Forward

In its role as the voice of and advocates for the graduate and professional students of the University of Arizona (UA), the UA Graduate and Professional Student Council (GPSC) presents the following white paper on fees approved and administered by the Arizona Board of Regents (ABOR) and UA Administration. The GPSC aims to remain an active part of the campus-wide conversation on fees and their origins, purposes, approval, oversight, and possible elimination, reduction, refund, and/or waiver for certain student populations.

Overview: This white paper has been divided into the following sections.

1. Introduction
2. Inventory of Tuition and Fees
3. Approval of Tuition and Fees
4. Administration of Tuition and Fees
5. Elimination, Reduction, Refunding, and Exemption of Fees
6. GPSC Concerns
7. History of Tuition and Fees
8. GPSC Recommendations

1. Introduction

In 2010, Debra Stewart, the President of the Council on Graduate Schools, and Kurt Landgraf, President and CEO of the Educational Testing Service, noted that “It has been argued that in the knowledge economy, a graduate degree will become the new bachelor’s degree, the minimal education credential that high-skills employers require.” Along those lines, graduate education is a “strategic national asset” that must be “nurtured.”

Steward and Landgraf, however, also argue that “If that is so, then the United States is in peril of losing its competitive edge with long-term consequences for our economy, our quality of life, and our global standing,” given the United States’ lagging investment in graduate education when compared to Europe, China, India, and others (Stewart & Landgraf, 2010).

In fact, recent national policy has been to make graduate and professional education even more expensive. Graduate and professional students no longer qualify for subsidized loans (CNN, 2011) and pay a higher interest rate on unsubsidized loans than undergraduate students, despite lower rates of default (US News, 2013). Furthermore, policymakers in Washington are in discussions to cap Public Service Loan Forgiveness programs at $57,500 (Lowden, 2014). Recently, the U.S. House of Representatives passed a bill that aims to “consolidate existing grant programs into one Pell Grant program and all existing loan programs into one Stafford loan” (House Committee on Education and the Workforce, Republican Priorities for Reauthorizing Higher Education Act, 2014); though presented as an efficiency measure, this bill would effectively shuffle $303 million from the Pell Grants program to pay off private companies that profit even further from collecting student loan payments (Gallucci, 2014).

In addition, decreased state investment in higher education for the past twenty years has lead many schools to significantly increase tuition and fees to replace lost funding. In the last 30 years, college tuition and fees have climbed higher than the inflation rate, leaving many students and families overwhelmed and anxious about the growing cost of a degree. In the past five years alone, the state of Arizona has seen a 77 percent increase in the cost of higher education (Ma, 2012).

In response to these challenges, a recent trend has been to cover budgetary shortfalls by instituting mandatory student fees, as opposed to merely raising tuition. This is significant as graduate student financial support usually takes the form of graduate assistantships (e.g, teaching and research) that offer, in exchange for 10-20 hours of work, a stipend and a partial-to-full waiver of tuition only (not including fees). Furthermore, most graduate/professional students do not enjoy the same degree of family support as undergraduate students in funding their education. Such fees, therefore, place a distinctly inequitable burden upon a specific subset of the student population.

These issues are particularly pressing as financial support is the most significant factor contributing to completion of doctoral degrees (Council of Graduate Schools, 2009).

*University of Arizona Graduate and Professional Students*

The average GA annual stipend is $16,388 at the University of Arizona, which does not cover the average total cost of attendance of $20,900 (UA Financial Aid Office)\(^1\). Additionally, associated tuition waivers do not cover the mandatory fees that students must pay out-of-pocket each semester (on average, $509 per semester), nor do they cover additional fees assessed to international students ($100) or any other differential tuition or program fee costs.

Over the last three years (2012-2015), the [GPSC Institute](#) has connected numerous surveys of UA graduate and professional students regarding financial issues. The data from these surveys demonstrates a growing need to support graduate and professional student education and lifestyles at the local level that is currently not being addressed.

