

March 30, 2015

To whom it may concern:

My name is Shawna Meechan and I am a third year PhD Candidate in Political Science and a Graduate Teaching Fellow (GTF) at the University of Oregon. I am writing to express my strong support for adding a Graduate Employee representative to the Boards of Trustees. As a graduate employee, I have a unique experience on the campus of the University of Oregon that is not adequately represented by full-time employees nor non-employee students.

I have held a position as a GTF since I arrived at the University of Oregon in fall of 2012. In my first term, I taught two discussion sections in addition to taking 15 credits of graduate level courses. This is the equivalent of working a more than full-time job as a graduate student (where it was expected that I would spend 60-80 hours a week on my own work) and a part-time job as a teacher and mentor to undergraduates. While I was paid for approximately 10 hours of work per week, I greatly exceeded these hours in many weeks to ensure that I was serving my students to the best of my ability. As you can imagine, in my first term of graduate school, this was incredibly overwhelming and an experience quite separate from those of other groups on campus. I have continued as a GTF over the past two and a half years and continue to fight to balance my own work with my work as a GTF.

As a graduate employee, I am regularly regarded as alternatively a student or an employee when the situation fits. When I need to spend hours doing mandatory training, preparing for classes, teaching, and answering student emails I am an employee. However, when I bargain to increase my salary so that I can afford basic necessities such as groceries, I am reminded that I am a student. The truth is, I am both, always. And this puts me in the special position to both enforce and be personally affected by policies on campus. This is a position that should be acknowledged and valued on the institutional board.

I want to be clear that I love my job and value the experience I am gaining as a graduate employee, but I also want to be acknowledged as a part of a unique community with an important voice on campus. I urge you to pass this legislation to ensure that my voice is not devalued within my own community.

Sincerely,  
Shawna Meechan  
PhD Candidate  
Graduate Teaching Fellow  
Department of Political Science  
University of Oregon