

# **Student Activity and Service Fee Advisory Committee**

## **Guidelines for Student Activity Fee Creation, Elimination, and Change**

### **Background/Purpose**

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When the Student Service and Activity Fee Advisory Committee (SASFAC) was created in 2001, among its primary objectives was to provide a more meaningful role for students in developing, maintaining, and overseeing student fees. Previously, student involvement was limited to referenda when activity fee groups sought to establish or raise their respective fees. Each group was responsible for conducting its own referendum, a process that resulted in inconsistencies and raised questions concerning the success and validity of each referendum. These guidelines intend to create a fair, consistent, and meaningful process by which student input in the process of creating, increasing, decreasing, or eliminating student activity fees can be maximized. These guidelines are applied without regard to race, national origin, age, gender, disability, sexual orientation, creed, religion, academic standing, or political affiliation of the student organization and seek to ensure that the process for creation, elimination or change of any student fee in support of a student organization is free of viewpoint discrimination.

The organizations associated with these fees, also known as Trustee Accounts and/or Fee Funded Groups, are recognized by the University Board of Trustees in accordance with Connecticut State Law (Sections 4-52 through 4-57a of the Connecticut General Statutes) defined within as “any account operated in any state educational, welfare or medical agency for the benefit of...the students of such institution...the revenue of which is derived from...student activity fees . . .” Under state law, such funds must be used exclusively for the benefit of students (23 Op. Atty. Gen, 345; April 10, 1944).

### **Assumptions**

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In developing guidelines for the process of creating future fees or increasing, decreasing or eliminating existing student fees, the SASFAC:

- Affirms its basic purpose of providing the general student populace with a voice in the decision-making process;
- Operates under the assumption that as a general rule, student fees at a public university such as the University of Connecticut provide co-curricular, recreational, and social opportunities that state and tuition dollars do not otherwise provide;
- Understands that students are expecting greater opportunities in these areas, and that it is imperative to ascertain interest in and support for changes to student fees in support of potential Tier III student organizations;
- Understands that the cost of a higher education is significant, and so it is imperative to work to limit the number of fees levied on students.
- Recognizes the referendum as an advisory mechanism only that serves as one of a number of factors considered by the committee, the Provost, the Vice President for Finance and Chief Financial Officer, the Vice President for Student Life and Enrollment, and the Board of Trustees (who ultimately must approve all modifications to the fee structure) while encouraging greater participation, awareness, and ownership by the fee paying students.

### **Timing**

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- Referenda on student activity fees should occur immediately following the annual Budget Hearings (generally scheduled for late February/early March), to provide additional information to the SASFAC in preparation for the Committee’s recommendations to the Provost, the Vice President for Finance and Chief Financial Officer, and the Vice President for Student Life and Enrollment.
- The student body should be given due notice of the referendum of a period not less than two weeks.
- In the event of multiple requests for a referendum, the SASFAC will coordinate and schedule all sanctioned referenda.

## Procedures

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### **Creation of a new Student Activity Fee**

#### 1) Background of Student Activity Fees

- a) Fee Funded groups have a higher level of accountability to the University community as defined under State statute and must be used exclusively for the benefit of students; their budgets are managed according to the State Comptroller's Manual, which is interpreted by the Department of Student Activities for the fee funded groups.

All decisions made by Fee Funded groups must be made at the local, student level. Fee Funded groups must not delegate authority or responsibility for budget, programmatic or structural/organizational issues and/or decision making to outside entities or non-fee paying students.

NOTE: Non-student employees of fee funded groups must be University employees, and these employees are jointly hired and supervised by the student leaders in the group and the University.)

In addition to the requirements listed below, any current student organization wishing to create a new fee and become a Fee Funded organization must demonstrate a level of reach and scope comparable to other Fee Funded organizations, while having operated as Tier II organization at Storrs and as a registered student organization at a Regional or Professional Campus. They must provide evidence, collected over the course of at least four years (the length of a typical student generation), that they can be sustained long term, that they are structurally sound, and that success was not based, nor will it be based, on the founders or any specific leaders. The leaders must have developed and implemented large scale and collaborative activities that seek to involve and/or serve the entire student body that pays the fee.

