

ACADEMIC SENATE
of
THE CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY

AS-2594-03/FGA
March 6-7, 2003

Student Fees in the California State University (CSU):
Mitigating Their Effects

RESOLVED: That the Academic Senate of the California State University (CSU) recognize the necessity for a short-term increase in student fees as a last resort for protecting student access to higher education and slowing the erosion of quality of California public higher education; and be it further

RESOLVED: That the Academic Senate CSU oppose any fee increase that does not meet the following conditions:

1. Provide for sufficient financial aid to cover the additional need that the fee will create among new and existing recipients. Until such time that the needs of all of our non-traditional students can be met by Cal Grants and other external financial aid programs, 1/3 of all revenues generated by fee increases should be directed to internal CSU financial aid programs to alleviate the increased financial need created by the fees.
2. Provide for maintenance and expansion of programs designed to educate current and potential students about the availability of financial aid and the procedures for obtaining it. Such programs should be exempted from cuts and treated as a necessary expense associated with the collection of increased fees.
3. Provide that any fee increases identified as necessary to the long-term fiscal stability of the CSU, be implemented in a gradual, moderate, and predictable manner.
4. Provide that any future fee increases be the result of a meaningful consultation process involving students, faculty and other members of the university community and be based on a coherent and defensible policy.

RATIONALE: The sole purpose for which student fees of any kind are warranted is to provide students with access to a high quality university education; fees can be supportive or destructive of this end, depending upon the way in which they are implemented. Fees that raise revenues for financial aid

can help preserve access by providing a pool of resources for students who might otherwise be unable to afford college; fees that raise revenues for instruction can help preserve quality by providing students with sufficient curricula and support to make timely progress to a high quality degree. Fees that do neither, but merely raise revenues to help the state close a general budget deficit, are a regressive tax on those students who can still afford a college education, and a barrier that could prevent the neediest students from attending at all.

For many students, access is primarily an issue of affordability. It is important, therefore, that any fee increases be accompanied by sufficient student aid to maintain the affordability and access that has been the hallmark of California higher education. The CSU has recently raised student fees by 15% for graduate students and 10% for undergraduates, and the Governor's budget proposes an additional fee increase for AY 2003-04 of 25% for undergraduates and 20% for graduates.

The Legislative Analyst's Office proposes that fees for undergraduates be raised 15% but that the traditional requirement that 1/3 of all fees be set aside for financial aid be lifted. The LAO cites the availability of Cal Grants as a reason for why the 1/3 financial aid set aside is not required. This reasoning is erroneous. A significant number of CSU students are not from the traditional 18-24 age group and many have been out of high school for more than one year, making them ineligible for most Cal Grants. The best, and in many cases the only way to provide for their financial need, is through internal State University Grants funded by the 1/3 of fee revenues that the CSU traditionally sets aside for financial aid.

The CSU is experiencing a budget shortfall so severe that, whatever the fee increases, severe cuts are expected. Those cuts should not fall upon those specific programs and services that can help students cope with the fee increases, or else student access to higher education will be even more seriously imperiled.

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