you do not have to wait for GEs to come forward about it. You have the right to take action to require management to act fairly and follow the contract.

- **Your job is to defend the rights of all GEs under the contract** (and GDRS). This does not mean you will always like or even agree with every co-worker you represent, but it does mean **you must separate your personal feelings from your overall duty to the union and the contract.**

Helping your colleagues solve workplace problems is rewarding but it can also be quite challenging. As the department steward, you may be the first person a grievant approaches but **you are never alone!** The GTFF has a grievance officer and a staff organizer to provide guidance, help and advice. Seek their knowledge and support at any time and always inform them when you have discovered a problem or contract violation.

It is very important to keep a record of investigations and grievances and to share them with our union so we can keep track of what's going on.

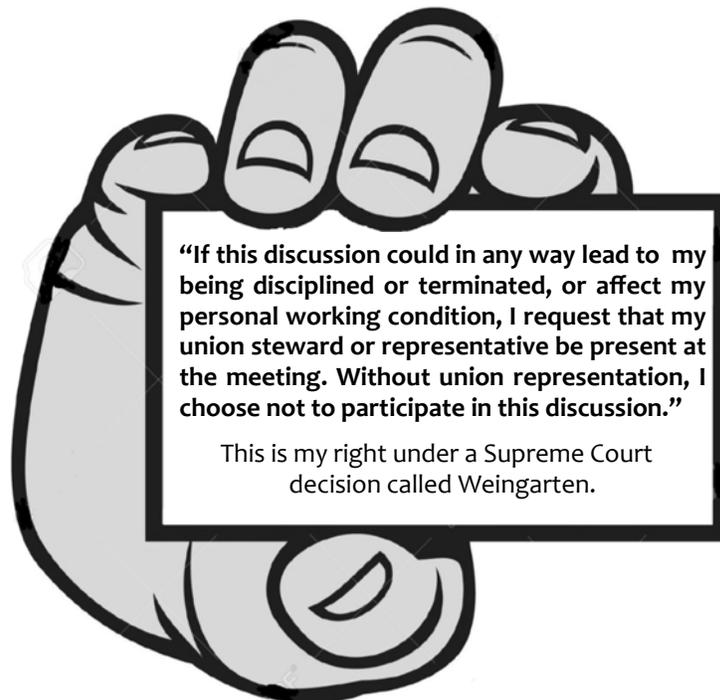
Weingarten Rights

The right to union representation

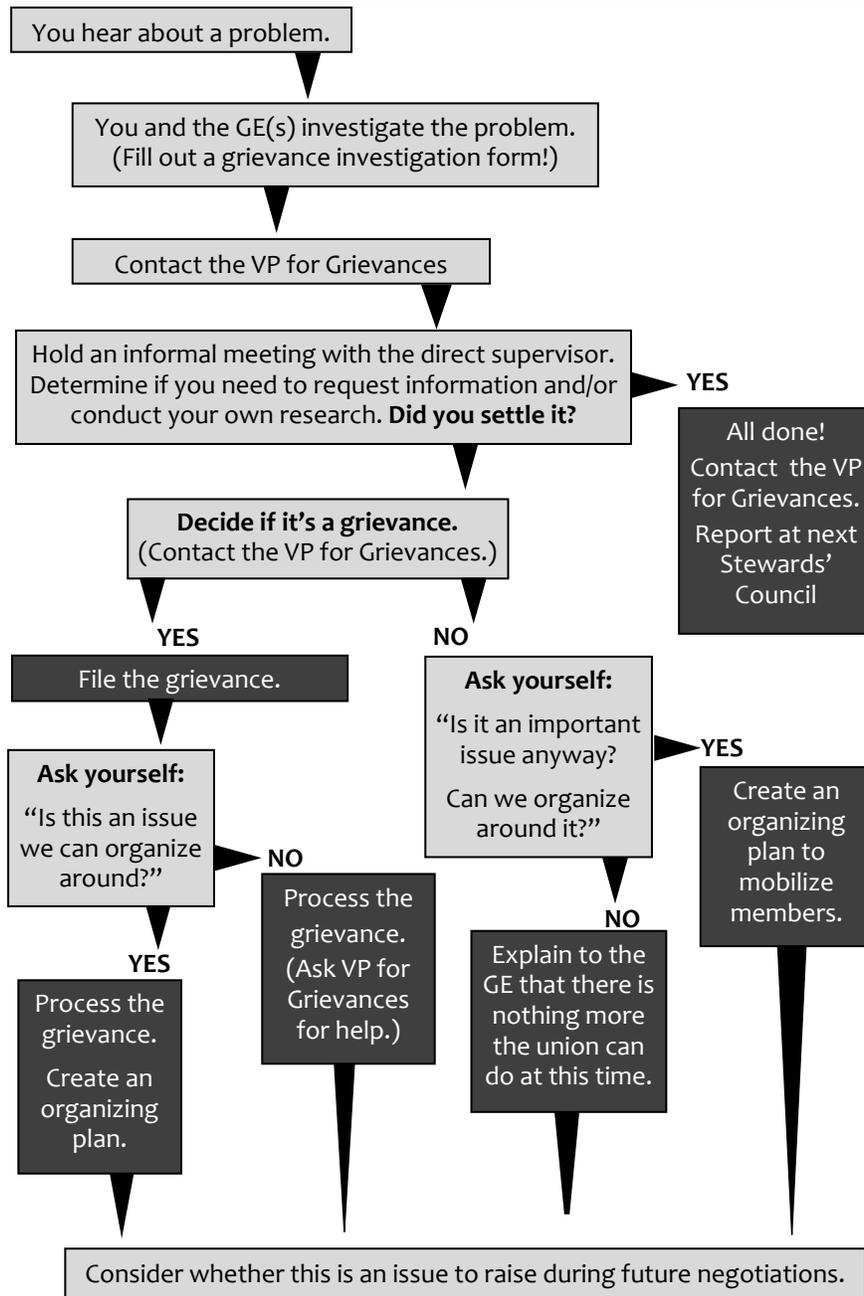
One of the most important protections graduate employees have is the right to union representation at any potential disciplinary meeting. This is referred to as your **Weingarten Rights**.

The Weingarten rule provides that if an employee is called into a meeting with management and the employee believes that the meeting could result in discipline, the employee has a right to union representation. The employee must request union representation before or during the meeting. Providing this representation is a sacred task for a steward.

For their own protection, **all graduate employees should be aware of their Weingarten Rights** and instructed to read or hand this statement to management before the start of any meeting that could lead to discipline:



Guide to Problem Solving



Complaint or Grievance?