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\[1\] Calculated by taking the estimated total cost of attendance and subtracting the tuition ($32,700 – 11,800), or ($49,700 – 28,800). [Source: Financial Aid]
2. Inventory of Tuition and Fees

1. Base tuition
2. Differential tuition
3. Mandatory Fees
4. Program Fees
5. Class Fees
6. Opt-In Fees
7. Opt-Out Fees

ABOR is the governing board for the State’s public universities: Arizona State University, Northern Arizona University, and the University of Arizona. It is also responsible for setting student tuition as well as mandatory fees, differential tuition, and program fees. In addition, course and other fees over $100 must be approved by ABOR.

At the University of Arizona, a variety of fees exist that impact students’ ability to attend classes. These range from mandatory fees, which must be paid to maintain eligibility for attendance, to opt-in fees, which are paid only to gain access to certain services. Depending on the nature of the fees, it may be approved at the university level alone or require ABOR approval.

**Base Tuition** is defined as, “a sum of money charged for teaching or instruction by a school, college, or university.” According to the Office of Scholarships and Financial Aid for the 2014-2015 school year, undergraduate in-state students paid $11,000 for base tuition while out-of-state students paid $29,500. Graduate in-state students paid $11,800 while out-of-state students paid $28,000. In the last year alone, ABOR approved a 3% tuition increase that increased resident tuition by $300 and non-resident tuition by $800.

**Differential tuition** is any tuition amount that deviates from base tuition and applies to all academic programs on a campus or college level. As states continue to cut university funding, schools are pressured to apply differential tuition to programs that are traditionally more expensive to maintain. According to information provided by Mark Denke, ABOR representative?, program fees/differential tuition and class fees comprised 4% of total tuition/fee revenue in 2007. Since then, differential tuition rates/program fees have increased by 85%, while revenue generated has increased by 286%. For 2014-15, differential tuition/program fees are projected to comprise 6.8% of tuition/fee revenue. During this nine-year cycle, the highest percentage was 7% in 2012-13. how many differential tuitions do we have? Do you have to pay the base tuition and the differential tuition on top of it?

Accelerated program tuition is the tuition schedule for accelerated Master’s programs. (how many accelerated program tutions do we have?)

According to the UA Office of Academic Affairs, undergraduate students who are admitted into these programs are initially allowed to take up to 12 units of graduate coursework to apply to both their Bachelor’s and Master’s degree. At this point, this student would still be charged at the undergraduate rate and retain their ability to apply for undergraduate scholarships. Once a student has completed the Bachelor’s requirements, they are granted graduate status, charged at graduate rates, and become eligible for graduate assistantships. However, a student who reaches 12 graduate credits without completing undergraduate course requirements is considered a graduate student for financial aid and tuition purposes, but without eligibility for either undergraduate scholarships or graduate assistantships.

Mandatory fees are defined as ABOR-approved fees charged to all students at the University of Arizona. For the 2014-2015 school year, undergraduate students are required to pay eight different mandatory fees while graduate students pay seven. The mandatory fees include:

1. Arizona Financial Aid Trust Fee (AFAT): Approved by students in 1989 to provide state-based financial aid to students who are underrepresented in the university population or who demonstrate a clear need for financial aid.

2. Health and Recreation Fee (HEALTH): Approved by ABOR in 2010 to help fund student health services (e.g., medical, counseling, and psychological) as well as the operational and service costs of the Campus Recreation Center. As of Fall 2013, Campus Health received 54% of the funds from this fee while the Recreation Center received 46%.

3. Student Media Fee (MEDIA): Approved by students in 2013 to support the student-run campus media organizations (i.e., KAMP Radio, UA TV, and the Daily Wildcat).

