STUDENT ADVOCACY, GOVERNANCE, AND ENGAGEMENT

The University of California Student Association is the official voice of over 240,000 undergraduate, graduate, and professional students from all ten UC campuses. It is our mission to advocate on behalf of current and future students for the accessibility, affordability, and quality of the University of California system.

In the 1960s, the UC Student Lobby, later UCSA, was established because students realized they needed a permanent organization to provide a voice in the Capitol and organize students on campuses. Every year, UCSA advances critical conversations through direct action and shared governance. In just the last year, its advocacy helped secure a two year undergraduate tuition freeze, more state funding for the UC, and mandatory in-person training for students to prevent sexual assault. Other UCSA victories include the creation of the voting Student Regent position, the Return-to-Aid policy that requires the UC provide financial aid to students when increasing fees, and numerous electoral wins like Prop 30 and 47 that passed with the help of thousands of student voters turned out by UCSA grassroots organizers. UCSA’s benefit to generations of students is clear.

About the SAGE Proposal

Presently, UCSA depends on funding from membership dues collected by most campuses’ undergraduate and graduate/professional student associations, with supplemental support from the UC Office of the President and grants awarded to UCSA for program initiatives, such as voter registration.
While UCSA is proud of what it has historically accomplished since its beginnings in the Free Speech Movement of the 1960s, with extremely limited resources, UCSA is seeking to adopt a more sustainable, equitable, and direct model of funding to expand student representation at the university, state, and federal levels.

In consultation with student leaders from UCSA member and non-member associations, the Office of the President, the Council of Presidents, the Council on Student Fees, and the Student Regents, UCSA proposes the establishment of a systemwide, voluntary opt-out fee: the Student Advocacy, Governance, and Engagement (SAGE) Fee.

For the purpose of guaranteeing the independence, integrity, and accountability of the statewide student association for all students of the University of California system, an opt-out student advocacy engagement and governance fee of six* dollars per academic year, adjusted regularly for inflation, should be established and distributed to the University of California Student Association in replacement of the present membership dues funding model.

**Student Input Survey**

We invite students to give input as to how any increase in UCSA’s budget may be used to support student advocacy and activism. [Click here to give your input.]

**Frequently Asked Questions**

Why do we need this?
How does an opt-out fee work?
Has this been done before?
How will the money generated by SAGE be spent?
How can students be sure that SAGE spending is transparent and accountable?
Why would UCSA advocate for more student fees?
What needs to be done for SAGE to pass?
How can I help?

**Why do we need this?**

In the current representation model, where student governments choose whether or not to pay a membership fee to UCSA, roughly one in ten UC students do not have voting representation on the UCSA Board of Directors. Without access to resources made only available to UCSA as the recognized systemwide organization, non-member associations face institutional barriers in getting their issues to a level of awareness where they may be resolved, and having the resources to do so.

Further, though there is a floor for membership dues, campuses contribute at varying rates, skewing the premise of equal representation systemwide. Inequities exist between large associations and small (usually graduate) association budgets, which has a negative impact on their ability to participate.

These challenges are compounded by revenue stagnation, which has a negative effect on staff retention and the ability to execute a truly robust plan for sustainability, much less growth.
A new funding model, where students choose to pay an individual fee to support UCSA, rather than student governments, levels the playing field. It allows students on every campus to participate in UCSA and the shared governance of the UC.

How does an opt-out fee work?

When paying other fees to register, students will be given the option to opt out of SAGE. UCSA is seeking the counsel and collaboration of the university’s information technology experts to include fee collection at point of registration, along with other system-wide fees. UCSA will be transparent in educating students about how to opt-out if they choose to do so.

Has this been done before?

UCSA's sister organization at the California State University recently passed their own representation fee, known as SIRF. So we know it is possible! We are in conversations with the UC Office of the President to see what infrastructure is required to digitally manage opt-out fees.

How will the money generated by SAGE be spent?

Before any money is allocated to UCSA, a portion of the revenue from SAGE will go directly to financial aid for students under the UC’s return-to-aid policy, potentially generating nearly half a million dollars in aid.

The balance will be allocated to UCSA and would offer a number of benefits for students:

- Student unity across all campuses and true systemwide representation with the elimination of a “pay-to-play” membership system
- Bolstered capacity for legislative advocacy in Sacramento and DC
- Increased access for students for representation to UC decision makers, where students do not have to front the cost of travel to participate in advocacy
- Expanded conference offerings and content, including trainings and speakers
- Support for staff and improved technology, increasing the capacity of UCSA to serve students

How can students be sure that SAGE spending is transparent and accountable?

Already, UCSA is one of the most accountable bodies serving students. Students are democratically elected to serve on the Board of Directors through campus elections. Even more, the annual UCSA budget is subject to monthly review and amendment by your elected student leaders on campus.

UCSA publishes its financials and federal/state information returns on its website and Guidestar.org. Upon implementation of SAGE, UCSA will conduct a yearly external audit to also be shared publicly. It is important to UCSA that it is entirely transparent regarding its revenue and expenses.

Why would UCSA advocate for more student fees?

UCSA representatives are students too, and they understand that the cost of education has skyrocketed. They do not
take this proposal lightly.

But it is also understood that there is undeniable value in building a movement that is representative of students on every campus, regardless of a school's size or ability to pay membership fees. Furthermore, UCSA has a proven track record of securing tuition freezes or rollbacks for students. SAGE would increase UCSA's capacity to do this more effectively than ever, and ultimately save students money.

**What needs to be done for SAGE to pass?**

Right now, the proposal is under consideration by the UC Office of the President and the Board of Regents. If accepted, the UC will need to build its online infrastructure to include fee collection at point of registration, along with other system-wide fees, and the opportunity to opt-out of SAGE. Policies may also need to be written concerning the collection, management and disbursement of SAGE funds.

**How can I help?**

Students need to educate each other about SAGE. Before its implementation, UCSA will host several townhalls at every campus so students have the opportunity to learn about and weigh in on the proposal. Look out for a townhall on your campus and contact us if you want to be involved in educating your peers about SAGE.

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**TAKE ACTION!**

- Student Organizations – Take the UConsent Pledge!
- Sign the Petition – Call for a Public Forum with Brown and Napolitano!

**CALENDAR**

- November UC Regents Meeting
  - 11/19/2015 - 11/20/2015
- Finals (Quarter System)
  - 12/07/2015 - 12/11/2015
UPDATES

- Intent to Submit to Volume Two, Graduate Policy Journal
- An Open Letter of Solidarity to the #FeesMustFall Decolonization Movement

CONTACT UCSA

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