Every grievance is a complaint, but not every complaint is a grievance. Some problems can be solved via the grievance procedure, others require a different approach. So...

What is a complaint?

A concern of an individual or a group that they have been wronged. It is not necessarily a contract violation. There are ways to address complaints without filing a grievance.

What is a grievance?

A charge by an employee, group of employees or the union that they employer has violated, misinterpreted, or misapplied a provision of the collective bargaining agreement or GDRS.



What isn't a grievance?

A conflict between graduate employees, an action or inaction that is not implicitly or explicitly contained in the contract, does not violate any section of the contract, or does not reply on established, agreed upon past practice.

“Screening” problems and identifying grievances

As a steward, you may receive complaints from coworkers. Some of these will be complaints that you can pursue through mobilizing members, meeting with management informally, and/or filing a grievance. After you hear a complaint and gather all the facts, you may decide it is a valid grievance or you may decide that the complaint is one that requires some other approach or you may determine a complaint is a personal problem the union cannot address. Sorting out issues and possible solutions is an important task of a steward.

The Duty of Fair Representation (DFR)

Under the NLRA, the union has a **legal obligation to equally and in good faith represent everyone covered by the CBA**. It's called the duty of fair representation and it applies to full members and fair-share members regardless of whether they like or dislike the union. The duty of fair representation means that when any worker in your bargaining units brings a possible grievance to you, you must make a thorough investigation. Failure to do so undermines solidarity and opens up the union to legal repercussions.

