Guidelines for Transparency and Shared Governance

Memorandum of Understanding between the Graduate and Professional Student Council (GPSC) and the Administration of The University of Arizona

Approved by GPSC on March 19, 2012

This Memorandum of Understanding, agreed to by the Graduate and Professional Student Council (GPSC) on behalf of all graduate and professional students and the Administration of The University of Arizona, outlines principles of shared governance with regards to changes in tuition and mandatory fees (hereafter fees) at The University of Arizona and is entered into freely by the students and administration committed to a constructive dialogue to strengthen the University.

The Administration of the University of Arizona for the purposes of this agreement specifically refers to the University President, Provost, Vice-President of Student Affairs, Dean of the Graduate College, and the Vice-President for Research.

This Memorandum of Understanding establishes a clear and transparent procedure for incorporating student feedback into the tuition and fee proposal process and any significant changes to the general tuition and fee structure at the University of Arizona. These procedures are based in large part on the results of a wide-reaching survey of graduate and professional students.

A. General Principles for Tuition and Fee Proposals

1. In accordance with the constitutional mandate to keep education in Arizona “as nearly free as possible” (Arizona constitution, Art. 11, Sec. 6) we strongly believe that tuition and fees should be maintained at their current level or decreased whenever possible. Thus, GPSC cannot support an increase in tuition or fees without substantial documentation of a significant need and without clear student input using the processes outlined below.

2. Any tuition or fee proposal must be officially presented to GPSC early enough to allow for sufficient time for GPSC to study the proposal, propose changes if applicable, and engage with the administration in a constructive negotiation.

3. Any tuition and fee proposal should consider differential rates for graduate and professional students relative to undergraduate students, taking into account service usage and considering the different values that services hold for the various student populations.

4. Tuition and fees should be prorated by a student’s units up to full-time, unless there are substantial reasons showing that the usage of a service is independent of a student’s course load.
5. Refundable and opt-out fees must be clearly labeled as such, and the process for obtaining the refund must be clear, simple, and comparable in effort and ease to paying the fee (e.g. electronically through the university system).

6. Opt-in fees must be clearly labeled as such, and the process for opting into the fee should be clear, simple and comparable in effort and ease to paying a mandatory fee (e.g. electronically through the university system).

7. Whenever possible, fees should, in the interest of transparency, reflect a single unit.

8. There should be exemptions from fees for services that are unavailable to the student populations who are not residents of Tucson and thus unable to utilize those services.

9. Any tuition and fee proposal should consider the dual roles of graduate and professional students appointed as graduate assistants/associates, being employees of the University of Arizona as much as students, and the proposal's impact on the services provided by them in teaching, research, outreach, administrative, and clinical work.

B. Process for Tuition Proposals

The signees agree that tuition proposals by the administration must adhere to the following procedures for soliciting and incorporating student feedback:

1. **Necessity**
   Publish and provide to GPSC appropriately detailed budgetary information for proposed tuition increases together with reasons for the unavailability of funding sources other than tuition (and fees).

2. **Transparency**
   Publish a detailed rationale of how the administration arrived at its proposal and a detailed estimate how the proposed tuition would be used, and make these documents readily available to GPSC in a timely manner.

3. **Timeliness**
   Furnish the preliminary tuition proposal and any supporting documents, such as budgetary information, to GPSC with sufficient time for GPSC to go back to its members to obtain and provide substantive feedback before the proposal is presented to the Arizona Board of Regents.

C. Process for Fee Proposals

The signees agree that units requesting new or increased fees must adhere to the following procedures for soliciting and incorporating student feedback:

1. **Transparency**
   Publish a detailed estimate of how proposed fees will be used and make such estimates readily available to GPSC and ASUA, to the appropriate (student) advisory groups or committees, and on websites. Regularly update published information regarding usage of fees when appropriate.
2. **Surveys**

   If a survey is used to determine support for a fee or fee increase, the survey must be reviewed by GPSC and ASUA before it is administered. If not supported, published results must indicate concerns voiced by ASUA and GPSC or their appointees and must clearly indicate lack of support on the survey. Review must be sought at least 30 days prior to survey distribution in order to allow for students' concerns to be addressed.

   Surveys must solicit input from affected student groups and the general student population during the regular fall or spring semesters and kept open for at least 7 regular session days. To ensure quality the survey should be reviewed by the Director of Assessment and Research in the Division of Student Affairs prior to implementation.

   Survey results must be made public and furnished to GPSC and ASUA, as well as the appropriate (student) advisory groups or committees in a timely manner.

3. **Proposal Approval**

   Whenever possible, students should be allowed to vote directly on the approval of proposed new or increased fees. (Voting systems are available through GPSC and ASUA.) Survey participation regarding value of services may not be reported as student support without an accompanying vote for specific fee amounts and proposed usage unless GPSC approves this.

   If a direct vote is not possible, the full proposal, including supporting documents such as survey results, must be furnished to GPSC at least 15 days before proposal of the fee to the Administration or the Arizona Board of Regents, whichever comes first.

4. **Documentation**

   This procedure must be documented and presented to the Administration and insofar as possible the Arizona Board of Regents with all fee proposals. The documentation must include a report of specific feedback from students, final positions of GPSC and ASUA on the survey and interpretation approval, demonstration that the survey sample was representative, and comprehensive survey results.

   This process should be implemented such that it does not need additional resources; it should be integrated into the fee culture at the University in the interest of collaboration and shared governance.

**D. Fee Implementation**

In order to extend transparency to the fee implementation, there must be an oversight and advisory group or committee for every fee to ensure the spending of the fee moneys is in accordance with the approved fee proposal.

This group or committee must be provided a sufficiently detailed expenditure report and budget estimate, as well as service utilization reports if applicable, at least once per semester by the unit overseeing the fee, to enable the committee to evaluate the fee utilization and make recommendations on future fee usage.

The group or committee membership must represent student shared governance organizations and user groups and except for non-voting members be independent of the unit(s) overseeing the fee.
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President

Date

Andrew Comrie
Senior Vice President for Academic Affairs and Provost

3/20/13
Date

Melissa Vito
Vice President for Student Affairs

March 25, 2013
Date

Andrew Carnie
Dean of the Graduate College

April 22, 2013
Date