#### b) Storrs-based Student Organizations

- i.) Student organizations at UCONN-Storrs Campus are divided into three tiers: I, II, and III. (See [http://www.studentactivities.uconn.edu/solid\\_3tier.html](http://www.studentactivities.uconn.edu/solid_3tier.html) for a full explanation of the Tier System). Tier III groups at Storrs are groups that are funded by Student Activities Fees.
- ii.) Groups seeking to become a Fee Funded, Trustee Account must have operated as a successful Tier II organization. Annual Tier II requirements include :
  - (a) Tier-II Registration Form completed;
  - (b) Submitted/have on file in Student Activities a current copy of the organization's constitution;
  - (c) Identified and secured an organization advisor (advisor must confirm that role);
  - (d) Completion of the following SOLID workshops:
    - Mission, Values & Culture (All 4 Officers) - In Person
    - Executive Leadership (President & Vice President) - In Person
    - Organization Financial Management (Treasurer) - In Person
    - Secretary Training (Secretary) - Online
    - SOLID 101, or similar requirement (All 4 Officers) - Online
    - Policies & Procedures (All 4 Officers) - Online
    - Hazing, Harming, Harass. (All 4 Officers) - Online
  - (e) A thorough UCONNTACT page.

After all of these documents are submitted and workshops are attended, the group is considered "registered."

#### c) Regional - and Professional Campus-based Student Organizations

Groups seeking to become Fee Funded, Trustee Accounts at the Regional and Professional Campus must have operated as successful student organizations. Operation of a successful student organization includes:

- (1) Submitted/have on file a current copy of the organization's constitution for the past four years;
- (2) Identified and secured an organization advisor (advisor must confirm that role); and have worked with an advisor for the past four years.

2) Process to Engage Students on the Creation of a New Student Fee

If a group, having understood and adhered to the requirements listed above, is interested in pursuing the creation of a Fee Funded organization, the group should follow the following steps:

- a) The group must contact the Chair of the SASFAC (the Office of the Vice President for Student Life and Enrollment can provide contact information) between October 1 and October 30 with a written request providing the rationale for the requested Student Activity Fee.
- b) Upon receipt of the request, the Chair of the SASFAC will meet with the student leaders to discuss the process.
- c) The Chair of the SASFAC will provide the language to the group to be used on the petition to be signed by students who would pay the fee in question.
  - i.) For Storrs-based fees, the petition should include a minimum of 200 signatures.
  - ii.) For regional campus-based and professional campus-based fees, the petition should include a minimum of 25 signatures.
  - iii.) Signed petitions must be completed & submitted to the Chair of the SASFAC by the last day of class of the fall semester.
- d) The group must complete and submit an application for a New Student Fee to the SASFAC Chair no later than January 31. The application must include the following:
  - i.) The group's constitution.
  - ii.) For Storrs based organizations: A form, signed by the Director of Student Activities, that details the SOLID training history of the group for the past four years, and that details the components of the UCONNTACT page that the group has used over the past four years.

For Regional- or Professional Campus-based organizations: A letter, signed by the Dean or Director, that details the operational history as well as the impact of the group over the past four years.

- iii.) A list of the programs and services of the group over the past four years. Flyers, event programs, photographs, etc. that help document the group's activities are encouraged.
  - iv.) A plan of programs and services that the group plans to implement if a fee is granted.
  - v.) A proposed budget created using the SASFAC form (link).
- 3) Upon receipt of the packet, the SASFAC Chair will share the information with the Committee and schedule a public forum/budget hearing with the leadership of the group, in coordination with the annual Budget Hearing process listed in the "Timing" section above.
- 4) Upon completion of the public forum/budget hearing, the SASFAC, with the assistance of the Division of Student Life and Enrollment, will conduct a referendum within 30 days for all eligible students who will pay the fee.
- a) The SASFAC will consider a successful referendum when at least 10% of the population who will pay the fee votes. The limited purpose of the referendum is to encourage student participation and endeavor to assess the collective student voice. The referendum will not serve as an up or down vote on the creation of a student fee in support of student organizations and failure to obtain 10% will not automatically preclude creation of a new Student Activity Fee; but the referendum is one of a number of objective factors to be considered by the SASFAC.
  - b) Responsibilities of the Office of the Vice President for Student Life and Enrollment during the referendum stage:
    - i.) Determine the appropriate mechanism for eligible voters to cast their votes.
    - ii.) Conduct and oversee the referendum.
    - iii.) Provide notice of the referendum to the eligible voters of the student body, including questions, dates and mechanism/location of voting (examples include but are not limited to, Daily Campus Advertisements, UConn student webpage, and university-wide e-mails).
    - iv.) Verify the validity of the results and transmit the results and any aberrations to the SASFAC following the referendum.
    - v.) Remain appropriately neutral in this process.
  - c) Responsibilities of the Student Organization(s) seeking a new Student Fee during the referendum stage:
    - i.) Educate the student body and provide justification of the need for the fee request (i.e. via forums, informational sessions, promotion materials, and campus media).
    - ii.) Advocate for the fee request.