If you are unsure of how to address a complaint or potential grievance, ask the VP for Grievances or Staff Organizer for advice.

Investigating Problems

Investigating a problem or potential grievance almost always begins with interviewing people involved to collect the facts and/or requesting necessary information from management. **Structuring your research and interview questions around the “5 Ws” can help you get necessary information quickly.**

The “5 Ws”:

- **WHO?** Identify by name the worker(s), the immediate supervisor and any other persons involved in the complaint (witnesses, co-workers, etc.)
- **WHAT?** What exactly happened? What actions (or inactions) gave rise to the problem? Be specific!
- **WHERE?** If an incident was involved, determine the precise location and department of the incident.
- **WHEN?** Determine the time and date of the incident. If it’s an ongoing problem, try to determine when it started and when the GE(s) first learned of it.
- **WHY?** Why is this incident a problem or potential grievance? What section of the contract or GDRS has been violated? And/or are past practice or state or federal law being violated?



And don’t forget the “Big H”:

- **HOW?**
How can I involve the grievant and other members in solving this problem? How can I educate members about the problem? How can I mobilize them to help the union win the grievance? How do I use this problem as an organizing tool?

ALSO, REMEMBER TO:

- **TAKE NOTES!**
Use the **Investigation Form** (see next page) or something similar to keep careful records. Investigation forms are available through the GTFF Office (or ask VP for Grievances for a copy).
- **Request necessary information from the university!**
- **Inform the VP for Grievances of any serious situations!**



Investigation Form

(This sheet is not intended to go to management. It is only to be used for the union's investigation of a grievance. It should be kept in the union's files.)

Grievance Investigation # _____

(Dept_Mo.Yr, eg., SOC_6.16)

Grievant(s) _____ Phone _____

Department _____ Date of incident _____

Who from management is involved? _____

Who else is involved (witnesses)? _____

What happened? (Describe the problem) _____

What else is important to this case? (Grievant's record, other relevant history)

Why is this a grievance? (contract violation, GDRS, law, past practice — be specific)

What remedy do we seek from management? _____

Next step(s) _____

Resolution _____ Date _____

Did this become a formal grievance?

Have you contacted the VP for Grievances or Staff Organizer?

Has this information been logged in GTF office (see VP Grievances)?

Steward _____ Date _____

What is a Grievance?

Under our Collective Bargaining Agreement (CBA), a grievance is defined as “an allegation that there has been a violation, including but not limited to misinterpretation or improper application of the terms” of the contract (Article 13).

What can be grieved?

Violations of the Collective Bargaining Agreement (contract)

Direct and clear violations of the CBA are, of course, grievable. But not all language in the CBA is crystal clear. Sometimes grievances are based on particular or strategic readings of the contract.

Violations of Department General Duties and Responsibilities Statement

Violations of a department’s GDRS are also subject to the grievance procedure and can be grieved. You can find the GDRS for every department here: <http://gradschool.uoregon.edu/gtf/rights-and-responsibilities/gdrs>

Past Practice

Sudden changes to long-standing practices or rules, even if not explicitly mentioned in the CBA, can be grieved as a violation of past practice. Article 7 (Maintenance of Rights and Benefits) of the CBA states “Past practices involving GE rights and benefits, defined as terms and conditions of employment, which are in effect at the time this Agreement is signed and which are terms or conditions of employment shall be maintained in those departments or comparable employing unit where such past practices have been uniformly applied over a reasonable period of time, except where such practices have been addressed or limited by this Agreement.”

What if it’s not a problem the union can address?

One of a steward’s main duties is to identify problems that are appropriate for resolution through the grievance procedure or other union actions. But there are plenty of serious problems that aren’t grievances, legal issues, or even work-related. Occasionally you may have to tell a GE that although you recognize their problem, there isn’t anything the union can do about it. Still, stewards may still be in a position to offer help and support. For example, if a worker’s performance is suffering because he’s worried about being able to pay for child care, a referral to the Graduate Student Hardship Fund may be the most valuable thing a steward can provide. It might be helpful in these cases to ask the VP for Grievances or Staff Organizer for advice.

