



COALITION OF GRADUATE EMPLOYEES

**WELCOME TO EMPLOYMENT AT OSU,
AND WELCOME TO YOUR...**

**UNION UNION
UNION UNION
UNION UNION**

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WHAT IS A UNION?

UNIONIZED GRAD WORKERS AT OSU

A Union is a group of workers who organize together to protect and improve the conditions of their work.

We are employees united to ensure we have the best workplace possible and to ensure OSU serves us, our students, and our community. Unions bring democracy, dignity, and respect to our work and our lives.

CGE is democratic and all leaders are grads elected by their fellow workers. CGE is our tool as grad students to improve our working conditions. There are multiple elections every year, dozens of positions to get involved with, and priorities come from the bottom-up, not the top-down.

UNIONIZED WORKERS AT OREGON STATE UNIVERSITY

We are part of a community of unionized workers at Oregon State University...

- Faculty are organized as the United Academics at Oregon State University (JAOSU)
- Classified staff are organized as the Service Employees International Union 503, Sublocal 083 (SEIU)

All three unions at Oregon State fight to ensure each and every one of us receives safe working conditions, fair wages, equity, and robust benefits. We are only as strong as we are united.

THE STATE OF UNIONIZED WORKERS IN THE U.S.

Nationwide, unionized workers earn 26.2% more than non-unionized workers.

- Average wage gains through workplace union solidarity are even higher for women and People of Color.

Labor unions have made incredible impacts to working conditions in the US over the last 200+ years! Here are some of the wins we owe to organizing:

- 5 day work week
- Outlawing child labor
- Workplace safety

GRADS ARE WORKERS, TOO



As a Graduate Employee at Oregon State University, you are represented by our Union, the Coalition of Graduate Employees (CGE). Our labor union represents all 1,700+ Graduate Employees at OSU.



We are united not only as Graduate Employees at OSU, but as educators across Oregon and across the United States. We are an affiliate, known as a “Local,” of the American Federation of Teachers. All together, our Federation represents 1.7 million educators across this country.

CGE is not a “third party” between OSU and employees.

We are a democratic structure by-and-for Graduate Employees.

Your union is not a student club. You and your coworkers, together forming your union, are protected by Oregon's Public Employee Collective Bargaining Act as the legal entity representing all Graduate Employees at this University. OSU is legally obligated to negotiate our conditions of employment with us through our union, and to uphold the contract language that both organizations agree to. As a collective, we control our working conditions.

YOUR RIGHTS AT WORK

WE ENFORCE OUR CONTRACT

Our Union is our mechanism for maintaining, improving, and enforcing our rights as workers. No one else is going to do this for us. All of the rights we have, we won together through collective bargaining.

THE CONTRACT

Our rights are laid out in the Collective Bargaining Agreement (CBA, sometimes called “the contract”) with OSU, which we regularly fight to maintain and improve. The CBA establishes wages, benefits, and working conditions and provides a mechanism to address violations and workplace problems.



**CGE
2024-
2027
CBA
HERE**



AS A UNIONIZED GRAD EMPLOYEE, YOU HAVE THE RIGHT ...

- to turn down work that exceeds your assigned workload
- to a workplace free of discrimination and harassment
- to receive employment documents on time
- to use your sick leave when you need it
- to leave an unsafe working environment
- to fight for fair wages and working conditions directly with our Employer

PROBLEMS IN YOUR WORKPLACE

When a grad employee experiences an issue, there are multiple ways for our union to address it. Here's what to do when an issue arises:

1. **Talk to your department steward.** Have a conversation with your fellow worker to identify possible solutions.
 - There is a list of stewards is on our website: cge6069.org/leadership/stewards
2. **Decide whether to pursue a grievance.** Your steward will help you determine whether the issue is resolvable by a grievance.
3. **Pursue other solutions.** Either instead of or in addition to a formal grievance, offer guidance and support, or organize a pressure campaign, depending on what is most helpful to the impacted employee.