iii.) Provide appropriate detail and documentation to the SASFAC as necessary (see application information listed in 2 (d)).

5) After the Referendum:

- a) The SASFAC will review and consider the results, the organization's written request in the form of the application packet, and its presentation to the SASFAC and any information presented by students during the process.
- b) Thereafter, SASFAC will make a recommendation to the Provost, the Vice President for Finance and Chief Financial Officer, and the Vice President for Student Life and Enrollment. The recommendation may be to support or not support the proposal.
- c) The Provost, the Vice President for Finance and Chief Financial Officer, and the Vice President for Student Life and Enrollment will make a recommendation to the Board of Trustees, which ultimately controls decisions regarding implementation and adjustment of student fees. The recommendation may be to support or not support the proposal.
- d) In deciding whether to support the requested Student Activity Fee proposal:
  - i.) All involved decision-makers are subject to the viewpoint neutrality principle and are bound to uphold this principle.
  - ii.) All of the following shall be considered:
    - (1) The student organizations' history as a
      - (a) Tier II (at Storrs); or
      - (b) Student organization (at a Regional or Professional Campus).
    - (2) The student organization's written submission, including its budget packet;
    - (3) The student organization's presentation to the SASFAC;
    - (4) The results of the student referendum;
    - (5) Information received at any public forum;
    - (6) Whether the student organization would encourage the free and open exchange of ideas by and among the student body, including viewpoints not currently well represented in the University community;
    - (7) The financial circumstances of the University.

**Change (increase) of an existing Student Activity Fee**

- 1) Tier III student organizations or Regional/Professional Fee funded groups wishing to raise their fee should contact the Chair of the SASFAC (the Office of the Vice President for Student Life and Enrollment can provide contact information) between October 1 and December 15 with a written request providing the rationale for the requested increase to the Student Activity Fee.
- 2) Upon receipt of the request, the Chair of the SASFAC will meet with the student leaders to discuss the process.
- 3) The Chair of the SASFAC will provide the language to the student organization to be used on the petition to be signed by students who would pay the fee in question.
  - a) For Storrs-based fees, the petition should include a minimum of 200 signatures.
  - b) For regional or professional campus-based fees, the petition should include a minimum of 25 signatures.
- 4) The signed petitions must be completed and submitted to the Chair of the SASFAC by the last day of class of the fall semester.
- 5) The student organization must create two proposed budgets using the SASFAC form:
  - a) One proposed budget including the proposed fee increase; and
  - b) One budget utilizing the current fee.
- 6) The student organization must submit the completed Budget Hearing packet to the SASFAC (annually required for all Student Activity Fee Funded groups) no later than January 31.
- 7) The SASFAC will review the fee increase request at the annually scheduled public forum/budget hearing with the leadership of the student organization.
- 8) Upon completion of the public forum/budget hearing, the SASFAC, with the assistance of the Division of Student Life and Enrollment, will conduct a referendum for all eligible students who will pay the fee.
  - a) The SASFAC will consider a successful referendum when at least 10% of the population who will pay the fee votes. The limited purpose of the referendum is to encourage student participation and endeavor to assess the collective student

voice. The referendum will not serve as an up or down vote on the increase of a student fee in support of student organizations and failure to obtain 10% will not automatically preclude an increase of a Student Activity Fee; but the referendum is one of a number of objective factors to be considered by the SASFAC.