The Grievance Procedure

The grievance procedure is the process the union and the university have negotiated for use in resolving workplace disputes (Article 13). **It is crucial for stewards to know the grievance procedure well and to adhere to it strictly—especially when it comes to timelines.** Here is an overview :

Step 1 (Informal)

At Step 1, GEs and/or a union representative present a grievance orally to the person to whom the GE is assigned. That person must report a decision orally to the GE within **five working days**.

Step 2 (Formal)

If the grievant is not satisfied with the decision at Step 1 (or if Step 1 was not used), the grievant or a representative may present the grievance **in writing** to the head of the operating unit (department, institute, school, etc.) **within ten working days** of the decision at Step 1. The unit head shall arrange a meeting with the grievant or representative within **10 working days**. The unit head must make a decision in writing within **fifteen working days**.

Step 3 (President or Designee)

In the event that the grievant is not satisfied with the decision at Step 2, the grievant may present the written grievance to the President of the university (or a designee) within **ten working days** of the decision at Step 2. The President or designee will convene a grievance hearing and must send a decision in writing within **twenty working days** of the hearing.

Arbitration (Article 15)

If a grievance is not resolved at Step 3, the union may, on the decision of the Executive Council, advance the grievance to binding arbitration.

If the Union (or the University) is the grievant, the grievance shall be filed at Step 3. A meeting shall be initiated by the grievant and held within **five working days** of the filing.

It is essential that stewards pay strict attention and follow the timelines laid out in the grievance procedure. Failure to do so can lead to a grievance being dismissed and potentially open up the union to a duty of fair representation charge.

Filing a Grievance

The key to writing a grievance is to keep it simple! When in doubt, leave it out! Whether you write the grievance from a template or from scratch, almost every grievance contains just three key elements:

1. What happened (what did management do or not do)?
2. Why is it a grievance (what part of the contract, GDRS was violated)?
3. What remedy is the union seeking (What should management do)?

Our grievance procedure also requires that the Union or grievant provide “all relevant facts supporting the allegation.”

It is a good idea to **contact the VP for Grievances or the Staff Organizer before filing a grievance**, if you have questions, or if you need help or guidance.

Below you can see an example of a grievance. Notice the underlined phrases that **are important to include** in any grievance.

DATE: October 3, 2015

FROM: Suzy Diaz-Kikker

TO: Prof. Pension, Chair, Department of Basket-weaving

Beginning on or about October 1, 2015, the Department of Basket-weaving paid Hannah Hardworker and all other affected employees at the GE II level despite her having advanced to doctoral candidacy on June 15, 2015.

This violates Article 21, Section 2 and any and all other relevant articles of the collective bargaining agreement and Departmental GDRS.

The Union demands that management immediately raise Ms. Hardworker's pay to the GE III level, compensate her in the form of back pay for those months during which she was underpaid, and in other ways make her whole.

Helena Handbasket, GTFF VP for Grievances, will be representing Ms. Hardworker on behalf of the Union.

Sincerely,
Suzy Diaz-Kikker



Grievance Log

Grievance # _____

(Dept_Mo.Yr, eg., SOC_6.16)

Grievant(s) _____ Today's Date _____

Department _____

Supervisor _____ Steward(s) _____

Subject of Grievance/Article Violated: _____

Date of incident _____

	Timeline	Deadline (fill in)	Actual Date (fill in)
Step 1 filed	45 days		
Step 1 meeting	asap		
Step 1 response	5 days		
Step 2 filed	10 days		
Step 2 meeting	10 days		
Step 2 response	15 days		
Step 3 filed	10 days		
Step 3 meeting	asap		
Step 3 response	20 days		
Step 4 (arbitration)	20 days		

**MARK ALL DEADLINES ON CALENDAR. CONTACT VP FOR GRIEVANCES.
CONTACT STEWARD ONE DAY BEFORE DEADLINE TO REMIND.**

Resolution: Withdrawn Settled Arbitrated Date _____

If withdrawn or settled, have letters been sent to the employer and the grievant(s)?

