

## Bargaining Session #12: Grads, Professors and Legislators, Oh My!

*Summary by Rob Hess*

Last Wednesday (June 4), CGE had our most significant bargaining session to date. Trust me. When I say big, I mean BIG:

For a more complete report on bargaining, visit the CGE website at [cge6069.org](http://cge6069.org).

\* Speaker of the Oregon House of Representatives and Democratic candidate for Oregon's U.S. Senate seat Jeff Merkley kicked the morning off by talking in support of our efforts

\* Six grad assistants and members of CGE testified to the administration on our key economic proposals; the administration seemed receptive to what they all had to say

\* Gordon Lafer, a professor at the Labor Education and Research Center (LERC) at the University of Oregon, testified in support of our proposal on fair-share

\* Oregon State Representative Brad Witt testified on behalf of 41 of his colleagues in support of our bargaining position; the administration got pretty defensive during his testimony

After 3 months of nearly no progress in negotiations, we decided that it was time to start to put a little more pressure on the administration. Jeff Merkley, Brad Witt, and the other legislators were the first part of that. An open letter to the administration has been circulating among the Oregon Legislature for some time now. (You can read Jeff Merkley's copy of the letter on page five.)

The six graduate assistants who testified were Chris Knutson (Chemistry), Brian Dietel (Math), John Klock (Geosciences), Travis Margoni (English), Cat Searle (Zoology) and Jana Doppa (EECS).

Finally, our big dog, State Representative Brad Witt, testified that, to an outsider, the failure to make progress in these negotiations over three months and 12 bargaining sessions might suggest that the administration may not, in fact, be bargaining in as good of faith as they ought to be, and he did not mince words in warning the administration that these negotiations have now gotten his attention along with the attention of several other members of the Oregon state legislature. As evidence of this, he dropped a stack of 42 of the aforementioned letters from Oregon state legislators into the administration's hands.

Representative Witt's testimony seemed to ruffle the administration's feathers a bit. Almost shockingly, several members of the administration's team started to pick a fight with him during his testimony, questioning whether his outsider's perception of these negotiations was a valid one. To this, Representative Witt simply responded that he was calling it as he saw it and that any reasonable person who was marginally familiar with these negotiations would probably come to the same conclusion.

# Spring GMM and New Officers for '08 – '09

The Spring General Membership Meeting recapped bargaining and answered graduate employees' questions and concerns over contract negotiations. Those who attended the AFT-Oregon Convention in Sunriver were happy to report that the resolution drafted by CGE passed, as did many others drafted by additional locals.

## CGE Officers for the 2008-2009 Year:

President	John Osborne (COAS)
VP Collective Bargaining	Rob Hess (EECS)
VP Organizing	Jim Duncan (Geo)
VP Communications	Allison Weinstein (Geo)
Secretary/Treasurer	Angela Brandt (Zoo)



## Actions

On April 10th, CGE members, staff and volunteers handed out flyers detailing the administration's bargaining proposals to date to attendees of the President's Circle Reception. Entrance into the President's Circle requires a donation of \$1000 or more. CGE's message was simple: Graduate employees would like to be competitively compensated for their work, treated fairly, and have satisfactory working conditions.

The flyers highlighted what CGE hopes to accomplish this bargaining session and compared it to the Administration's current proposal. At the time, Administration had cut the \$250/term while noting that fees and health insurance costs were going to increase. This amounts to a 13% pay cut to the average grad assistant's stipend. At the very next bargaining session, the administration placed the \$250/term stipend back in their contract proposals.

During the event, our volunteers received many statements of support from event attendees, suggesting that there is widespread supporting for properly funding graduate assistants.

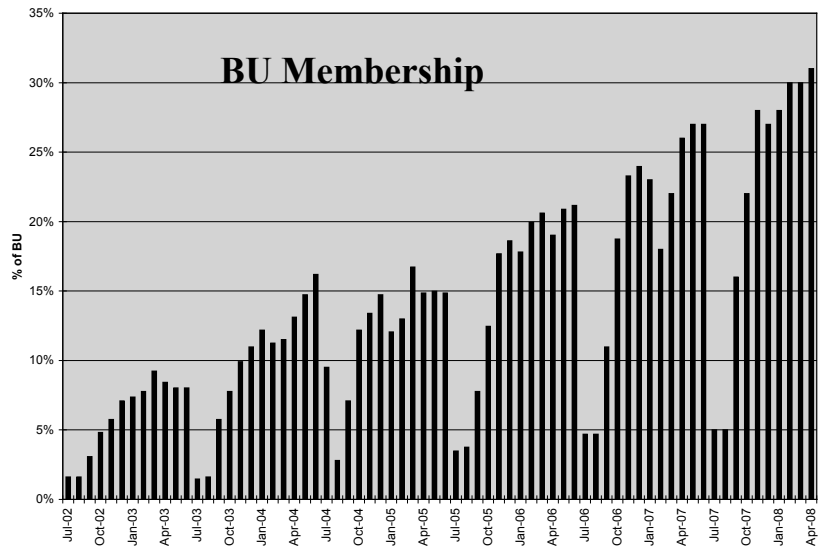


# April Membership Drive

April's membership drive marks several milestones for CGE. Most importantly, CGE membership represents 31% of the BU! We now have the highest national membership of any graduate employee union who does not have fair-share!

