

# The TUGSA Tribune

*United We Bargain! Divided We Beg.*

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## Your Contract, Your Decision

### Negotiations for a New Contract About to Begin

The current contract, which covers all TAs and RAs, expires on February 15, 2006. TUGSA representatives are therefore preparing to negotiate a new contract for all members to vote on. We do not, however, want merely to renew the current contract, but to improve it.

TUGSA plans to address such issues as: wages, health insurance, leave, gender discrimination and Affirmative Action, and transparency regarding hiring and termination practices.

### PERFORMANCE EVALUATION

Some graduate students are accepted into doctoral programs but refused TA or RAs, for unexplained reasons. Other students have had their TAships denied renewal without warning or explanation, thus forcing them to look for outside employment at short notice.

Even if the denial of a TA or RAship is justifiable, it should be clear why. Those students who have actively sought an explanation for their lack of funding have received various responses; none, however, have had anything to do with questions of merit. One student, who has asked to remain anonymous, was told that her funding had been taken away by mistake but that the mistake could not be rectified during that school year.

Accordingly, TUGSA will be asking that Temple establish clear, publicly available criteria for evaluating the performance of TAs and RAs. TUGSA will also demand that any TA or RA who is terminated, except for just cause (such as incompetence, grave misconduct, or neglect of duty), be given compensatory salary and written notice far enough ahead of time to be useful.

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## Changes Proposed to Graduate Faculty

The Graduate Board and Dean of the Graduate School have proposed changes to graduate faculty structure that could affect doctoral students' choice of dissertation committee chairs.

Under the current structure, students may choose any member of the graduate faculty to be their committee chair (always assuming the lucky one is willing, of course). The proposed changes would divide graduate faculty into three tiers: Graduate Faculty with Privilege to Chair Doctoral Committees, Graduate Faculty, and Adjunct Graduate Faculty. The latter two groups would be allowed to direct master's theses and projects and to serve on doctoral committees, but not to direct them. In order “[t]o qualify for the privilege of chairing doctoral dissertation committees, a regular member of the Graduate Faculty (*not* Adjunct Graduate Faculty) must demonstrate a pattern of productive scholarly activity, including a record of scholarship, publication, and other contribution to the field” (“Graduate Faculty Criteria and Responsibilities,” as approved by the Graduate Board, 26 February 2004).

While the proposed changes have been approved by the Graduate Board, made up of the Graduate School Dean and some Graduate Faculty, they cannot take *de jure* effect until voted on by all Graduate Faculty, which, as of going to press, has still not happened.

Proponents of the policy point out that, under the proposed changes, Adjunct Graduate Faculty appointments are extended from one to four years, thus making it practical for a student to have an Adjunct Graduate Faculty member on her committee. Also proposed is an appeal process for elevating some non-tenure track Adjunct Graduate Faculty members to Graduate Faculty status under special circumstances.

Opponents of the policy argue that, while some changes are necessary to the current policy to make it up-to-date, such changes should be made by the departments themselves (which is allowed under the current policy). The new policy would, if passed, transfer control of faculty governance from the faculty themselves to the Dean of the Graduate School.

As of going to press, it is not known if a vote has actually been taken on the proposed changes by the entire Graduate Faculty (minutes from the last Graduate Board meeting have yet to be posted to the Graduate School website); however, opponents of the proposed policy have sent a petition to the Dean of the Graduate School, requesting a vote, a request which, as it has more than the required number of signatures, must be honored.

### Sources

“Graduate Board Endorses Proposed Policy on Graduate Faculty Membership.” *Temple University Faculty Herald* 35:6 (3 May 2005).

“Graduate Faculty Criteria and Responsibilities.” *Temple University Faculty Herald* 35:6 (3 May 2005).

Korsh, Jim, and Tony Ranere. “Urgent: Graduate Faculty Governance Alert.” *Temple University Faculty Herald* 35:6 (3 May 2005).

*For Graduate Board minutes and a list of members, go to <http://www.temple.edu/grad/about/gradboard.htm>.*

## Getting Involved

Your C.V. may list plenty of teaching experience and even some publications, but more items couldn't hurt, right? And neither could the experience you would gain by joining a TUGSA committee. In doing so, you could help not only yourself but many others.

### Communication Committee

The Communication Committee does exactly what its name implies, providing many opportunities for those interested in honing their writing, communication, and artistic skills by working on the newsletter, website, or fliers and brochures (or all of the above!). Interested? Contact Anna Peak, at [apeak@temple.edu](mailto:apeak@temple.edu).