4. Information Technology/Library Fee (ITL Fee): Approved by ABOR in 2006 and intended to enhance students’ learning environment by expanding university capacity for high-quality digital experiences, increasing digital access to library materials, and appropriately equipping classroom spaces. As of Fall 2013, Information Technology received 68% of the funds from this fee while the Library received 42%.

5. Recreation Center Bond Retirement Fee (REC BOND Fee): Approved by students in 1985 for the amount of $25/semester to help fund the construction of the Student Recreation Center. This fee is slated to expire once bonds have been retired.

6. **Recreation Center Program Fee (REC PROG Fee)**: Approved by students in 2002 for the amount of $3/semester to assist with the funding of Campus Recreation programs.

7. **Student Service Fee (SERVICE Fee)**: Approved by ABOR in 2007 to support student programs such as campus safety, student health, counseling services, increased student employment opportunities, and enhanced food options.

8. **Wildcat Events Board Fee (WILDCAT Fee)**: Approved by students in 2013 to assist with funding Wildcat Events programs. This fee is assessed to undergraduate students alone.

UA graduate and professional students pay the following mandatory fees as of 2014-2015. Fees depend on the number of units a student takes; the numbers are for a full-time student taking seven units or more:

- **Arizona Financial Aid Trust (AFAT)** - $47.00
- **Health and Recreation Fee** - $150.00
- **Information Technology and Library Fee** (ITL) - $240.00
- **Student Media Fee** - $3.00 - refundable
- **Recreation Center Bond Retirement Fee** - $25.00
- **Recreation Center Program Fee** - $3.91 - refundable
- **Student Services Fee** - $40.00
- **International Student Fee*** - international students only

**Facts**

- 30% of 12,000 courses at 3 universities have class fees (Source: ABOR, 2014)
- Approximately 3,600 courses have fees (Source: ABOR, 2014)

**Program fees** are additional amounts charged to students in select degree programs within colleges, schools or departments that have demonstrably higher costs of delivering instruction overall (e.g., due to special equipment, technology, key personnel, market conditions, etc.). (Number of program fees? Discuss the revenue? How much have program fees increased over the last 5-10 years?)

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Class fees are additional charges for specific classes or courses that have demonstrably higher costs of delivering instruction because of the use of special equipment, supplies, technology, key personnel, or field trips. Since 2007, revenues from class fees have increased by 375%. The number of class fees has increased by 55% since 2011, when the number of total class fees was first revealed. It should be noted that not all courses with fees are offered every semester.

Opt-in fees (subscriptions) are tied to services and resources for which students pay an optional “subscription” fee for access. An example is the $5 fee associated with access to parts of the UA Career Service website, e.g., registration, access to JobLink and employment opportunities.

3. Approval of Tuition and Fees

The approval process of the fee depends on the fee. Here’s a quick breakdown.

**Mandatory Fees** ultimately have to be approved by the Arizona Board of Regents (ABOR). Before a fee is considered for approval there will be discussions in the unit who is proposing the fee. These fees should be discussed with students as early as possible. It is up to student leaders to jump into conversations early about possible fees. Once the conversation formalizes around the discussion of possible fees, GPSC and ASUA should be consulted (see [MOU](#)). Sometimes fees will have to be voted on in the GPSC and ASUA Elections.

**Differential Tuition** is the additional tuition that graduate and professional students will have to pay to cover the more expensive cost of instruction. Check with your Dean on the proposal and approval process.

**Program Fees** are ultimately approved by ABOR but the process prior to an ABOR vote take places in the college. Ask your Dean and GPSC Representative to learn more.

**Class Fees** over $100 have to approved by ABOR. Class fees under $100 only need the approval of the University Fees Committee.

4. Administration of Tuition and Fees

Criteria to be addressed in the fee approval requests include the quality of the student experience, access and affordability, variance in college/school/campus cost of instruction, and market pricing. In addition, results of student consultation must be included in the request.

**How Fees are Spent**

In 2015, the [University Student Service Fee Survey](#) indicated the following top five priorities for graduate students. Many of these could reasonably be funded through existing mandatory fees.

