

# **STEWARD'S HANDBOOK**

## **2011-12**

**Graduate  
Teaching  
Fellows  
Federation**

**AFT-Oregon, AFT, AFL-CIO**





## **The Main Duties of a Steward Are:**

1. Attending Executive Council meetings, once a month for 2 hours. Representing the members in their worksite at Executive Council meetings. Helping to decide the future of the GTFF.
2. Assisting the Executive Board in organizing members of the worksite. Mobilizing members to become active in the union.
3. Becoming familiar with the Collective Bargaining Agreement and reporting to the Grievance Officer potential grievance issues.
4. Forwarding emails and hanging informational fliers. Maintaining the GTFF bulletin board in the worksite.
5. Attending General Membership Meetings and encouraging others to attend as well.
6. Attending the E-Council Retreat.

## **WELCOME STEWARDS!**

Stewards play a central role in the Graduate Teaching Fellows Federation--quite possibly the rockiest grad union around. This handbook is designed to help orient you to your new job and answer questions you may have. The information in this manual comes from a variety of sources within the labor movement, especially from other graduate employee unions (GEUs), and from present and former GTFF stewards, officers, and staff members. If you have suggestions for improvement or think we missed anything, just let us know.



You should always feel free to discuss union issues with and ask questions of your fellow stewards, board members, and union staff. This is a wonderful way for you and for the people with whom you're speaking to learn more about the union together. It's through this interaction and collegiality that the GTFF grows stronger. In some sense, we learn from each other while we do our thing.

## **The GTFF Executive Council:**

### **The Stewards & the Union Officers**

The stewards and the board members together form the Executive Council, which meets monthly. Between meetings, stewards and board members share and discuss information via the Executive Council e-mail list. **Because the E-Council is so important to the effective functioning of the GTFF, attendance at all E-Council meetings is imperative.**



The Executive Council formulates policy, plans activities, and provides guidance for our negotiating team before and during collective bargaining with the university. It also gives stewards a way to share information and exchange ideas with each other to build and grow the union.

### **Steward Reports**

At the E-Council meeting each steward gives a department

report. This is the space for you to bring up any potential grievances, questionable practices, and/or suspicious actions your department has taken. **If you have questions, ask!** Experts are in the room to help you. Plus, the same issues tend to come up in various different departments at different times. Your question is likely to help someone else down the road. The department report is also the place to let the leadership know what the members of your department are thinking. If people are asking questions about bargaining, it would indicate the bargaining team is not doing a good job of getting the message out.



**In order to have something to say, you should take some time to talk to your colleagues before the E-Council meeting. A half-hour or so of door-knocking, hallway-chatting, or lounge-visiting will keep you in touch**

**with your department and will give you something more to say at E-Council than, “Nothing to report.”**

## **Organizing**

The GTFF is what is known as an “organizing-model union.” This means that we are always organizing. Being a contingent union with part-time, short-term members, we



**“Hi, my name is Jane and I’m the department steward for the GTFF. Can I talk to you about the union for a couple of minutes?”**

It only takes a couple of minutes to get a sense of the person and their interest in the union. Organizing is, however, more than just signing up members. Getting and keeping members involved is the key to a successful union. The best way to get members involved is to keep them informed of union events and activities, ask them for input, ask them what they think about the union...in other words, talk to them. And keep talking to them.



## Grievances

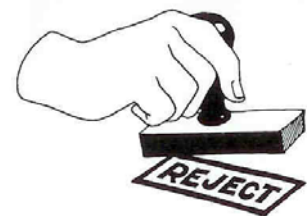
A grievance is typically a violation of the contract, but it can also be a violation of departmental policy (GDRS) or, in rare cases, a violation of a past practice. Therefore, it is important for stewards to have a working knowledge of the contract and their department's GDRS.

For us to continue to grow as a union, we must begin to seek out grievances on the individual level. As a steward, it is your job to keep your ears open; if you hear someone complaining, griping, and/or beefing, ask yourself what the union can do to help, then talk to the member.

It is important to remember that, as the department steward, while you may be the first person a grievant approaches, you are not alone! The GTFF has a grievance officer to provide guidance and help and staff to give advice.

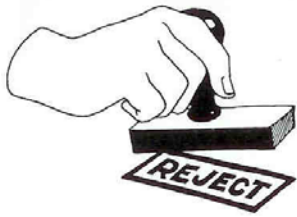
### *Grievance Timelines/Definitions (Article 13)*

Step 1: **Thirty working days** from the first incident or commencement of the condition that lead to the grievance. This grievance is **informal**. The grievant, or you as the grievant's representative, should talk with the professor or supervisor that caused the grievance to occur and see if you can get a resolution to the problem. Contract violations often occur because the professor simply



does not know what is in the contract. The supervisor has **five (5) days to respond** with a decision.

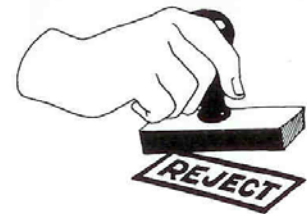
Step 2: **Within ten working days** of the Step 1 decision, a **written** grievance can be presented to the **Department Head**. Within another **ten working days** a meeting should be held between the grievant and/or the



grievant's representative to discuss the grievance and possible solutions. The Department Head has **fifteen working days** to issue a **written response**.