Also, this spring's membership drive set a record for the most number of people to have joined the union in any spring in CGE's history!

In part, the high success rate is due to three amazing volunteers who joined us for two weeks in April: Amber Cooper from the Graduate Employee Organization, AFT Local 6297, at University of Illinois at Chicago, as well as Dave Beck and Lori Serb from the Graduate Employee Organization, AFT Local 6300, at University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. **CGE also thanks all graduate employees who volunteered their time!**



## Graduate Employee Angered by Administration's Antics

Dear CGE,

I was an observer during the April 14th bargaining session. I arrived only minutes early fearing that I had already missed part of the action. I sat with my pen hovering over my notebook, ready to scribe points of interests for my peers who could not attend. And I waited, and waited, and waited. Administration entered the room 35 minutes later, having called a caucus in order to prepare for the meeting!

Better late than never. But bargaining still didn't start. Instead, the HR Team spent the next 30 minutes attempting to scold CGE for leafletting and speaking to invitees of the President's Dinner. They claimed CGE did a 'disservice' to represent them in this way. "A disservice to who?" I ask. I saw copies of management's proposals. They gave us nothing, but took benefits away.



Thank you for standing up for employees' rights and guaranteeing them for the future. Increased take home pay is always great, but fair working conditions and just treatment are even more important. In solidarity,

- Anonymous Graduate Employee

## Bargaining Results Through Session #8

*Administration says “No” to Wage Increase, Fee Relief, Greater than 75% Insurance Contribution, and Fair-share*

Bargaining sessions 6, 7, and 8 have come and gone since the last newsletter, and only minimal - at best - progress has been made. At Session 7, the administration made a proposal that included no wage increases, no fee relief, no greater increases in the university's insurance contribution, and no fair-share – but they indicated verbally they might be willing to talk about summer health insurance for a small number of graduate employees. They also proposed to remove contract language that keeps grad employees from being re-hired at a lower rate from one year to the next.

At Session 8, CGE worked very hard to get the administration to agree to accept a single Article. In the end, Administration said the “liked the concept” of Articles 17, 18, and 19, but they will not make an agreement on them because they *do not want to set the precedent of making an agreement*. For more information, read the bargaining blog at <http://cge6069.org/>.

The CGE bargaining team will continue to meet with Administration over the summer in pursuit of reaching an agreement. If you are interested in joining the team, please contact an officer.

## GTFF reaches contract agreement

Our brothers and sisters at UO in the Graduate Teaching Fellows Federation, AFT Local #3544, reached a tentative agreement with the University on a two-year contract. Here are the highlights:

- The University contribution to dependent insurance raised by \$100/term. (GTFF members continue to pay \$0 for single employee coverage.)
- 8% raise to the minimum salary over two years (4% each year).
- Fees capped at \$150/term. The University will also cover the matriculation fee.
- Up to two weeks of paid vacation for GTFs with at least a 9 month research position.
- The ability of GTFs to request a reassignment for positions in which they don't feel safe.
- Increased access to supplies, computers, private meeting space, and office space for GTFs.
- Extension of cost coverage of their current health care plan, a 2-year University contribution to raise the benefits cap from its current level of \$100,000 to \$500,000 next year (08-09) and \$1,000,000 the year after (09-10), which will allow GTFs to qualify for FHIAP.

## Upcoming Events

### **Bargaining Sessions:**

Friday, June 13th, 1-5 PM

Westminster House (101 NW 23rd St.)

Thursday, June 19th (time TBA)

Memorial Union 206

### ***Hear Something? Let Us Know!***

If you have questions or concerns about treatment of graduate employees or your rights under the contract, don't hesitate to contact us:  
[unite@cge6069.org](mailto:unite@cge6069.org) or 757-7141.

### **Summer Health Insurance and COBRA**

Hey grad assistants - for those of you not on assistantships over the summer, you're faced with the prospect of either not having health insurance or paying the full premium over the summer. Don't worry, CGE is working on making that choice more bearable - we're trying to get the university to help defray the cost of summer health insurance. In the meantime, however, be sure to make that choice by June 30! Contact Student Health Services for help:  
[OSUStudent.Insurance@oregonstate.edu](mailto:OSUStudent.Insurance@oregonstate.edu)  
or 541-737-7568.

## CGE and AFT-OR Working Together

In light of the lack of progress at the bargaining table, CGE and AFT-OR contacted dozens of members of the Oregon Legislature. Forty-two State Senators and Representatives, including local Representative Sara Gelser and Speaker of the House Jeff Merkley (whose letter is reproduced at right) signed letters in support of CGE and our efforts. The names of the legislators who signed letters are below.