Meeting with Management

Meeting with a supervisor or dept chair as a steward can be intimidating. Here are some suggestions and things to remember. Contact the VP for Grievances if you have any concerns.

1. **ACT AS AN EQUAL — because YOU ARE!** A grievance meeting is a meeting between two parties on equal footing. Don't be intimidated. But it may be necessary to do extra work to command respect and assert your rights to be treated as an equal.
2. **Remember your goal.** You are striving to settle the problem at the lowest level possible. Start out assuming that you will do so. Avoid starting by backing management into a corner or putting them on the defensive.
3. **Stick to the point** and take charge of the meeting. Insist on keeping the discussion to the matter at hand.
4. **Maintain a united front.** Never have an argument among union people in the presence of management. If needed, call a recess to discuss.
5. **Take notes!** It's important to record what management says and does.
6. **Repeat your best arguments and facts.** Don't let management derail you or bait you into a defensive position on weaker aspects of your case. It is ok and, in fact, usually effective to repeat your best arguments.
7. **Disagree with dignity.** Avoid getting excited, angry or hostile. On rare occasions, when planned and strategically timed, showing emotion might be useful. But losing your cool means you've lost control of the meeting.
8. **Be ready to end or suspend the meeting.** If unexpected information crops up in a meeting, call a caucus to discuss it. Don't be afraid to ask to postpone the meeting so you can better prepare. If you are getting no response or only "Nos" from management, use your judgement on when the meeting has become unproductive and end it by indicating that you intend to move the case to the next step in the process.

Useful questions when management says "No"

- Do you understand the problem we are trying to solve?
- How do you see the problem?
- Can you explain how you arrived at that position?
- What about our proposed remedy do you have a problem with?
- Do you have other suggestions for how we can resolve this?
- What are you concerned would happen if you agreed to our remedy?
- This is important to us. Are you saying you have no flexibility at all?

Health Insurance FAQs

Our insurance is an employer-based group plan, and it is awesome. If a member can find cheaper & better insurance, they should take it! Here is quick FAQ on the plan that might be useful. **Golden Rule: When in doubt, tell 'em to call Glenn 541-344-0832!**

Common Enrollment Questions:

Q: “Is enrollment in the GTFF insurance automatic?”

No. To sign up, a member has to fill out a paper application! Many people think they signed up when all they actually did was mark a “FERPA release” box on the GE contract allowing the Grad School to send GTFF the person’s UO ID for the “purpose of health insurance administration.”

Q: “What’s this ‘insurance’ charge on Duckweb? I must have been automatically signed up for the GTFF insurance, right?”

No you weren’t. Are you an international status grad? All international students (undergrad/grad) are automatically enrolled in the UO’s international student insurance. Even though it happens to also be with PacificSource, it is **NOT** GTFF insurance. You need to sign up with me, then waive the UO’s insurance by logging into Duckweb “My Health” portal. GTFF insurance is 1/10th the cost of the UO’s, so make sure to sign up with me and waive the UO’s!

Q: “I did not have the coverage over last summer because I did not want to pay the premium, my coverage started back up automatically in the fall and I should be covered right now, right?”

Wrong. Anytime there is a gap in your coverage you need to re-enroll. Check in with Glenn to get it started back up. If you have been without coverage for 90 days or less all you need to do is fill out a new payroll deduction form and I can reinstate your old ID#. If it's been longer than one term (e.g., summer and fall) you will need to fill out a new Pacific Source enrollment form (Pacific Source will issue you a new ID#) and payroll deduction form.

Common Coverage/Benefits Questions:

Q: “Can I get a massage on the plan?”

You know it. “Alternative Medicine” (chiropractor, naturopath, massage therapy, acupuncture) are some of our most popular benefits. Up to 6 massages and 12 chiropractic or naturopath visits per year are covered.