### Organizing Committee

The Organizing Committee is primarily responsible for recruitment and for educating everyone about contract proposals and, when the time comes, about the progress of contract negotiations. If you're interested in the new contract proposals, or if you want to practice your personal communication and interaction skills, this is the committee to join. Interested? Contact one of the chairs, Jess Brady ([jlbrady@temple.edu](mailto:jlbrady@temple.edu)) or April Logan ([april@tugsa.org](mailto:april@tugsa.org)).

### Political Action Committee

The Political Action Committee forges alliances between TUGSA and other labor and justice organizations both on and off campus. As such, it's an ideal opportunity for those interested in politics, media relations, and, of course, labor and justice issues. Interested? Contact the chair, Jennifer Murphy, at [jmurphy@temple.edu](mailto:jmurphy@temple.edu).

## Taking it to the Streets . . . Churches, Mosques, and Synagogues

*Brian Fink*

Why should the religious community care about the struggles of TUGSA? What do various religious traditions say about justice and worker rights? How can the religious community help us during our upcoming contract negotiations?

Labor unions and congregations are both long-standing anchors of communities, including the Temple University community. They share the common interest of Temple remaining a successful and vibrant institution that respects the surrounding neighborhood and treats its employees with dignity and respect. Each brings a different kind and degree of power and influence to the table, and by working together, that much more can be achieved. Community breeds solidarity and solidarity leads to success.

This summer I had the opportunity to work with TUGSA, as part of the national "Seminary Summer" program, sponsored by the AFL-CIO and Interfaith Worker Justice. As a graduate student in Philadelphia training to become a rabbi, the intersections between religion and social justice have always been very clear to me.

Most religious traditions have texts and tenets that teach about the pursuit of justice and ethical behavior in

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## New Contract, cont.

### Stipend/Salary Ranges at Other Universities

#### WAGES

Before the formation of TUGSA, departments were only required to pay TAs and RAs \$11,000 a year. The current contract raised that salary minimum by over \$2,000 a year and furthermore guaranteed TAs and RAs a yearly raise of 2.75% - almost more important than the initial raise, as even the old figure of \$11,000 may have been princely at one point. However, all of us know that even \$13,000+ is difficult to live on for an entire year, or even an entire school year. Other universities recognize this fact and provide their graduate student employees with stipends or salaries of \$14,000 or more - in some cases significantly more. Nor are these universities all Ivy Leagues; Lehigh University, for example, offers its students up to \$19,500 a year (see inset). It's important to note, too, that Temple is by no means behind the eight-ball in terms of graduate student salaries; Temple's salary minimums are rather above the mean and mode averages. But the fact that many universities, including a number of public universities, provide their students with relatively high funding means that it is by no means unrealistic for TUGSA to negotiate for a higher wage for all the members of its bargaining unit.

#### HEALTH INSURANCE

While the current contract provides comparatively generous coverage for single students, the cost of health insurance for those with dependents is still prohibitively high. TUGSA did win the opportunity for TAs and RAs to enroll domestic partners on their health insurance plans, but the University does not contribute a subsidy towards coverage for domestic partners - the TA or RA must shoulder that burden.

TUGSA therefore plans to negotiate for an increased administration subsidy for dependent and spousal/partner coverage.

#### LEAVE

Parental leave and leave to attend immigration hearings will be another of TUGSA's requests, as well as more leave in general. TUGSA will also be negotiating for a contract that ensures that graduate employees who do take leave are protected from arbitrary termination.

*Students in different fields receive different wages. In general, those in the natural sciences are paid more.*

Arizona State University - \$12,000 - \$17,000  
 Boston University - \$14,000 (humanities, social sciences);  
                                   \$15,000 (natural sciences)  
 Carnegie Mellon University - \$13,000 - \$19,800  
 Florida State University - \$9,000 - \$18,000  
 Indiana University, Bloomington - \$10,000 - \$17,000  
 Lehigh University - \$13,000 - \$19,500  
 Pennsylvania State University, University Park - \$13,000 - \$15,000  
                                   (+ subsidized health insurance for students' spouses and children)  
 University of Alabama, Birmingham - \$16,500 - \$17,000  
 University of Michigan - \$13,500 - \$14,000  
                                   (+ subsidized health insurance for students' spouses and children)  
 University of Texas, Austin - \$11,000 - \$20,000  
                                   (TAs at lower end, RAs at higher; all receive \$3000 for health insurance)  
 Utah State University - \$9,000 - \$21,000 (avg. more like \$15,000)

#### Source

"The Stipend Gap: Survey Data." *The Chronicle of Higher Education*  
 (15 October 2004). Online (no subscription necessary to view) at:  
<http://chronicle.com/stats/stipends/>.

