



## ***Member Handbook***

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Website: [cge6069.org](http://cge6069.org)  
Email: [solidarity@cge6069.org](mailto:solidarity@cge6069.org)  
541-757-7141 101 NW 23<sup>rd</sup> St

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## Introduction

In this member handbook you will find a basic introduction to the Coalition of Graduate Employees (CGE) and unions more generally, as well as how members (or in union language the rank-and-file) give the union its power.

CGE not only strives to empower its rank-and-file in the workplace, but seeks to create strong bonds of solidarity between members.

**CGE is your union, not a third-party representing your interests.** By joining CGE as a full member, you will shape the direction and decisions of your union. The union's interests and your interests are one and the same.



## What Is A Union?

A union is made up of workers who organize collectively to protect and improve the conditions of their work.

In a typical work setting, power is exclusively held by bosses. This arrangement leaves the individual worker vulnerable and likely to suffer poor working conditions. A union alters this relationship of power. Workers in a union stand together and move from vulnerability to empowerment. Therefore, **unions bring democracy into the workplace.**

Not all unions organize themselves in the same way, because of this the rest of this manual focuses on CGE. **Our union is deeply democratic and led by its rank-and-file workers** (meaning you). Every member has a voice in the union, and every member's issues matter. This means that an injury to anyone is an injury to all, and if the boss treats us unfair we will fight together so that we can beat the boss.

Visit our Resources page online to learn more  
<http://cge6069.org/resources>

## **CGE: Who We Are and What We Do**

CGE is the labor union representing Graduate Teaching Assistants and Graduate Research Assistants at OSU. Graduate employees founded CGE in 1999, and we won our first contract in 2001. CGE is an activist, democratic, and member-run organization committed to the following objectives:

**Organizing:** Empower graduate employees at OSU through building relationships and member-driven collective action.

**Collective Bargaining:** Advance the interests and rights of graduate employees through the bargaining and maintenance of a fair working contract.

**Education:** Promote quality education and work to protect and promote the role of graduate employees and higher education workers in the delivery of quality education and research for the public.

**Equity and Justice:** Fight all forms of bias on the basis of race, creed, religious affiliation, sex, age, disability, body type, sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, lifestyle, political affiliation, economic status, color, ethnicity, national origin, parental status, veteran status, or other characteristics subject to discrimination.

**Solidarity:** Promote the mutual interests of all working people through collaboration and cooperation with other people and groups on campus and beyond.

# **Your Rights As An OSU Employee**

CGE has successfully negotiated a **Collective Bargaining Agreement** (CBA or called “the contract”) with OSU which guarantees health care for graduate employees, workplace safety, paid sick leave, and protections on how many hours you are expected to work.

The full contract can be found on our website:

<http://cge6069.org/about/cba/>

As a CGE member, **you are entitled to file grievances about your work if the conditions are not acceptable**. CGE has the resources and experience to file grievances and improve the issues you are dealing with on the job, whether over harassment, unpaid services, workload, or anything else you find unacceptable about your employment.