1. Funding for graduate student academic travel, presentations, and professional development (86%)
2. Access to scholarships and financial aid information (81%)
3. Expanded career-related opportunities (76%)
4. Career-based experiential learning and internship opportunities (75%)
5. Academic support services (including tutoring, supplemental instruction, and educational planning) that teach the skills needed to be a successful student (74%)

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[1] Calculated by taking the estimated total cost of attendance and subtracting the tuition ($32,700 – 11,800), or ($49,700 – 28,800). [Source: Financial Aid](#).
5. Elimination, Reduction, Refunding, and Exemption of Fees

One of the issues that GPSC and ABOR has discussed if all fees are permanent. GPSC and ABOR agree that some fees should be automatically “sunsetted” and reviewed for continued approval.

6. GPSC Concerns

Email to Provost Andrew Comrie, Vice-President of Student Affairs, and Graduate College Dean Andrew Carnie on November 26, 2014

GPSC Serious Fee Concerns

Hello Melissa, Andrew, and Andrew,

I wanted to write an email to let you know positions GPSC has taken on fees. This email’s size represents growing frustration about fees and the financial realities of being a graduate or professional student.

This email is divided into five (5) sections.

1. GPSC Statement on Fees
2. GPSC Statement on Potential Fees
3. GPSC’s very serious concerns on iCourse Fee
4. Devaluation of the Campus Recreation Fee
5. GPSC Perspective & Graduate Student Perspective

For much of this semester, the GPSC General Council (31-strong this year) has discussed fee and specific fee boards that are not transparent and do not uphold themselves to the standard of fee boards such as the Student Services Fee Advisory Board (SSFAB). In fact, GPSC currently has an online petition regarding fee transparency of the IT Student Advisory Board and the University Fees Committee. As of November 26, 2014 380 graduate and professional students have signed the petition.

For GPSC, fees that are non-transparent violate the principles of shared governance, a principal the University of Arizona is known for, and the MOU on Fees and Tuition the GPSC signed with UA Administration during Spring 2013.

Because of our concerns, we have taken the following positions.

1. **GPSC Statement on Fees (Fall 2014)**

"GPSC is collectively against any and every proposed fee or fee increase that doesn't fit all four of the following criteria:

1. Calculated by taking the estimated total cost of attendance and subtracting the tuition ($32,700 – 11,800), or ($49,700 – 28,800). **Source:** Financial Aid.
1. It is a specified dollar amount per student,
2. It has been made clear how and where the money will be spent to both GPSC and the student population (both undergraduate and graduate),
3. GPSC and the student population have been made aware of the proposed expiration date of the fee (if applicable) and any proposed timetable of fee increases,
4. The GPSC General Council has had the opportunity to vote on the fee and has voted in favor of the fee."

… passed unanimously during GPSC’s General Council Meeting Fall 2014

2. **GPSC Statement on Potential Fees (Fall 2014)**
   a. **Street Car Fee**
      a. GPSC does not support the Street Car Fee with the current level of information.
      … passed unanimously during GPSC’s General Council Meeting Fall 2014
   b. **Green Fee**
      a. GPSC does not support the Green Fee with the current level of information.
      … passed unanimously during GPSC’s General Council Meeting Fall 2014
   c. **iCourse Fee**
      a. GPSC opposes the existence of the iCourse Fee.
      … passed unanimously during GPSC’s General Council Meeting Fall 2014

3. **GPSC’s very serious concerns on iCourse Fee (Fall 2014)**

One of GPSC’s main concerns about the iCourse fee, besides the lack of transparency about the decision to form the fee, has to do with its likely improper fit as a fee.

- Class fees are designed to be used for the class itself, and not for the development of future classes. The iCourse fee seems to be a fee for the development of future classes.
- Program fees are designed to be used for a program since the fee is assessed to every student completing the program (you can't graduate without taking those specific courses), and the money is going towards the creation of a platform for future use by that program. However, ABOR needs to approve all program fees before they can take effect, which didn't happen with the iCourse fee.