Rep. Jeff Barker  
Rep. Phil Barnhart  
Rep. Vickie Berger  
Rep. Elizabeth Terry Beyer  
Rep. Deborah Boone  
Rep. Scott Bruun  
Rep. Peter Buckley  
Rep. Ben Cannon  
Rep. Brian Clem  
Rep. Jean Cowan  
Rep. Chris Edwards  
Rep. David Edwards  
Rep. Larry Galizio  
Rep. Sara Gelser  
Rep. Mitch Greenlick  
Rep. Paul Holvey  
Rep. Dave Hunt  
Rep. Betty Komp  
Rep. Tina Kotek  
Rep. Bob Jenson  
Rep. Greg Macpherson  
Rep. Jeff Merkley  
Rep. Nancy Nathanson  
Rep. Mary Nolan  
Rep. Tobias Read  
Rep. Chuck Riley  
Rep. Arnie Roblan  
Rep. Diane Rosenbaum  
Mike Schaufler  
Rep. Chip Shields  
Rep. Carolyn Tomei  
Rep. Brad Witt  
Sen. Suzanne Bonamici  
Sen. Kate Brown  
Sen. Richard Devlin  
Sen. Mark Hass  
Sen. Rick Metsger  
Sen. Rod Monroe  
Sen. Bill Morrisette  
Sen. Floyd Prozasnski  
Sen. Ben Westlund  
Sen. Kurt Schrader

### OPEN LETTER FROM LEGISLATORS

We, the undersigned members of the Oregon State Senate and House of Representatives, call upon Oregon State University to negotiate a fair contract with the graduate employees represented by the Coalition of Graduate Employees (CGE), AFT Local 6069, specifically in relation to its bargaining request for fair-share.

CGE is a democratic, member-run organization and its decisions and goals are transparent to its members and the campus community. CGE is the only organization exclusively dedicated to the working conditions of all graduate employees, and it is one of the largest membership organizations at OSU. CGE is affiliated with the over 30,000 Oregon members of the American Federation of Teachers, a national organization with strong commitment to competitive, publicly funded education. There is no reason to deny CGE the benefit offered to other unions and recognized student organizations at OSU.

The Oregon Legislature has specifically provided for employees of state institutions, including its public universities, the right to form organizations for the purpose of engaging in collective bargaining. *"Experience in private and public employment has also proved that protection by law of the right of employees to organize and negotiate collectively safeguards employees and the public from injury...by encouraging practices fundamental to the peaceful adjustment of disputes...and by establishing greater equality of bargaining power between public employers and public employees..." (ORS 243.656).*

Union membership or non-membership is protected as a matter of individual choice. However, the legislature has mandated that employers bargain over requests by their unions to deduct the cost of representing and advocating for all employees, regardless of membership. The resulting agreement is called a "fair-share" agreement.

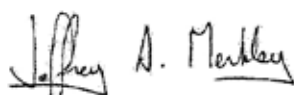
Fair-share agreements are part of nearly every public employee collective bargaining agreement in Oregon. The Oregon University System has negotiated fair-share agreements at every campus where the faculty has formed a union: Portland State University, Southern Oregon University, Western Oregon University and Eastern Oregon University. Classified staffs at all OUS campuses, including OSU, have long enjoyed collective bargaining agreements that include fair-share. The University of Oregon negotiated fair-share with its graduate employees over 25 years ago. CGE is the only group of union-represented employees denied fair-share, both at Oregon State University and among its peers in the Oregon University System.

There is no cost for Oregon State University to negotiate a fair-share agreement with CGE. A fair-share agreement would simply mandate that, in observance of the union's legal obligation to bargain the same salaries and benefits for everyone, everyone should in turn contribute to the financial cost of their representation.

The principle of mandating equal contributions for the greater good is well known to all Oregon public universities. For example, OSU and other OUS institutions collect the costs associated with the functions of student government and campus-recognized student organizations from all students and graduate employees. These costs, while set by the students themselves through their democratic process, are collected universally from all students as a condition of attending Oregon State University.

Fair-share is good public policy and consistent with OSU values of accountability, diversity, integrity, respect, and social responsibility. Fair-share has been extended already to the faculty, adjunct faculty, classified staff, and graduate employees in local unions throughout the Oregon University System. Fair-share is in keeping with established practice by OUS member institutions in regards to its relations with unions and recognized student organizations. In consideration of the above, we ask you to extend fair-share to the graduate employees at Oregon State University.

Sincerely,



# Member of the Month

## Erin Lieuallen

“No salary increase?! No fee relief? You have to be kidding me!”



Erin is a 1st year M.S. student in Geology, having started after completing two years as a post-bacc. When Erin is not doing fieldwork studying the lavas of Mount Hood, she contributes to making CGE a stronger organization in many ways. During the last year Erin has taken an active role in the union by reaching out to other grad assistants. Most recently, she and Logan Mitchell attended the AFT-Oregon Convention in Sunriver.

If you see Erin around campus, be sure to thank her for everything she does for all of us. If you are not yet a member of CGE you can show your appreciation of her efforts by becoming a member. If you are already a member, follow Erin's lead and become more active in working to build the union!

Do you want CGE to attend an event, speak, or hand out leaflets?

Do you want CGE to come speak to Graduate Students in your department?

Do you have an idea for organizing?

Just call or stop by the office or email an EC member!



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