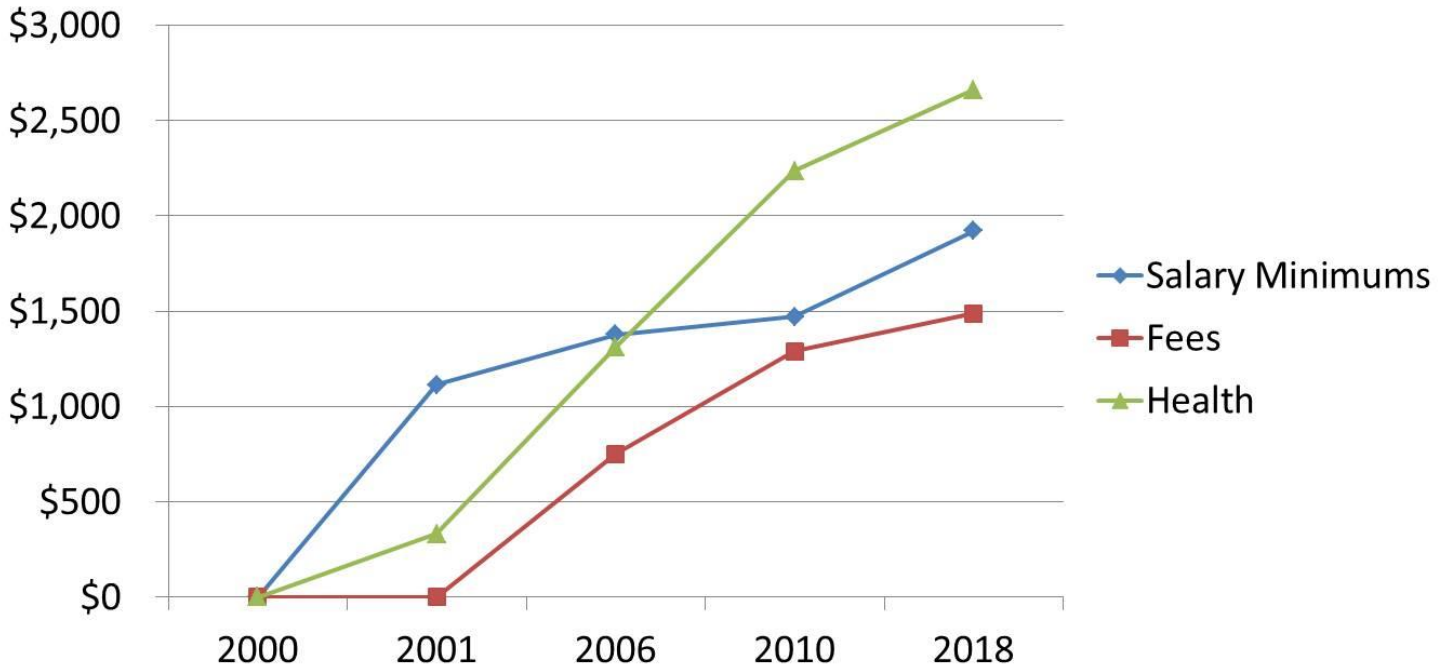
More importantly, our union is most effective when its members understands the power of collective action in improving the work standards at OSU. The contract protections secured are only strong if we apply pressure on the bosses when needed, and this often happens outside of formal grievances.

## **Union Gains Through Time**

One of the earliest union movements in the United States rallied around the slogan “8 Hours for Work, 8 Hours for Rest, 8 Hours for What We Will.” This was the campaign which secured **a 40-hour work week and a weekend for laborers**. Before this campaign, the majority of laborers did not receive overtime payments, or even have a right to two days off from work a week. **Unions have secured gains in health care, pension plans, decent wages, workplace safety standards, and protections from harassment and wrongful termination on the jobsite.**

More than these gains though, unions have operated as a vehicle where laborers can shape the conditions of their work where they can decide what forms of work are really valuable and meaningful for a happy life. **Without unions, bosses are prone to exploit workers for their own profits. With unions, workers can determine whether they should have a boss at all.**

## Gains Made By CGE



At minimum, CGE puts an additional \$7,026 in your pocket a term.  
Average costs of dues per year= \$456\* Dues are 2% of salary

Prior to CGE, graduate employees were not guaranteed tuition remission, minimum salaries, fee waivers, or any health care coverage. The above graph provides a visual representation of only a fraction of the gains made by CGE since our first collective bargaining agreement.