- b) Responsibilities of the Office of the Vice President for Student Life and Enrollment during the referendum stage:
    - i) Determine the appropriate mechanism for eligible voters to cast their votes.
    - ii) Conduct and oversee the referendum.
    - iii) Provide notice of the referendum to the eligible voters of the student body, including questions, dates and mechanism/location of voting (examples include but are not limited to, Daily Campus Advertisements, UConn student webpage, and university wide e-mails).
    - iv) Verify the validity of the results and transmit the results and any aberrations to the SASFAC following the referendum.
    - v) Remain appropriately neutral in this process.
  - c) Responsibilities of the Student Organization(s) seeking the increase during the referendum stage:
    - i) Educate the student body and provide justification of the need for their fee request (i.e. via forums, informational sessions, promotion materials, and campus media).
    - ii) Advocate for their fee request.
    - iii) Provide appropriate detail and documentation to the SASFAC as necessary.
- 9) After the Referendum:
- a) The SASFAC will review and consider the results, the organization's written request in the form of the application packet, and its presentation to the SASFAC.
  - b) Thereafter, the SASFAC will make a recommendation to the Provost, the Vice President for Finance and Chief Financial Officer, and the Vice President for Student Life and Enrollment. The recommendation may be to support or not support the proposal.
  - c) The Provost, the Vice President for Finance and Chief Financial Officer, and the Vice President for Student Life and Enrollment will make a recommendation to the Board of Trustees, which ultimately controls decisions regarding implementation and adjustment of student fees. The recommendation may be to support or not support the proposal.
  - d) In deciding whether to support the requested Student Activity Fee proposal:
    - i) All involved decision-makers are subject to the viewpoint neutrality principle and are bound to uphold this principle.
    - ii) All of the following shall be considered:
      - (1) The student organization's written submission, including its budget packet;
      - (2) The student organization's presentation to the SASFAC;
      - (3) The results of the student referendum;
      - (4) Information received at any public forum;
      - (5) Whether the student organization would encourage the free and open exchange of ideas by and among the student body, including viewpoints not currently well represented in the University community;
      - (6) The financial circumstances of the University.

**Change (decrease) of an existing Student Activity Fee**

- 1) Students wishing to decrease a Tier III student organizations or Regional/Professional Fee funded group should contact the Chair of the SASFAC (the Office of the Vice President for Student Life and Enrollment can provide contact information) between October 1 and December 15 with a written request providing the rationale for the requested decrease to the Student Activity Fee.
- 2) Upon receipt of the request, the Chair of the SASFAC will meet with the students wishing to decrease the fee to discuss the process.
- 3) The Chair of the SASFAC will provide language to the students wishing to decrease the fee to be used on the petition to be signed by students who pay the fee in question.
  - a) For Storrs-based fees, the petition should include a minimum of 200 signatures.
  - b) For regional or professional campus-based fees, the petition should include a minimum of 25 signatures.

