



## CONFIDENTIAL

### Memorandum

To: Deans and Directors  
From: Doug Blandy, Senior Vice Provost, Office of Academic Affairs  
Barbara Altmann, Senior Vice Provost, Office of Academic Affairs  
Bill Brady, Senior Director of Employee and Labor Relations, Human Resources

**RE: ACADEMIC PLANNING DURING POSSIBLE GRADUATE TEACHING FELLOWS FEDERATION (GTFF) STRIKE**

#### Memo Summary:

**Objective:** to ensure minimal disruption to classes and other services for our students. We are prepared to continue normal operations for the duration of the strike.

**Graduate students** are students first

- The university will continue to engage each GTF as a student
- Each GTF can decide whether to strike
- “One-cross” policy
- No retaliation against strike GTFs

**Public employees** are prohibited from honoring picket lines of bargaining units other than their own

- Variety of options available to covered work normally performed by striking GTF members.
- University may seek volunteers from faculty ranks. All additional work will be compensated.

**Planning guidance**

- Teaching function strategies
- Final exams and grading strategies
- Administrative and research function strategies

**Graduate Research Fellows**

## Overview

The university is preparing for the possibility of a GTFF strike. Though the GTFF has declared impasse, the union must still hold a strike vote and there is still the possibility that the parties will resolve their differences and reach a tentative agreement to avert a strike. Nevertheless, it is imperative that there are processes in place to ensure minimal disruption to our students.

The University recently formed an Academic Continuity Team (“ACT”), which is working to identify needs during periods of interruption and formulating coping strategies to ensure continued delivery of classes and other services to students. Though the creation of the team has been motivated by the potential of a strike, the processes created are applicable to various types of events that have the potential to interrupt classes and services. These events include natural disasters, weather emergencies, pandemics, and civil unrest. ACT is comprised of representatives from Academic Affairs, Office of the Registrar, Human Resources, Enterprise Risk Services, the Academic Leadership Team, General Counsel’s Office, Graduate School, Media Relations, and Office of the Vice President for Research and Innovation.

## Engagement with Graduate Students

It is important to recognize that all of our graduate students, including Graduate Teaching Fellows and Graduate Research Fellows (hereafter “GTFs”), are students first. We will continue to support and educate our graduate students during a strike. GTFs will be expected to fulfill their obligations as students.

During a strike, those in the GTFF bargaining unit have a right to decide whether to strike or continue to work. Administrators and supervisors of GTFs must not attempt to influence GTFs as to their decision to honor the strike. There can also be no retaliation against GTFs if they choose to strike.

Additional information will be forthcoming as to how the university will be tracking which GTFs are present and working and which have decided to strike. We will have a one-cross policy. If a GTF crosses the picket line and begins working during the strike, and then subsequently strikes, they will not be permitted to return to work for the duration of the strike.

We are aware that there are some complications related to individuals who do the same work as a graduate student and as a GTF. GTFs on strike will be permitted to continue working on projects in their capacity as graduate students.

Further guidance on engaging GTFs will be available on the Graduate School website at <https://gradschool.uoregon.edu/gtf/bargaining-updates>.

## Engagement of Faculty

As the university prepares for a possible GTFF strike, a chief concern amongst departments and units is how to deploy faculty during the strike period. It is unknown at this time how long a strike would last, if it occurs, or what percentage of graduate teaching

fellows would walk off the job. The university will be prepared to continue normal operations for many weeks should the parties not come to an agreement.

State law prohibits public employees from honoring the picket lines of a bargaining unit other than their own. Faculty, OAs, and classified staff, therefore, cannot honor the GTFF strike and refuse to come to work or refuse to perform duties within the scope of their positions. Department Heads are expected to work with their deans to ensure work previously performed by striking GTFs is being covered and that the departments are operating as smoothly as possible. If a strike occurs, supervisors should report any instances where employees, other than GTFs, are refusing to do perform their normally assigned duties. Guidance will be forthcoming on reporting refusals to perform normal duties.

How the university engages faculty to perform duties not currently assigned to them during a GTFF strike is not clearly described in law. It is important to remember that while most of our faculty members are covered by the collective bargaining agreement between the university and United Academics (UA), many have been excluded from the bargaining unit due to title or the performance of supervisory functions. Within the context of a GTFF strike, different rules will apply for represented and unrepresented faculty members.

#### *Represented Faculty*

Article 40, Section 2 of the UA collective bargaining agreement provides:

In the event of a strike by other employees of the university, bargaining unit faculty members, if requested by the University, will consult about how work which was previously performed by a striking employee will be covered. Any work previously performed by a striking employee assigned to a bargaining unit faculty member shall be considered an overload assignment. Bargaining unit faculty members will not unreasonably refuse to perform such work.