Q: “I went to the doctor but insurance paid nothing on the visit, what’s up?”

Have you met your annual \$200 deductible? Before insurance pays out anything for medical expenses (and just medical—not dental, vision, or pharmacy) you must first pay \$200 towards medical expenses, then insurance pays.

Q: “I heard the campus UO Health Center is free, is that true?”

Yes. For all medical visits and procedures—excluding *alternative medicine*—there is 100% coverage with no deductible. i.e., See a nurse—free. Get an x-ray—free. Get some blood work—free. Physical Therapy—free. Mental health counseling—free. Massage—90% coverage after you meet your \$100 deductible. (Only students can access UO Health Care, not family members).



Q: “I got a bill from PacificSource, now what?”

PacificSource is the insurance company, they do not send bills. Only your doctor’s office sends you bills. What you received is called an “Explanation of Benefits.” This letter informs you how much your doctor billed insurance for the visit, how much PacificSource will pay for, and how much you will owe the doctor’s office. When you go to the doctor they bill your insurance for the visit. After PacificSource pays them, they will send you a bill for whatever remains. Wait for the bill from the doctor and pay the doctor’s office when you get it.

Common Premium Payment Questions:

Q: “How much does the insurance cost?”

For 2017 fall, 2018 winter, 2018 spring and 2018 summer with summer GE appointment (rates are per quarterly term):

GE only= \$71.57	GE+partner= \$150.30
GE+child(ren)= \$126.70	GE+partner+child(ren)= \$205.42

For summer 2018 without a summer GE appointment

GE only= \$286.30	GE+partner= \$601.21
GE+child(ren)= \$506.79	GE+partner+child(ren)= \$821.70

Q: “How can I pay my premium?”

The single best method is payroll deduction using a payroll deduction form available from Glenn. By marking a payroll form, you can be assured your coverage remains active for every term you are eligible. It is possible to pay by check (preferred) or credit card (we take many payments via phone, but GTFF is charged quite a bit in VISA fees, so checks are better).

Acronyms (Alphabet Soup)

There are quite a few acronyms used in this handbook and around the labor world. Here's a cheat sheet.

AFL-CIO	American Federation of Labor--Congress of Industrial Organizations. The largest federation of labor unions in the US. Founded in 1955 but with much older roots. AFT is a member of the AFL-CIO.
AFT	American Federation of Teachers. National union of educators. GTFF is an affiliate (Local 3544) of the AFT and AFT-Oregon.
AFSCME	American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees. A national union representing public employees in Oregon (Council 75) and other states around the country.
AGEL	Alliance of Graduate Employee Locals. An organization of AFT Graduate Employee locals. GTFF is a member/participant.
CBA	Collective Bargaining Agreement (our union-negotiated contract).
CGE	Coalition of Graduate Employees. The union representing graduate employees at Oregon State in Corvallis. AFT Local 6069.
CGEU	Coalition of Graduate Employee Unions. An organization of grad employee unions from across N America. Formed in 1992. GTFF usually sends delegates to CGEU annual conference.
DFR	Duty of Fair Representation. The union's legal responsibility to represent all members (full and fair share) of the bargaining unit.
ESSN	Eugene-Springfield Solidarity Network. The local chapter of Jobs with Justice. Organizes and promotes solidarity among workers. GTFF is a member organization with seats on their Board.
FERPA	Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act. Federal law that protects the privacy of student education records.
FLSA	Fair Labor Standards Act. Federal law establishing minimum wage, overtime pay, recordkeeping, and youth employment standards.
FMLA	Family and Medical Leave Act. Federal law requiring covered employers to provide employees job-protected and unpaid leave for qualified medical and family reasons.
FTE	Full-time Equivalent. Indicates a GE's workload. An FTE of 0.5 signals half of a full work load (20 hours/week).
GDRS	General Duties and Responsibilities Statement. Each department's formal statement describing the conditions under which GE assignments are made. Accessible via Grad School's website.
GE	Graduate Employee. Any graduate student employed by the University of Oregon at more than .2 FTE (formerly GTF).