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## **New Contract, cont.**

### **AFFIRMATIVE ACTION**

The University claims a commitment to diversity, but the administration has yet to provide TUGSA with comprehensive demographics on TAs and RAs and the entire graduate student population. From the information that has been made available, it appears that racial and ethnic minorities make up 21% of part-time faculty but only 18% of the full-time faculty at Temple in 2004.

TUGSA accordingly plans to fight for a complete analysis of the demographics of graduate employees and to strengthen the contract's language regarding Affirmative Action and non-discrimination. TUGSA also wants to add language protecting TAs and RAs from discrimination based on gender identity or expression.

### **HOW YOU CAN HELP**

How realistic are these demands? They are realistic in proportion to TUGSA's strength. It was the solidarity of more than 400 students that led to the formation of TUGSA in 2001 (95% voting for, 5% against) and thus to the benefits of the current contract. Since then, TUGSA's membership has increased, as has the overall number of graduate students.

If you would like to join TUGSA and be able to vote on the new contract, congratulations on your courage. Just fill out the form on the back of this newsletter and send to us (inter-office mail address 083-86), or go to [www.tugsa.org](http://www.tugsa.org).

## **Taking it to the Streets, cont.**

society. However, not everyone successfully makes the leap from abstract pronouncements to concrete actions in support of actual worker demands. Many clergy with whom I met over the summer support the rights of labor unions in theory, but need an extra nudge before choosing to engage in the struggle.

Through the auspices of Jobs with Justice Philadelphia, and its local Interfaith Committee on Worker Justice, I met with many religious leaders over the summer, educated them about TUGSA's situation, and began the conversation of how the labor and religious communities in Philadelphia could successfully work together. Some were willing to have their congregations participate in the national "Labor in the Pulpits" initiative, in which the word "labor" becomes the theme for worship services over Labor Day weekend. In partnership with the Jewish Labor Committee, I helped to create synagogue worship materials about the campaign to raise Pennsylvania's minimum wage.

However, not all clergy were quick to jump on the TUGSA bandwagon. Many said that their priorities lay with the members of their congregations; only if union members were congregation members would they help. Further, some clergy were upset because they felt that unions only contacted them "when they needed something." Unions, including TUGSA, should develop means for regular communication. Many clergy had also hoped for ways in which TUGSA and other unions that they supported could give something back.

To help facilitate the next steps in this important conversation, all union members are encouraged to talk with their clergy and congregations about TUGSA, including the issues of our upcoming contract negotiation. Interested clergy can be invited to participate in a labor/religious strategic planning meeting, tentatively scheduled for Friday morning September 30, where together we can map out how to win a just contract for TUGSA members, and fight for worker justice well into the future.



## Ask Ms. TUGSA

Dear Ms. TUGSA,

*I'm thinking of joining the union, but I can't bear the thought of shelling out my hard-earned dollars for dues without knowing what my money is paying for. Where do my dues go? And where's the accountability?*

*~Skeptical*

Dear Skeptical,

Dues go to pay union expenses: this newsletter, for example; office rent; salary for the union's few non-volunteer workers; membership in larger, more powerful unions, such as the AFI, which provide TUGSA with monetary and legal aid; and so on.

Temple's anti-union law firm gets roughly \$300 an hour; TUGSA asks its members for less than \$30 a month. Furthermore, by unionizing, we saved ourselves thousands of dollars by persuading the administration to more than double its contribution to our health insurance.

And our books are no secret. Any member of the bargaining unit who asks to see them, can.

Dear Ms. TUGSA,

*I'm not sure whether or not I should sign the Declaration of Academic Benefit form. I know you only have to declare you're receiving academic benefit if the benefit is direct, but what exactly does "direct" mean?*

*~ Philosopher*

Dear Philosopher,

Basically, "direct" means specific and immediate. Your RA appointment may (and should) provide you with valuable experience and knowledge in a general way, and the research you do now may pay off later in a myriad of ways. But the future is always uncertain, and your whole life provides you with general experience and knowledge. Unless you are doing specific research as an RA that you are using right now for a dissertation or thesis or that fulfills an academic requirement, you don't need to sign this form.

Why does it matter? Because if you declare that you are receiving direct academic benefit, the University takes that to mean that you don't need any other benefits. You will therefore be ineligible to join TUGSA, and you will not be guaranteed coverage under the provisions of either the current contract or the next.