GPSC believes that the iCourse fee needs ABOR approval.

- iCourses aren’t eligible for a class fee because they don't cost any more than a physical course as evidenced by the iCourse fee money going towards the creation of a new platform that won't be used by this first round of iCourses.

The total cost of teaching an online course needs to be compared to the total cost of teaching a physical course, and only if the online course is more expensive overall (with all costs taken into account) can an additional fee be charged. It’s not clear if the University of Arizona has demonstrated that every online course is $50 more expensive than a hypothetical physical counterpart.

- **GPSC requests that the iCourse fee be suspended and then be reinstated on a case-by-case basis for any courses that demonstrate higher costs associated with the online version of the course, to comply with ABOR requirements.**
- **GPSC requests that iCourse fee be refunded to any student enrolled in an iCourse mandated by their program. Graduate students in Nursing and one of the MBA tracks have mandatory iCourses. Other programs likely fall under the same category.**

### 4. Devaluation of the Campus Recreation Fee

GPSC has two concerns about the Campus Recreation portion of the Campus Recreation and Health fee.

1. GPSC is concerned that students are getting less value from the Campus Recreation Fee than it did two years ago.
2. GPSC is concerned that the Campus Recreation Fee is subsidizing other departments, meaning that students with their fees are subsidizing other department operations without proper campus or ABOR approval.

Lynn Zwaagstra, the Director of Campus Recreation, has said that the last shared space between Rec and Athletics is Bear Down Field. She predicts that Athletics will attempt to gain sole use of Bear Down Field in the near future (history suggests the next year or two).

Over the past three years, Recreation has been evicted by Athletics from two shared spaces (Murphy Field and Robson Tennis Center - Recreation had to take out a loan to construct Sitton (Cherry) Field as a replacement, and is having to cut into its rainy day fund to handle the blocked access to its remaining tennis courts), and lost Bear Down Gym to office space for staff displaced from Old Main (Gittings Gym was provided as a replacement, but is significantly smaller and needed to be remodeled by Campus Rec).

These actions/decisions directly affect the value of the Campus Recreation Fee.

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[1] Calculated by taking the estimated total cost of attendance and subtracting the tuition ($32,700 – 11,800), or ($49,700 – 28,800). **Source:** Financial Aid.
GPSC requests that either a) the Campus Recreation Fee be reduced or b) the services lost in terms of space available to use be restored.

5. GPSC Perspective

GPSC recognizes that the driving forces of fees have to do with state budget cuts since 2008. GPSC recognizes that the over-regulation and under-funding of higher education in the state of Arizona represent tremendous challenges to the institution. GPSC recognizes that the UA Administration has had to be very creative to continue to operate a university in a new and constantly changing budgetary environment. GPSC realizes that fees can be necessary and that fees can be transparent.

Graduate Student Perspective
While GPSC recognizes the issues that drive fees at a state level, most graduate students are more focused on the micro-level. For example, the average compensation for .50 GAs is $16,388 while the estimated costs, according to UA Financial Aid, are $20,900. This does not include fees or health care expenses. That means that many graduate students are receiving less compensation than their expenses making costs such as fees extremely frustrating. Without transparency, fees seem punitive.