Acronyms (Alphabet Soup)

GEU	Graduate Employees Union. The grad union at Portland State University. A joint local of AFT and American Assoc of University
GMM	General Membership Meeting. Quarterly GTFF meetings for all members. Where important decisions are made.
GTFF	Graduate Teaching Fellows Federation (AFT Local 3544). That's us!
GTFFSU	Graduate Teaching Fellows Federation Staff Union. This is Michael and Glenn's (independent) labor union. GTFF and GTFFSU renegotiate the CBA every 2-3 years.
IATSE	International Alliance of Theatrical Stage Employees. The union representing theater workers. IATSE Local 675 represents stage workers at UO, Knight Arena, Hult Center, OSU and other places.
NLRA	National Labor Relations Act. Federal law governing private sector workers' rights. See also National Labor Relations Board (NLRB).
PECBA	Public Employee Collective Bargaining Act. The law covering public employees' rights in the state of Oregon. Modeled after the NLRA.
RTW	Right-to-Work. State and/or national legislation that bans the collection of fair share (or agency) fees from non-union members despite requiring unions to represent all employees, including non-members. A Supreme Court ruling in Janus vs AFSCME is expected to make right-to-work national.
UA	United Academics. UO faculty union, jointly affiliated with AFT (Local 3209) and American Assoc of University Professors (AAUP).
SEIU	Service Employees International Union. An international union representing public service and healthcare employees. UO support staff are affiliated with SEIU, Local 503.



General Membership Meetings

Term	Date	Time	Location
Fall			
Winter			
Spring			
Summer			

Executive Council Meetings

Month	Date	Time	Location
October			
November			
December			
January			
February			
March			
April			
May			

Stewards' Council Meetings

Month	Date	Time	Location
October			
November			
December			
January			
February			
March			
April			
May			

Department Meetings

Term	Date	Time	Location
Fall			
Winter			
Spring			
Summer			

Solidarity Forever

When the union's inspiration through the workers' blood shall run
There can be no power greater anywhere beneath the sun
Yet what force on earth is weaker than the feeble strength of one
But the union makes us strong

Solidarity forever, Solidarity forever
Solidarity forever, for the union makes us strong!

It is we who plowed the prairies, built the cities where they trade
Dug the mines and built the workshops, endless miles of railroad laid
Now we stand outcast and starving 'mid the wonders we have made
But the union makes us strong

Solidarity forever, Solidarity forever
Solidarity forever, for the union makes us strong!

They have taken untold millions that they never toiled to earn
But without our brain and muscle, not a single wheel can turn
We can break their haughty power, gain our freedom when we learn
That the union makes us strong

Solidarity forever , Solidarity forever
Solidarity forever, for the union makes us strong!



GTFF Executive Board (2017-18)

President	Jessica Neafie	president@gtff.net
VP Organizing	Dani Cosme	organizing@gtff.net
VP Grievances	Mike Magee	grievances@gtff.net
VP Political Education	Larissa Petrucci	politicaled@gtff.net
VP External Relations	Jordan Clementi	external@gtff.net
VP Operations	Rita Ludwig	operations@gtff.net
VP Communications	Ellen Gillooly-Kress	communications@gtff.net
Treasurer	Mike Hudak	treasurer@gtff.net
VP Equity and Inclusion	Nicole Francisco	equity@gtff.net
VP Membership	Devin Lea	membership@gtff.net

GTFF Caucuses and Caucus Chairs (2017-18)

Caucus	Chair	Contact
Disability Access		
Environmental Justice		
Grad Employees of Color		
International Student		
LGBTQ		
Parents'		
Survivors (T.R.U.S.T.)		
Women's		
Workers'		

GTFF Staff

Benefits Administrator	Glenn Morris	benefits@gtff.net
Staff Organizer	Michael Marchman	stafforganizer@gtff.net

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