For a full list of CGE's gains through time, go to our website at [cge6069.org/about/cba](http://cge6069.org/about/cba)



## CGE Member Benefits

Becoming a member also includes membership discounts with local Corvallis restaurants, movie theaters, and retail shops. Below is our current list of benefits:

- \***Bombs Away Café:** \$1 Off All Pints (except Tuesday)
- \***Corvallis Brewing Supply:** 15% off any beer, cheese or wine starter kit and 10% off any packaged item
- \***Corvallis Used and Vintage Sewing Machines:** Free sewing machine assessment and 10% off all products & services
- \***Darkside Cinema:** Free popcorn with ticket purchase (must bring your own container)
- \***Oregon Coffee and Tea:** 5% off all loose leaf tea and coffee purchases
- \***Pegasus Games:** \$2 Off any game over \$20
- \***Downward Dog on Monroe:** \$1 Off any non-happy hour food
- \***Simple Touch Therapeutic Massage:** 15% off all services

## CGE Social Events

Being in a union is also about creating a deeper sense of community with the folks who work alongside us and live in our neighborhoods. This is why CGE hosts regular social events to help get members connected to each other and build real relationships together. Our events include:

- \***Fall Term BBQ**, usually the beginning of fall term in Avery Park
- \***Trivia Nights**, at DeMaggio's Pizza in Downtown Corvallis.
- \***CGE-GTFF-GEU Brew-Off**, a charity event for the Linn Benton County Food Share hosted with our union cousins GTFF at UO and PSU.
- \***The Great Cover Up**, a concert hosted by GTFF in Spring Term with graduate employee bands playing their favorite live covers.
- \***Thirsty Thursdays & Games**, one Thursday of the term at McMenamin's on Monroe.
- \***CGE Movie Nights** We host regular movie viewings at Westminster House.

# **CGE Governance Structure**

CGE makes decisions using a **consensus process**, meaning each member has equal authority to influence and agree to decisions made by the broader union. To accomplish consensus on such a large scale, **CGE has two councils: the Steward Council and Executive Council.**

Stewards are elected and appointed by department, and serve as the intermediary between their department and the broader union. Steward Council meetings are twice a term.

The Executive Council also has elected appointments, but consists of only seven officer positions. They meet every week and make decisions regarding day to day operations of the union.

**Committees and caucuses are created to handle specific issues/tasks. Current caucuses include Women of Color Caucus, Pride Caucus, Housing Caucus, Anti-Harassment Caucus, Safety, Disability Justice, Environmental Justice, Mental Health, Interantional, and Working Parents Caucus. Email [ec@cge6069.org](mailto:ec@cge6069.org) to connect.**

These Councils make decisions on a consensus basis approved by members during General Membership Meetings (GMMs). GMMs are held once per term, where the biggest decisions, elections, and more are agreed upon by CGE members.

CGE's constitution can be found at [cge6069.org/about/constitution](http://cge6069.org/about/constitution)

## FAQs: General CGE

Q: *Why should I join CGE?*

A: The union only exists when members take ownership over it. **By joining, you are asserting your voice and your values in the union**, and as a collective of workers the union only gets stronger when its member numbers increase.

Q: *Who can join CGE?*

A: **Any OSU graduate employee can join CGE.** GTAs and GRAs who are in the BU can become full members. All other graduate employees, such as those on fellowship or performing hourly work, become associate members.

Q: *How much does it cost to join CGE?*

A: Member dues are 2.0% of your monthly salary before taxes. If you have an appointment for \$1,000 a month, dues would be \$20. Associate member dues are \$10 a month.

Q: *Can I get into trouble for joining CGE?*

A: **No.** All graduate employees have the legal right to join CGE.

Q: *Where do my dues go?*

A: Every one of our dues dollars goes toward building a stronger CGE and a stronger AFT. Our dues pay for our office and administrative staff to keep the union running.

Q: *How do I join?*

A: Sign a blue-card or go online at [cge6069.org/join](http://cge6069.org/join).

# International Students Rights

Q: *Can international students join CGE?*

A: **Yes.** International students have the legal right to join and participate in all aspects of the union. Union membership does not jeopardize your visa.

Q: *Does this mean that even though I'm an international student employee I am still protected by CGE's collective bargaining agreement?*

A: **Yes!** If you work under a department and sign a contract as either a GTA or GRA then you have all the same benefits that all graduate employees receive because of CGE's collective bargaining agreement with the university. This means you get health care, a guaranteed salary, and the right to file grievances.



Want to know more? Interested in joining?  
Awesome! Visit us in person at Westminster House or go  
online to [cge6069.org](http://cge6069.org)

