

United Academics

Stewards Handbook 2016-7



United Academics Mission Statement

We promote and defend quality public higher education by working together to uphold the University of Oregon's academic and research priorities.

We believe in democracy, fairness, transparency, academic excellence, diversity, access to education, and economic opportunity.

We aim to enhance the quality of faculty work life and student education by negotiating our terms and conditions of employment.

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Dear Stewards and Representatives of United Academics,

Welcome to the Stewards Council and Representative Assembly of United Academics at the University of Oregon! By serving as a steward or Rep for your department, you are helping to make sure our union stays strong and active.

Being a steward orients you in two directions. A steward amplifies the union's messages: by taking information about events and issues from the Executive Council and passing it along to members, you make sure everyone is kept up to date on what's happening. But even more importantly, a good steward **listens** to members of their department and brings those concerns, including possible grievances, to union meetings. Without this two-way communication system, we would have a much harder time making sure the voices of all 1800 members of United Academics can be heard in meaningful ways. You might even be the first interaction a new faculty member has with our union!

This handbook will cover the ins and outs of being a steward: what your duties are, some nuts and bolts of organizing, and a glossary of terms. You may wish to use it in conjunction with **United Academics 101**, our introduction to what a faculty union is, how it works, and how United Academics at the University of Oregon came to be. You will also want to make sure you have a copy of the **contract** handy – but don't worry if you don't feel like you have enough knowledge to be a steward. The most important thing is that you are available to the members of your department and that you are ready to listen. Sometimes "I don't know the answer to your question, but I'll find someone who does" is the most reassuring thing you can say.

You might hear officers or staff say that United Academics is a "member-driven" union or that we use an "organizing model." This means that the work of our stewards and Reps is some of the most important work that happens in our union. You make us what we are and what we aim to be: welcoming, just, and effective at achieving our goals. In this booklet you'll find a description of your job duties, along with some very basic information about our contract and our grievance process. We will also offer trainings periodically throughout the year – but the best resources to access when you have questions include our website, <http://www.uauoregon.org>, and the officers and staff listed on the back cover.

Your leadership and service keep us going strong!

What is a Steward?

According to the UA Constitution and Bylaws, all Reps serve as stewards for their department and/or constituency. Some departments may have more than one steward, so they should coordinate with one another to make sure everything gets covered.

Stewards' and Reps' duties consist of the following:

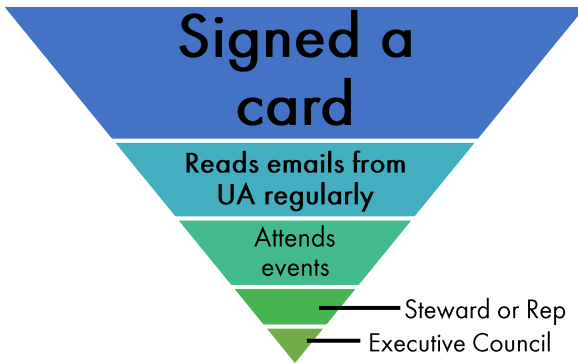
- To coordinate union activities within the academic unit.
- To communicate relevant decisions and activities of the Executive Council and Representative Assembly to your department, including, but not limited to, notification of upcoming elections, meetings, and social events.
- To act as advocates and advisors for union members within their department/academic unit regarding issues related to the union. Stewards are particularly charged with facilitating the resolution of any complaint that might result in a grievance, directing the member to the appropriate union resources and following up, as appropriate, to ensure that the issue has been resolved.
- To regularly attend steward meetings convened by the Vice-Presidents of Tenure Track Faculty Affairs, Non-Tenure Track Instructional Faculty Affairs, and Non-Tenure Track Research Faculty Affairs, or the Chair of the Organizing, Membership, and Communications Committee in order to coordinate the activities of all of the stewards.
- To encourage UO employees within the bargaining unit to join the union as full members.

See the "Stewards' Checklist" at the back of this booklet for a handy reminder of tasks you should try to keep up with each term!

Why Organize?

Most of the duties described on the previous page refer to **organizing**, the process by which we continually renew our membership and make sure our union stays strong, democratic, and representative.

Imagine the membership of UA, those who have already signed member cards, like an inverse pyramid. Right now, we look like the diagram below, with those who are most engaged forming a very small portion of the total number of those who have agreed to sign member cards.



To be a more stable organization, we need to even that pyramid out and shift some of the weight downward. Organizing is the process of inspiring more people to get involved at every level and make contributions to **our** union however they are able, so that all our pieces fit together.



Portrait of a Well-Organized Workplace: Visions of a Member-Run Union

What does it look like when a union has widespread participation from the membership?

The union is visible daily in the workplace to members and the community.

1. Stewards regularly communicate with department members about the union.
2. Every department has a steward and/or Rep.
3. Membership meetings are regular and well-attended.
4. A union representative gives updates at department meetings and orientations.
5. There is regular communication through emails, flyers, bulletin boards and more.

We defend our standards and enforce our contracts.

6. Members use collective action to solve everyday problems.
7. Every member knows how to find the contract on the UA website.
8. Stewards are trained to recognize potential problems and grievances.

