



Graduate Teaching  
Fellows Federation  
AFT/AFL-CIO, Local 3544

**UOregon and Grad Employees Settle Contract – Strike Ends**

December 10, 2014

The Graduate Teaching Fellows Federation (GTFF) and the University of Oregon Administration reached a tentative agreement on a new collective bargaining agreement early Wednesday morning. The agreement ends an 8 day strike by the union of 1,500 graduate employees.

The new agreement includes 5% raises to minimum wages retroactive for the current school year and another 5% for next year, and creates a new Graduate Student Assistance Fund. The Fund is accessible to all graduate students when facing financial challenges due to illness, injury or adding children to their families.

The two teams had been deadlocked on guarantees related to access to the Fund. The solution came in allowing the Fund to be overseen by a 7-member committee, the majority of which are graduate students.

Half of the graduate student seats are appointed by the union, the other half elected by the UO graduate student body.

“The Fund is not everything we had hoped to achieve, but this is progress in a national movement to strengthen the rights of workers to protected time off from work,” GTFF President Joe Henry said. “The Fund will allow our members to have the ability to be at their best while teaching. We will no longer be forced to sacrifice our health and teaching quality to avoid loss of income”

In response to the strike, the Administration canceled classes, hired replacement instructors, and asked faculty to change the format of some exams to make them simpler to grade. Some students were given the option to skip taking a final exam all together.

Even while not teaching, the graduate employees found ways to help their students. During final exams, picketing was done silently and grads handed out snacks and pencils to students on their way to exams.

“We're very happy for the strike to end,” Henry said. “Our students can now get adequate assessments of their progress and learning during the quarter.”

The GTFF can be contacted via  
Joe Henry – President – [president@gtff.net](mailto:president@gtff.net) - 760-333-5735



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Amber Cooper – Staff Organizer – [amber@gtff.net](mailto:amber@gtff.net) – 773-706-0311