Our Contract

BEFORE WE UNIONIZED (pre-1999)

- \$0 for health care
- \$0 to cover fees
- No tuition waiver guarantees
- No paid leave or time off
- No guaranteed access to workspace
- No minimum salary or FTE
- No standards on workloads
- No benefits for international graduate workers
- No ability to file grievances
- No assistance for emergencies

This list is not exhaustive. Many wins and improvements aren't included here.

SINCE WE'VE UNIONIZED (2025)

- 90% of health care paid by OSU
- 90% fee remissions
- Guaranteed tuition waivers
- 15 days time off
- Paid sick leave and sick leave donations
- Guaranteed access to adequate workspace
- Workload maximums
- Minimum salary and FTE
- \$700 SEVIS/visa and DACA reimbursement
- Formal grievance process for contract violations
- \$150,000/year emergency hardship fund

Each workplace protection and benefit we have today came from CGE members past and present. By joining your union, you become a part of a 25-year history at OSU and contribute to building upon these gains.

WHAT WOULD YOU LIKE TO WIN IN A CONTRACT?

If we work together, we can achieve so much more. If we don't join together to advocate for each other, we have a lot to lose.

Have an idea about what you want to see changed in your workplace? There are many ways to contribute to our collective power. See pages 10-11 for more information.

The bottom line? It all starts by talking to your fellow worker and finding a way to get involved. No one else will do it for us, and many hands make light work!

MEMBERSHIP DUES MAKE IT ALL POSSIBLE

Members are able to directly shape their union through participation and formal votes. Members support their union by paying dues (calculated at 2% of your salary). Dues pay for:

- organizing efforts and campaigns, including education and training
- legal and strike support so that we can defend our contract
- social events
- support staff who help us keep CGE running

Without these dues, your union would not exist. To make sure we respect all members' hard-earned dues, members like you make the decisions about how your dues are spent.

Dues let us collectively pool our resources so we can support each other. OSU has a team of six-figure suits whose sole jobs are to find ways to skirt our contract. Our dues let us counter that by pooling our resources to defend our contract and be prepared to win improvements in the future.



**WE NEED EVERY
GRAD EMPLOYEE
TO STAND
TOGETHER. WILL
YOU JOIN YOUR
UNION TODAY?**

This is a great place to work – only because Graduate Employees have united together and negotiated with OSU as a union. It was through thousands of CGE members attending events, rallies, bargaining, talking to one another, and taking direct action across two decades that we gained the strength to make great things happen.

The Coalition of Graduate Employees is your labor union. By joining CGE as a member, you shape the direction and decisions of your Union. We are the collective voice of all Graduate Teaching (GTA) and Research Assistants (GRA) at Oregon State University.



WAIT, AREN'T I ALREADY A MEMBER?

NO. Membership is not automatic. Before 2018, all workers represented by a union automatically contributed to their union's resources via "fair share dues," and could further elect to becoming voting members by paying slightly higher dues. After the *Janus v. AFSCME* Supreme Court decision in 2018, fair share dues became illegal. Unions all over the country lost a significant portion of their budget—which allows them to defend their hard-won rights—overnight.

To counteract this attack on our power, we need every single grad worker to elect to sign a union card and support their union. This is the only way we can work for better wages and working conditions, none of which OSU gave us without our union fighting for improvements. *It takes all of us, together.*

You can become a member of CGE by signing a membership card at our office, with your union steward, or online at cge6069.org/members/join.

HOW WE WIN

BUILDING A HIGH-PARTICIPATION ORGANIZING MODEL

Our contract wins are directly proportional to the number of workers joining our union and getting involved. We saw this play out in real time during the last contract negotiations, which culminated in a 4-week strike. What we saw during this round of negotiations was a version of OSU emboldened by a series of hits to our union's power: the end of "fair share" dues, the COVID-19 pandemic, and low membership and participation. We built a lot of power in response to OSU's attacks on our rights, but there is still a lot of work to do before we bargain again.

WHAT HAPPENS WHEN WE DON'T ORGANIZE?