Members own the union.

9. Members feel that their union is strong and can resolve problems.
10. Through stewards, members have immediate access to resources to resolve their problems.
11. Members participate in union-wide programs and campaigns.
12. Members are glad they belong to the union. Social events are well-attended.

[adapted from *Labor Notes: Secrets of a Successful Organizer*]

The Organizing Conversation

You don't have to follow a script, but it helps to get a sense of how to start a conversation about the union and keep it going. The key is to listen more than you talk, and to include examples from your own experiences to show your colleagues why it's important to join the union and get active.

1. Starting the Conversation

Begin by introducing yourself, and explain your role as steward. Share why you got involved with UA and what changes you've seen since you've been at the university. Then open the conversation up by asking questions. How long has your colleague been here? Have they had experiences with unions before? Were they positive or negative?

2. Listen and ask questions, and allow the potential member to **ask questions**

Ask open-ended questions to find out what the individual's key issues and concerns are. They might be things that are addressed "I don't know, but let me find out and get back to you."

Give a vision and Inoculate

3. Make an "ask": Directly ask your colleague to sign a card or show up to an event.
 - a. If they want more time to think, that's ok – just make a plan to follow up. Often it takes several visits before someone signs and that is perfectly fine. "What's holding you back from signing?"
 - b. Further asks: Reading a packet or the website, putting up a door sign, joining a committee, becoming a steward or rep, attending a meeting or event
4. Follow ups
 - a. Summarize any questions they have that you couldn't answer and make a plan to get back with them

Union Membership

Members of United Academics (sometimes called “full members”) have signed a membership card. They have the right to vote in union elections, including contract ratification, to run for office and serve on committees, and to attend union events. They pay 1.1% in dues, deducted directly from their paychecks.

Fee Payers have not signed a card yet. They cannot vote, cannot attend events, and, because of this, they lack a voice within the larger organization. Like full members, they pay 1.1% in fees deducted from their salary.

Objectors are those who have signed a declaration objecting to any portion of their dues or fees being used for political or partisan purposes. They still have the full 1.1% deducted from their pay, but they receive a quarterly refund of the amount used for “chargeable” or political purposes. Generally this amounts to about a quarter of that 1.1%.

It's important to remember that the principles and practices in the contract apply equally to everyone, no matter which category of membership they select.

Top Reasons to Join United Academics

1. **Gain a stronger voice:** United Academics works closely and cooperatively with the University Senate and Administration to find creative solutions to the challenges facing our university. Membership in the union allows you the opportunity to participate in these conversations.
2. **Protect your rights:** As a union, we work together to stand up for our rights. We all deserve clear expectations, fair treatment, and an environment free from discrimination and harassment. Our grievance procedure establishes a clearly written, progressive policy, and our grievance committee members solve cases quickly and confidentially.
3. **Guarantee working conditions:** The United Academics contract is a legally binding document that determines raises, cost of living adjustments, a grievance procedure, benefits including health care, and job protection for *all* faculty at UO. Because of the union, faculty have received raises every year since we have formed, and we have guaranteed cost of living adjustments and merit pools for the life of the contract.
4. **Advocate for public education:** As part of the American Federation of Teachers (AFT) and the American Association of University Professors (AAUP), we directly support efforts across the state of Oregon and

nationwide to uphold public education and academic freedom. We stand in solidarity with thousands of other teachers and public workers in Oregon who lobby for legislation that benefits workers. Joining the union strengthens these efforts.

5. **Participate in your union:** Only full members of United Academics may attend member meetings, set bargaining priorities, and vote on contract ratification and internal elections.

What's in our Contract?

Here are a few of the major benefits our contract guarantees:

- 19.25% raises between 2013 and 2018
- Clear merit raise policies and promotion procedures for each unit
- 8% raise upon promotion
- Faculty voice in decisions: shared governance is written into the contract
- Non-discrimination and hostile work environment protections
- Progressive discipline for just cause only
- Academic freedom: We have one of the strongest policies in the country, and one of the only policies locked in to contract language which can't be changed without negotiating with us.
- Grievance procedure: Three levels, and many grievances are solved informally. The end step is a third-party arbitrator outside the university system.
- A first year faculty mentorship program, established in conjunction with Academic Affairs, with a program for NTT professional development to follow.

In addition, **tenure-track faculty** receive one term of sabbatical at 100% pay. **Career Instructors and Researchers** have climbing salary floors, the right to a clear job description, the right to apply for a one-term sabbatical at 100% pay, increased contract lengths, clearly defined review processes, and a deadline for notification of renewal status with non-renewal within specific parameters only. **Librarians** received a 1% equity adjustment during 2016. **Postdoc** salaries will track NIH minimums after summer 2017. And **Pro Tem** faculty have the right to petition for reclassification after two years.

Stewardship and Problem-Solving

One of the benefits of a unionized workplace is a clearly stated grievance procedure, agreed to by both parties, which includes the possibility of third-party arbitration. Article 22 of our contract lays out the grievance procedure, described on the next page. United Academics has a **Grievance and Contract Administration Committee** which meets regularly to help employees who have decided to file formal grievances about their workplace conflict.