- 4) The signed petitions must be completed and submitted to the Chair of the SASFAC by the last day of class of the fall semester.
- 5) The Committee will review the fee decrease request at the annually scheduled public forum/budget hearing with the leadership of the Student Activity Fee–Funded Organization in question and the students who bring forth the petition. The student organization(s) may submit a rebuttal to the SASFAC.
- 6) Upon completion of the public forum/budget hearing, the SASFAC, with the assistance of the Division of Student Affairs, will conduct a referendum for all eligible students who pay the fee.
  - a) The SASFAC will consider a successful referendum when at least 10% of the population who will pay the fee votes. The limited purpose of the referendum is to encourage student participation and endeavor to assess the collective student voice. The referendum will not serve as an up or down vote on the decrease of a student fee and failure to obtain 10% will not automatically preclude the decrease of a Student Activity Fee; but the referendum is one of a number of objective factors to be considered by the SASFAC.
  - b) Responsibilities of the Office of the Vice President for Student Life and Enrollment during the referendum stage:
    - i) Determine the appropriate mechanism for eligible voters to cast their votes.
    - ii) Conduct and oversee the referendum.
    - iii) Provide notice of the referendum to the eligible voters of the student body, including questions, dates and mechanism/location of voting (examples include but are not limited to, Daily Campus Advertisements, UConn student webpage, and university wide e-mails).
    - iv) Verify the validity of the results and transmit the results and any aberrations to the SASFAC following the referendum.
    - v) Remain appropriately neutral in this process.
  - c) Responsibilities of the Student Organization and/or students requesting a decrease in the fee during the referendum stage:
    - i) Educate the student body and provide justification of their perspective(s) (i.e. via forums, informational sessions, promotion materials, and campus media).
    - ii) Advocate for their perspective.
    - iii) Provide appropriate detail and documentation to the SASFAC as necessary.
- 7) After the Referendum:
  - a) The SASFAC will review and consider the results, the organization's (or students') written request in the form of the budget hearing documents, the presentation(s) to the SASFAC and any other information submitted during the process.
  - b) Thereafter, SASFAC will make a recommendation to the Provost, the Vice President for Finance and Chief Financial Officer, and the Vice President for Student Life and Enrollment. The recommendation may be to support or not support the proposal to decrease the fee.
  - c) The Provost, the Vice President for Finance and Chief Financial Officer, and the Vice President for Student Life and Enrollment will make a recommendation to the Board of Trustees, which ultimately controls decisions regarding implementation and adjustment of student fees. The recommendation may be to support or not support the proposal.
  - d) In deciding whether to support the requested proposal to decrease the fee:
    - i) All involved decision-makers are subject to the viewpoint neutrality principle and are bound to uphold this principle.
    - ii) All of the following shall be considered:
      - (1) The student organization's written submission, including its budget packet (if applicable);
      - (2) The student organization's and the students' requesting the decrease presentation to the SASFAC;
      - (3) The results of the student referendum;
      - (4) Information received at any public forum;
      - (5) Whether the student organization would encourage the free and open exchange of ideas by and among the student body, including viewpoints not currently well represented in the University community;
      - (6) The financial circumstances of the University.

Note: A referendum is not required for a fee decrease request if the fee-funded organization makes the request to decrease the fee because of changes in financial need within the organization.

### **Elimination of an Existing Student Activity Fee**

- 1) Students who wish to eliminate an existing Student Activity Fee should contact the Chair of the SASFAC (the Office of the Vice President for Student Life and Enrollment can provide contact information) between October 1 and December 15. A written request should outline the fee to be eliminated as well as a rationale for the elimination of the fee.
- 2) Upon receipt of the request, the Chair of the SASFAC will meet with the students making the request to eliminate the fee to discuss the process.
- 3) The Chair of the SASFAC will provide the language to the students making the request to eliminate the fee to be used on the petition to be signed by students who pay the fee in question.
  - a) For Storrs-based fees, the petition should include a minimum of 500 signatures.
  - b) For regional or professional campus-based fees, the petition should include a minimum of 75 signatures.
- 4) The signed petitions must be completed and submitted to the Chair of the SASFAC by the last day of class of the fall semester.
- 5) The Committee will review the fee elimination request at the annually scheduled public forum/budget hearing with the leadership of the Student Activity Fee-Funded organization in question and the students who bring forth the petition. The student organization(s) may submit a rebuttal to the SASFAC.
- 6) Upon completion of the public forum/budget hearing, the SASFAC, with the assistance of the Division of Student Affairs, will conduct a referendum for all eligible students who will pay the fee.
  - a) The SASFAC will consider a successful referendum when at least 10% of the population who will pay the fee votes. The limited purpose of the referendum is to encourage student participation and endeavor to assess the collective student voice. The referendum will not serve as an up or down vote on the elimination of a student fee and failure to obtain 10% will not automatically preclude the elimination of a Student Activity Fee; but the referendum is one of a number of objective factors to be considered by the SASFAC.
  - b) Responsibilities of the Office of the Vice President for Student Life and Enrollment during the referendum stage:
    - i) Determine the appropriate mechanism for eligible voters to cast their votes.
    - ii) Conduct and oversee the referendum.
    - iii) Provide notice of the referendum to the eligible voters of the student body, including questions, dates and mechanism/location of voting (examples include but are not limited to, Daily Campus Advertisements, UConn student webpage, and university wide e-mails).
    - iv) Verify the validity of the results and transmit the results and any aberrations to the SASFAC following the referendum.
    - v) Remain appropriately neutral in this process.
  - c) Responsibilities of the Student Organization and/or students requesting to eliminate the fee during the referendum stage:
    - i) Educate the student body and provide justification of their perspective(s) (i.e. via forums, informational sessions, promotion materials, and campus media).
    - ii) Advocate for their perspective.
    - iii) Provide appropriate detail and documentation to the SASFAC as necessary.
- 7) After the Referendum:
  - a) The SASFAC will review and consider the results, the organization's written budget hearing documents, the students bringing forth the petition to eliminate the fee, the presentation to the SASFAC and any other information submitted during the process.
  - b) Thereafter, SASFAC will make a recommendation to the Provost, the Vice President for Finance and Chief Financial Officer, and the Vice President for Student Life and Enrollment. The recommendation may be to support or not support the proposal.