During the last round of bargaining, OSU proposed a series of cutbacks to our contract. For example, they wanted to lock us into a longer contract with no yearly raises, a negligible increase to the minimum salary, and major cuts to our grievance procedures. We wanted to win significant increases to our benefits, but we also had to fight to preserve what we had won in the past. This is why it's so important to get every grad involved in the union, both as a member and as a participant. If we don't organize, OSU sees a weakened collective and can claw back the gains we've made over decades of hard work.

BY WORKING TOGETHER, WE CAN ACHIEVE SO MUCH.

We know we deserve better. That's why we spent thousands of hours talking to our coworkers and asking each other what we would sacrifice for a fair contract. In November of 2024, 90% of CGE members voted on whether they would authorize the union to walk off the job and begin a strike. 93% of these members voted "YES." Roughly half of all graduate employees sacrificed their paychecks to win a better contract for everyone. We made significant wins, which you can see in your current contract. We also could have won so much more. Imagine what we could do with supermajority membership and participation. Imagine that workplace and then get involved so that we can build it together. There is no other way. *We need you.*

GRAD EMPLOYEE HEALTH INSURANCE

In 1999, Graduate Employees at Oregon State University achieved one of the most difficult things a group of workers can do: they unionized. Over what? Healthcare. At the time, OSU administration held firm that it would be impossible to provide Graduate Employees health care. So, the employees got together, formed a Union, made a plan, and *they won*.

That legacy continues with each contract cycle. OSU claims they can't afford their share of the health care premiums and administrative fees, and every year we fight back to win. Our health care is ours because of the tens of thousands of hours our union has spent bargaining over it since 1999.

Our ability to retain our health insurance comes from our organizing power. Participation in your union is the best way to keep building this power.

Cigna is the health insurance provider to Graduate Employees at OSU. Partners and dependents are able to enroll as well.

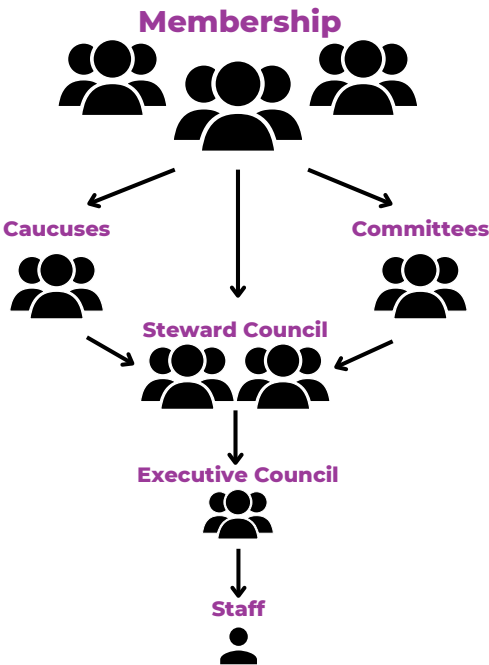
Read through a **quick summary of your healthcare coverage** with this QR code.

You may also find it useful to **activate and view your Cigna ?? profile** with this QR code. This is your online portal for your health insurance information, including coverage and benefits explanations for every healthcare appointment you make. You can use it to print new ID cards, download useful documents, view deductibles, find service providers in-network, and more.

CGE STRUCTURE



The actions and priorities of your employee union come from Graduate Teaching and Research Assistants just like you. This equal leadership structure is specified in CGE's democratic constitution.



Members elect department stewards, and members can form/join caucuses and committees that guide and inform all the union does. These groups inform the Executive Council, a team of elected leaders (grad employees and members themselves) who maintain operations and long-term plans.

Staff hold no decision making power and are supervised by the Executive Council.

GET INVOLVED

CGE is more than a collective of employees fighting for and winning a great place to work. **We are a social space to connect, an organization committed to developing and growing new leaders, and an activist hub for OSU and the Corvallis community.**

There are many ways to get involved in your union after you join CGE:

Join a Caucus or Committee

Caucuses are where members with particular interests or identities come together to direct the work of our union. Committees work on specific projects, like proposing changes to our budget. If you have an idea for a new caucus or committee, reach out and we can get it started together!