Many conflicts and problems arise, however, that can be solved more quickly and more easily without ever resorting to a formal grievance, and that's where an active steward structure becomes invaluable. Here are a few examples that get results using very different tactics:

- ◇ There's a problem with the way shared governance is being implemented in the department. Several NTTs approach the steward, who asks the department chair why NTTs have not been invited to the department meetings. The chair, who is new to the role, did not realize that he was violating the contract, and quickly amended the invitation.
 - *Not every contract violation requires a formal grievance. Often the problem can be fixed more easily and more quickly outside the grievance process.*

- ◇ Recently the department moved all its faculty to a new building. The set up for faculty offices is completely unworkable, but it doesn't actually violate any aspect of the contract so there's no grievance to file. After bringing it up at the Rep Assembly and talking to members of the Organizing and Membership Committee, the stewards and reps from the department organize all the faculty to put a flier on their door about the situation. After students see the fliers, they begin to email the department chair about fixing the situation.
 - *When there's no contract violation but there's still a clear problem, the best solution may be to organize around the issue and push for change in other, more creative ways.*

The Grievance Procedure

Step 1 – Informal Level

When you become aware that there may have been a possible policy or contract violation, you should have a conversation with your department or unit head within **45 days** to address your concerns. The union can be of assistance with these conversations. Faculty have the right to have a union representative present at all stages of the grievance process. Unit heads are obligated to provide a response - written or oral within **10 days**. If the unit head is the subject of the grievance, then you can proceed to Step 2 without the informal conversation.

Step 2 – Dean Level

If you are unsatisfied with the decision at Step 1, and within **45 days** of becoming aware that a possible contract violation has occurred, you should submit a written grievance to your dean or vice president. The dean or designee will meet with you and your union rep (if you have opted to have one) within **21 days** of receiving the written grievance. After the meeting, the dean will have **14 days** to provide a written response.

Step 3 – Provost Level

If you are unsatisfied with the dean's decision at Step 2, you should submit a written grievance to the Provost's office within **14 days** of the issuance of the Step 2 decision. The Provost or designee will meet with you and your union representative (if you have elected to have one) within **21 days** of receiving the grievance. After this meeting, the Provost will provide a written decision within **30 days** of the meeting.

Arbitration

If you are unsatisfied with the Provost's decision at Step 3, you should contact the Chair of the Grievance and Contract Administration Committee. By Oregon law, individuals cannot take an issue to arbitration and it needs to be a decision of the union. Working with the Grievance Committee, the Executive Council will hear about the grievance and make a decision whether or not to file for arbitration.

Weingarten Rights

Every member of the bargaining unit in United Academics has a legal right to union representation when they are being called to a meeting that may result in disciplinary action. Many department administrators will notify employees of this right when they are informed of their meeting, but this is not a legal requirement.

"If this discussion could in any way lead to my being disciplined or terminated, or affect my personal working conditions, I respectfully request that my union representative, officer, or steward be present at this meeting. Until my representative arrives, I choose not to participate in this discussion."

Usually a member of the grievance committee or a staff member accompanies members to these meetings, but you may be asked to accompany the member in the unlikely circumstance that nobody from the union office can be reached. Alternatively, a member who knows you are an active steward and trusts you may wish to have you at their side rather than a stranger. The number one thing to do during these meetings is to take detailed notes. Make sure you and the member both understand what specific policies have been broken and when, what action is or may be taken, and what the next steps are. You and/or the member should then contact the UA office to determine how to proceed.

Directory of Stewards and Representatives, 2016-2017

You can email all stewards and reps via our listserv stewards@uauoregon.org.

Name	Department	Position	Email
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Stewardship at a Glance

Use this checklist to make sure you are completing your stewardly duties each term!

- ◇ Get a new list of faculty in your department along with their office numbers and membership status. Check to make sure the information is up to date.
- ◇ Schedule a time to talk to all new faculty and/or non-members about joining the union. Have cards and materials on hand.
- ◇ Deliver any new membership cards to the office as soon as possible.
- ◇ Introduce yourself as a steward or rep to the faculty in your department. Explain that you are always happy to listen when faculty have issues pop up.
- ◇ Invite all full members to General Membership Meetings and other UA events. Make sure to: post fliers, email, and stop by offices to make sure attendance is high.
- ◇ Is a UA report a regular part of your department's faculty meetings? If not, why not add it to the agenda? (Note: Some departments assign service credit for stewards and reps.)
- ◇ Check in with members regularly to ask how things are going. With their permission, report back to the grievance committee or Rep Assembly as necessary. (For example, some faculty may not want you to use their name but feel fine about bringing the subject up during a meeting. It's always best to double check.)

2016-2017 Rep Assembly Schedule

Oct. 10: Noon-2, Falling Sky (EMU)

Nov. 14: 5-7p, McKenzie 375

Jan. 16: Noon-2, Falling Sky (EMU)

Feb. 13: 5-7p, McKenzie 375

Apr. 10: Noon-2, Falling Sky (EMU)

May 8: 5-7p, McKenzie 375



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