In addition to this language, there was significant discussion at the bargaining table about the role of faculty in the event of a GTFF strike. It is generally understood that supervisors can approach represented faculty and engage them in a dialogue about assisting for the duration of the strike. This assistance may include, but is not limited to: teaching, grading, or participating in the hiring of replacement workers. All work related to a strike done by represented faculty will be considered overload, assigned an FTE, and compensated accordingly. Guidance will be forthcoming as to general parameters for assignment of FTE for this work.

Currently, United Academics and the University are not in agreement as to whether supervisors can assign the work if the represented faculty member refuses. Based on the union's concerns at the table, it is expected that refusals will likely be related to the extent of the work covered (more than is reasonable) or the faculty member's political objections to aiding the administration during a strike. Every effort should be made to find volunteers to cover the work. In the event that there is a specific need that may require assigning work to a represented faculty member who has

refused to accept it, please contact Academic Affairs for further guidance about that particular situation.

### *Unrepresented Faculty*

Similar to represented faculty, we will be seeking volunteers from among our unrepresented faculty ranks for coverage of work previously assigned to GTFs. Unlike represented faculty, there is no ambiguity as to whether departments can explicitly assign the work should the need arise. Again, every effort should be made to find volunteers to cover the work. Supervisors should discuss with faculty at the time of the new assignment the compensation for the additional work. There is considerable flexibility in the means of compensation and faculty may wish to consider overload, release from other duties, or a lump sum. In the event that there is a specific need that may require assigning work to an unrepresented faculty member who has refused to accept it, please contact Academic Affairs for further guidance about that particular situation.

### General Planning Guidance

The timing of a GTFF strike is still uncertain and could fall during weeks 9, 10, or finals week. It is important that departments have clear plans in place for covering teaching, research and administrative functions that may be impacted by a strike. The following should be used as a guide to determining which coping strategies may be most efficient in providing coverage. For now, the following is guidance to start thinking about potential strategies. As more information becomes available about the potential strike date, you may be asked to participate in additional surveys to document coping strategies and connect your department with central resources.

### *Teaching Function Strategies*

For a potential strike occurring during week 9 or 10, departments should have a plan in place for covering instruction that is performed by GTFs. The following are potential coping strategies to consider. Please identify and consider the most cost effective means of covering the work.

1. Assign alternative assignments (e.g., podcasts, readings, etc...) which provide the amount of student engagement hours as would have occurred without the strike.
2. Use existing adjunct instructors in department by increasing their FTE.
3. Hire qualified individuals using your department's existing adjunct pool.
4. Hire qualified non-GTFF graduate students.
5. Hire recently retired faculty from your department. Note, Unclassified Personnel Services can provide you with information about who might be eligible.
6. Assign qualified Officers of Administration (OAs) who have volunteered. Duties performed by OAs beyond normal load must be compensated. The Academic Continuity Team will be collecting information on those who volunteer and this

information will be shared with departments where individuals may be qualified to teach.

7. Hire LCC instructors or other community subject matter experts.
8. Recruit existing faculty members in your department (using the guidance provided on engaging represented and unrepresented faculty above). Please note with this option, departments will need to estimate the overload FTE that these assignments will generate. More information on the calculation of overload will be available soon.

Note: Additional guidance will be provided if hiring an individual is the selected coping strategy.

### *Finals and Grading Strategies*

For a strike occurring on or after finals week, departments should have a plan in place for covering finals and grading that is performed by GTFs.

1. Consider whether the final exam can be reformatted so that it can be graded easily (e.g., Scantron or multiple-choice). Please note that the reformatted final exams should have an equal level of rigor as originally planned.
2. To provide proctor coverage for exams, please use the teaching function strategies above.
3. Provide students with the following options:
  - a. Forgo the final and take the grade they had going into the final
  - b. Take the final, but receive an “X” (missing grade) until such time that the finals can be graded

### *Administrative and Research Function Strategies*

Consider the following coverage strategies for administrative and research functions performed by GTFs or GRFs. These strategies are not in order of priority.

1. Use current staff to cover the functions (e.g. reassignment, increasing FTE when applicable). Duties performed above and beyond the normal
2. Use alternative methods to offer services (e.g. via email or web postings to serve more people)
3. Postpone or reschedule events or tasks
4. Reduce or suspend services
5. Hire temporary workers

Notes for Graduate Research Fellows (GRFs):

- PIs with concerns about meeting the specific aims of their sponsored activity should work closely with Sponsored Project Administrators in Sponsored Project Services.
- Units should review all grants to determine how a possible strike may impact grant terms.
- PIs should contact Moira Kiltie in the Office of the Vice President for Research and Innovation at [kiltie@uoregon.edu](mailto:kiltie@uoregon.edu) should additional questions arise.