Caucuses

- Anti-Harassment Caucus
- Disability Justice Caucus
- Environmental Justice Caucus
- Housing Caucus
- International Student Caucus
- Mental Health Caucus
- Pride Caucus
- Women of Color Caucus
- Working Parents Caucus

Committees

CGE-OSU joint committees:

- Transportation
- Health & Safety
- Health Insurance Advisory
- Housing
- Supervisor Training

CGE committees:

- Finance Committee
- Constitution Committee

Join the Bargaining Team

The b-team develops bargaining strategy, surveys members, researches and drafts proposals, and negotiates with OSU at the bargaining table. We always need more members, so if you want to have a say in the language that governs our working conditions, we need your voice!

Join the Contract Action Team

The CAT does the "boots-on-the-ground" organizing work to support negotiations outside of the bargaining table. CATs are the direct action group who plan rallies, protests, and other organizing campaigns that demonstrate our power as a collective. If you are interested in direct action, we need you on the CAT!

No prior experience necessary: we will teach you what you need to know!

Become a Steward in your Department

Stewards act as leaders within their department for all union-related concerns and projects. They are organizers, asking their coworkers about their conditions and building a plan to win together. Our constitution allows for one steward for every ten grad students in a department, meaning we can have close to 200 stewards if enough workers step forward! We need stewards in almost every department.

With more stewards participating in union activity, we can make sure the union is the best representative of our collective interests as possible. We can address contract violations more quickly, organize for better conditions in our labs and buildings, make exams and policies more fair, and generally build a better OSU! Don't let lack of experience prevent you from becoming a steward: we love training new leaders and do it throughout the academic year. Together, the stewards form the Steward Council.

Run for office in the Executive Council

The Executive Council (EC) is made of 10 elected positions that do the daily work of running the union. We make important decisions about union activity, informed by workers in caucus, committees, and the Steward Council. Elections are held in the spring of every academic year. All members are asked to vote in EC elections, yet another reason why we need every graduate employee to be a member of their union! Democracy works best when everyone is participating: our union is the best tool we have to ensure a fair workplace. If you disagree with decisions our union is making, step up and get involved! With everyone's voice, we can build a union that works for everyone.

**... THE BEST
UNION IS ONE
WHERE EVERY
WORKER
PARTICIPATES.**

EXPERIENCING A FINANCIAL EMERGENCY?

Your fellow workers fought for assistance with that, too.

After a long fight with the university, we won an addition to our contract that provides for a \$150,000 “hardship fund” for all graduate students who might be experiencing a financial emergency that impacts their work. However, OSU administers this fund, so there are a few things to keep in mind when applying. You need to have completed at least one term as a graduate student *AND* either:

- at least 1/3 of the total required credits towards a graduate degree, or
- at least 24 completed OSU credits towards a graduate degree

Getting an application approved can be tricky! That’s why we created a resource document to help out our fellow workers.

Remember, too, that we can fight for improvements in the hardship fund during future contract cycles, but *we need you* to help build our union’s power to make that possible.

CGE also runs an internal hardship fund that members control and distribute. This means that members review anonymous applications and allocate resources to other members, and are thus able to give priority to certain coworkers, like international workers.

However, ours is funded entirely by associate member dues (fellows and self-funded grads who contribute to our union), meaning we have less money to distribute than OSU. Still, we use the money we have to the best of our ability to help our coworkers when they need it most.

The CGE hardship fund opens 3 times per academic year; check your email for announcements.



RESOURCE DOCUMENT HERE!

CONTACT US!

All of our meetings are open-door. Come and check out a meeting, email us to learn more, come to social events, and get plugged in. We are so excited to meet you!

CGE Leadership 2025-2026

CGE President: Sarah Sellke (she/her), president@cge6069.org

Secretary-Treasurer: Andrew Scherer (he/him),
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