- c) The Provost, the Vice President for Finance and Chief Financial Officer, and the Vice President for Student Life and Enrollment will make a recommendation to the Board of Trustees, which ultimately controls decisions regarding implementation and adjustment of student fees. The recommendation may be to support or not support the proposal.
- d) In deciding whether to support the requested proposal:
  - i) All involved decision-makers are subject to the viewpoint neutrality principle and are bound to uphold this principle.
  - ii) All of the following shall be considered:
    - (1) The student organization's written submission, including its budget packet, and the petitioning students' written submission;
    - (2) The student organization's and the petitioning students' presentation to the SASFAC;
    - (3) The results of the student referendum;
    - (4) Information received at any public forum;
    - (5) Whether the student organization would encourage the free and open exchange of ideas by and among the student body, including viewpoints not currently well represented in the University community;
    - (6) The financial circumstances of the University.

***Administrative Elimination of a Fee:***

- 1) The SASFAC reserves the right to make a recommendation for elimination of a fee without a referendum if it determines upon review of all relevant information that there is a substantial change in the organization's operations that justifies such a recommendation. The SASFAC shall make such recommendation only after the following process has occurred:
  - a) The affected organization shall receive written notification of the pending recommendation from the Chair of the SASFAC.
  - b) The organization shall be given the opportunity to present a rebuttal to the recommendation for elimination of a student fee at a regularly scheduled meeting of the SASFAC.

Thereafter, the SASFAC will make a recommendation to the Provost, the Vice President for Finance and Chief Financial Officer, and the Vice President for Student Life and Enrollment that takes into account all information received from the organization, including the rebuttal.

- 2) A referendum is not required for fee elimination request if: (a) the fee-funded organization makes the request to eliminate the fee because of changes in financial need within the organization; or (b) the fee-funded organization becomes inactive. "Inactive" is defined as no elected student governance officers and no organization activity, as defined by the organization's approved constitution, for two academic years. If an organization becomes inactive, written communication to the students paying the fee will be made by the Vice President for Student Life and Enrollment, and the fee will no longer be collected by the University. For regional - or professional campus-based fees, the communication will be made by the Vice President for Student Life and Enrollment and the senior executive for that campus.
- 3) If there are any remaining funds in the student activity university account for the inactive fee-funded group, they will be made available to the Tier III student government organization on the campus where the inactive group was based, one academic year after the group is determined to be inactive. If no Tier III group exists on a particular campus, the Vice President for Student Life and Enrollment, in consultation with senior administration, will allocate the funds to another Tier III organization with the intent that the funds will be utilized for the benefit of the student population.

Note: If the inactive group wishes to re-establish itself as a Tier III organization, they must follow the process to create a new fee, as outlined earlier in this document.

- 4) If a Fee Funded organization does not act in accordance with Connecticut State Law (Sections 4-52 through 4-57a of the Connecticut General Statutes), the University, in its fiduciary role, may terminate collecting the fee on behalf of the organization. This process is separate and distinct from these guidelines.

Effective December 1, 2012; updated July 2019, updated November 2025