*Send questions for Ms. TUGSA to [union@tugsa.org](mailto:union@tugsa.org). You may be anonymous or not, as you choose; TUGSA will always respect your wishes and your privacy.*

## Union at Work

### Health Insurance Focus of Labor Relations Meeting

Health insurance was the focus of the most recent meeting with Temple's Labor Relations Department, held on July 19th between Andrew Dixon, TUGSA Co-President, April Logan, TUGSA Staff Organizer, and Sharon Boyle, Temple's Director of Labor Relations. TUGSA has quasi-monthly meetings with Labor Relations to discuss problems with the enforcement and implementation of the TUGSA contract.

A number of students have reported to TUGSA that they have experienced difficulties with online health insurance enrollment. A key reason for these difficulties is that the records of Human Resources and the Graduate School do not match for all graduate employees. Ms. Boyle stated that reconciliation of these records will not happen until some time during the spring 2006 semester.

In the meantime, in-person enrollment may be an easier option for many students, particularly those whose information is entered differently in different computer systems. Dixon accordingly asked Boyle for the dates of in-person enrollment. Boyle initially stated that a decision was made during a meeting of which TUGSA was not informed to abandon in-person enrollment, but later stated that in-person enrollment was in fact possible through the benefits office.

Another of TUGSA's concerns is that the various difficulties with online enrollment may have led to a decline in the number of students signing up for health insurance at all. In an attempt to discover whether or not this is in fact the case, TUGSA had earlier requested a list of graduate employees in the bargaining unit who are enrolled in Keystone or CompSelect. Such lists are routinely given to TAUP representatives; the list given TUGSA, however, was an un-alphabetized list of graduate employees within and without the bargaining unit - the latter being employees whom TUGSA cannot represent. Dixon and Logan therefore asked for an organized list of bargaining unit members only.

Boyle did acknowledge error in another area, however: many summer appointment letters contained errors, including erroneous pay dates, leading to financial hardship for a number of bargaining unit members. Boyle assured Dixon and Logan that her office was in the process of dialoguing with the appropriate offices to ensure that such errors do not occur in future summer sessions.

## Event Alert

In October, TUGSA will be hosting a campus event on the "History of Religious Involvement in the Labor Movement." Co-sponsored by the Student Labor Action Project (SLAP) and other student organizations, this event will be an opportunity to educate undergraduates about TUGSA and other unions on campus. Featuring suggestions for concrete action to take in support of TUGSA and a panel discussion (with Pat Eiding, president of the Philadelphia AFL-CIO Central Labor Council, and other guests), this event is not to be missed.

## Upcoming Events

Sept. 5	Labor Day Parade
Sept. 14	Membership Meeting
Sept. 16	Informational Meeting (all invited)
Sept. 30	Interfaith Strategic Planning

**TUGSA MEMBERSHIP CARD**

Temple University Graduate Students' Association (TUGSA)  
American Federation of Teachers, Local #6290  
215.235.0512 union@tugsa.org

Yes! I support my colleagues in our efforts to build a strong union. I hereby become a member of the Temple University Graduate Students' Association, and I authorize TUGSA to be my exclusive representative for the purposes of collective bargaining with Temple University.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_ City, State, ZIP: \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_ Home Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ Campus Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Dept. Enrolled: \_\_\_\_\_ Dept. Employed: \_\_\_\_\_

TA  RA  GA  TG  FFF  PT instructor

No university funding  Other, please specify: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

TUGSA runs on volunteer power. As part of my commitment, TUGSA can count on me to contribute 1-2 hours of my time to our union:

weekly  bi-weekly  monthly

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**TUGSA DUES AUTHORIZATION FORM**

To: Temple University  
Human Resources Office  
Labor Relations

I, the undersigned, a member of TUGSA, authorize Temple to deduct all dues payments authorized by the TUGSA Constitution and Bylaws from my pay and to remit the amount so deducted to TUGSA, while I am employed in a bargaining unit position.

This authorization will remain in full force and effect until revoked by me, in writing. Such revocation must be a written notice sent to TUGSA and the Temple Labor Relations Office during the ten (10) business days preceding the expiration of a semester.

As of June 1, 2004, the TUGSA Bylaws set dues at 1.65% of income from employment within the bargaining unit. Dues levels are established by the membership and are subject to change according to procedures defined in Article Thirteen of the TUGSA Constitution. Copies of the TUGSA Constitution and Bylaws are available at the TUGSA office or online at [www.tugsa.org](http://www.tugsa.org).

Name (please print): \_\_\_\_\_

Department Employed (please print): \_\_\_\_\_

Social Security #: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_