Step 3 and beyond: **While a grievant or steward can pursue a grievance at the Step 3 level, all stewards are strongly urged to contact the VP-Grievances and/or Dave.**

A Step 3 Grievance is filed with the **Office of the President** and must be done so within **ten working days** of the decision at Step 2. A meeting will be held, typically with VP of Institutional Affairs Brain Smith, and a **decision will issued within twenty working days of the filing of the grievance.**



Within **twenty working days** of a negative decision at Step 3, the **Executive Board**—and only the Executive Board—can decide to pursue the grievance to **arbitration**.

**\*NOTE:** While you shouldn't dally in the filing of a grievance, never let a missed deadline stop you. Denying a grievance on the grounds of a missed deadline is the weakest of all possible grounds and demonstrates to an arbitrator that the Employer does not take the issue of contract enforcement seriously.

### **Remember!**

**Not all problems can be solved through the grievance process, but almost all problems can be made better when we use the power of the union. Just because the contract doesn't address a particular situation, doesn't mean that you can't organize your department around the issue. You could get everyone together and demand a meeting with the**

*What does a grievance look like?*

The following few sentences outline a proper grievance.

On, or about, \_\_\_\_\_ (date) \_\_\_\_\_ the \_\_\_\_\_  
Department violated the Collective Bargaining Agreement  
between the Graduate Teaching Fellows Federation and the  
University of Oregon, specifically, but not limited to,  
Article \_\_\_\_\_, Section \_\_\_\_\_ when it \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_.

The \_\_\_\_\_ Department should \_\_\_\_\_  
to correct this violation.

**So a grievance might read like this:**

On, or about, Feb. 23, 2011, the History Department  
violated the Collective Bargaining Agreement between the  
University of Oregon and the Graduate Teaching Fellows  
Federation, specifically, but not limited to, Article 21,  
Section 1, when it required Sam Jones to work more than  
88 hours in a term, despite his .2FTE appointment.

The History Department should pay Sam Jones for all the  
hours he worked to correct this violation.

It is as easy as that. It is standard labor understanding that  
most grievances are not written by professionals. You  
should not worry about getting everything just right or  
ruining a grievance because you mis-worded something.  
Go ahead and file whatever you can if you are under

deadline pressure—you can always amend the grievance later.

## **Membership Communications**

The GTFF currently has an email discussion list for stewards (ecouncil@gtff.net) where a variety of union and union-related info gets passed around. One of the important duties of a steward is to evaluate the material which is being sent over the list and forward on to their department that material they think their colleagues might be interested in.

Stewards should also make an effort to make their members aware of the website. People have put a lot of work into the site and it looks awesome. Making your members aware that the web contains all the info they could ever want to know about the GTFF will cut down on the research you have to do to answer your member's questions. It's a great resource for you as well. Make sure you check it often!

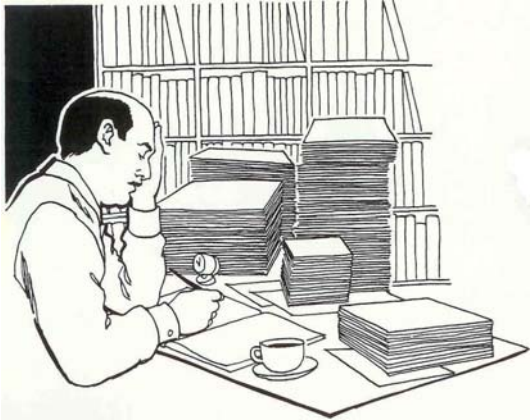
From time to time, you might be asked to print out and post a flyer



on the GTFF bulletin board in your department, especially when bargaining heats up. You should know where your department bulletin board is; if you do not, ask Dave. If you know of unrepresented departments in your building, throw a flyer on their bulletin board as well. When we all pitch in on this particular chore, it saves the staff hours of time.

### A Sad Day

It's possible that at times your academic or personal needs may require all your energy. This is regrettable but understandable. If you feel that you will be unable to perform your stewardship duties for a time, please inform the Vice President for Organizing or Dave to ensure that someone else can pick up the slack until you are able to resume your duties.



### Executive Council Meetings

<b>Month</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Time</b>	<b>Place</b>
May			
June			
October			
November			



Ph: 344-0832 Fax: 344-2105 Web: <http://gtff.net>

Office Hours  
Monday-Friday  
9 am to 4 pm

GTFF Executive Board

President	Jeremy Strickler	president@gtff.net
Treasurer	Steven McCallister	treasurer@gtff.net
VP-Organizing	Judith Lechner	organizer@gtff.net
VP-Grievances	Travis Waterman	grievance@gtff.net
VP-Operations	Heather Holmquest	operations@gtff.net
VP-External Relations	Sarah Praskievicz	external.relations@gtff.net
VP-Member Communications	Bryce Peake	member.communications@gtff.net
VP-Political Education	Mara Williams	political.education@gtff.net

GTFF Staff

Benefits Administrator	Lisa Hamilton	lisa@gtff.net
Organizer	Dave Cecil	dave@gtff.net

PacificSource Contact Info

Ph: 541-684-5582 or 888-977-9299  
Address: PacificSource Health Plans  
PO Box 7068 Eugene, OR 97401