Summary of GPSC’s Fee concerns

1. GPSC is concerned that fees are being approved on campus, such as the iCourse fee, that really should have ABOR approval.
2. ABOR wants to standardized how it approves fees to find fees, such as the iCourse fee, that may be listed as a class fee but should be reported as a program fee.
3. Fees are regressive. For low income students and graduate students fees makes up huge percentage of income. Regent Myers calls this the “pain index.”
4. Loans are out control, in part, because the fees that cannot be counted as tuition. They have to be paid out of pocket so the only way to pay for the “total cost of attendance” for many is through student loans.
5. Arizona universities argued that they should be free to approve, then administer program and course fees themselves. ABOR declined this argument.
6. Some program fees equal $5,000 annually (ASU)

7. History of Tuition and Fees

1. Because of the extra income generated by mandatory fees (non-academic fees) and differential tuition (academic fees), universities began approving differential tuition and program fees on top of tuition. It became a runaway train. Numerous requests for program fees began to appear in front of higher educational boards such as ABOR.
   1. Differential tuition started with graduate programs.
   2. Fees initiated political conversations about fees as socialism (benefits all) versus fees that benefit specific groups or individuals.
   3. Fees should be talked as if it’s extra tuition. The total cost of attendance is more important than tuition.

2. Once program fees were instituted, class fees within programs within colleges became the “entrepreneurial way to raise funds and stretch general fund dollars.”
   1. ABOR has seen more and more requests for class fees (ABOR wants to see student input on fees)
   2. ABOR wonders if only recruit supportive students or student representatives are part of fee decisions.
   3. It’s hard for students to decide the importance of fees because there are few standards for the criteria for approval

Source: Mark Denke, Arizona Board of Regents, Director of Academic & Student Affairs

8. GPSC Recommendations

6. Facts

1. Most class fees are under $100 (under $100 does not need ABOR approval)
2. Because ABOR was overwhelmed with fee requests, getting fee approval for only those fees over $100 was a way to manage ABOR’s agenda.

More information?
- It’s good to get a billing statement to see every fee assessed.

GPSC Feedback on Career Services Fee

Graduate students' contribution to the $40 Student Services Fee pool is supposed to support graduate services, which includes Career Services, of course. But Career Services is doing nothing to support PhDs and very little to support MA students.

There is an additional fee-for-service charge to graduate students who ask for help from Career Services. And there's a $5 opt-in fee for a cluster of services, but it is not clear what those services are. Deya Martinez paid the $5 opt-in-fee but didn’t find that information was helpful.

Board of Regents Meeting

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Differential Tuition and Program Fees by Undergraduate and Graduate Programs

In 2013-14, at the system level, 27% of differential tuition/program fees were for undergraduate programs; 73% for graduate. The revenue split was 41% for undergraduates and 59% for graduates, due in part, to the larger enrollment of undergraduate students.

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At the institutional level, although the percentages vary, the balance between undergraduate and graduate programs is similar, with fewer undergraduate programs charging fees but generating more of the revenue.

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SYSTEM TRENDS

The following system trends assume approval of the proposed changes. Since 2007, the numbers of and revenues from differential tuition, program fees and class fees have risen dramatically.

References


Unsorted references

http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2014/12/17/wealth-gap-record-pew-research_n_6343264.html

Lo Que Pasa January 2015

President Hart Testifies to Arizona House Higher Ed Committee

President Hart joined the presidents of the Arizona Board of Regents, ASU and NAU to address the House Government and Higher Education Committee on Thursday, Jan.29.

Committee Chair Bob Thorpe asked each to report on how the universities had managed previous cuts in state support, as well as trends in enrollment and tuition.

Hart spoke about the 37 percent drop in state support since 2008 and how the UA had reduced staff positions, closed or merged academic programs and cut expenses by more than $21 million. Enrollment also increased, going from 34,751 in 2007-2008 to 42,388 this academic year.

Tuition and fees rose steeply over the same period, from $5,048 to $10,957. One of the initiatives discussed to keep college affordable was the UA's Guaranteed Tuition Plan, which freezes tuition for incoming resident and nonresident students for four years, allowing students and families to make financial plans based on predictable costs.

Hart's testimony also showed how UA programs grow Arizona's economy through research activities that attract dollars to Arizona and help create new businesses. The new UA Impact Map, which details the UA's economic and societal contributions and activities across the state, also was featured. The Impact Map is available online at arizona.edu/impact-map.