

# Activity Fee Guidelines

Student Association and Graduate Student Association

UNIVERSITY AT ALBANY

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Office of Student Involvement & Leadership

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## Overview

As a doctoral degree granting institution of the State University of New York, the University at Albany is responsible for adhering to the Board of Trustees Guidelines regarding [\*Mandatory Student Activity Fees Guidelines\*](#) and [\*Mandatory, Fiscal and Accounting Procedures for Student Activity Fee Programs\*](#). The following shall be the only permitted uses of mandatory student activity fees, as outlined by the SUNY Board of Trustees, in order to support the campus community:

1. Programs of cultural and educational enrichment
2. Recreational and social activities
3. Tutorial programs
4. Athletic programs, both intramural and intercollegiate
5. Student publications and other media
6. Recognized student organizations including religious student organizations
7. Insurance related to conduct of these programs
8. Administration of these programs
9. Transportation in support of these programs
10. Student services to supplement or add to those provided by the University
11. Remuneration and reimbursement of travel expenses in accordance with state guidelines to students for service to student government
12. Campus-based scholarships, fellowships and grant programs, provided the funds are administered by the campus or a campus affiliated organization
13. Payments for contractual services provided by a nonprofit organization to the extent that such services are in aid of an approved student activity during the budget year and which activity serves the purposes set forth above and provided further that such payments may not be exclusively for the general corporate purposes of such organization
14. Salaries for professional non-student employees of the student government to the extent that they are consistent with hiring practices and compensation rates of other campus-affiliated organizations
15. Charitable donations to a nonprofit organization; provided, however, that such donations may be funded only from the proceeds of a fundraiser held by a recognized student organization.

## Conduct and Compliance

The University at Albany will only authorize disbursement of any activity funds to the duly elected and constituted student government as confirmed by the student government's Elections Commission, or similarly empowered body, and the Office of Student Involvement & Leadership.

In order to be approved as the duly elected and constituted student government, the Office of Student Involvement & Leadership must have a current copy of all governing documents (Constitution, bylaws etc.) and the student government must maintain updated and active adherence to its own governing documents. See Appendix B.

All officers of the student government must adhere to all University policies including, but not limited to, the student code of conduct. No officer shall have a standing judicial sanction while serving. See Appendix B.

## Referendum

Every two years, the student body—both undergraduate and graduate—shall determine by referendum (in accordance with established procedures for elections and referendums) whether student activity shall be supported by either voluntary or mandatory student fees. Such referendum shall be held on the same day as the annual elections for officers of each representative student government. The determination resulting from each referendum shall remain in force for a period of two academic years, except that at any time within such two year period a subsequent referendum held in accordance with the constitution and by-laws of the student government may affect a change in this determination with respect to the following academic year.

Special efforts should be made to assure:

1. Inform the student body

2. Extensive campus publicity concerning the referendum to encourage maximum student participation and voter turnout
3. A polling period which will be convenient for the greatest number of voters
4. An advantageous location of polling places to provide easy access for students (including students with disabilities) and alternative formats to accommodate the needs of students with disabilities

See Appendix A for standardized ballot for voting on student activity fees.

## **Annual Budget Preparation and Certification**

The annual budget certification process must include reviewing the policies and procedures of the SUNY Board of Trustees and the University regarding policies for internal control, affirmative action, employment practices, and sound business practices with the elected executives of the representative student organization. Based upon an understanding of the responsibilities, the Office of Student Involvement & Leadership may authorize the representative student government's budget. This authorization will include:

1. Recognition that the current student government are the duly elected representatives of the student body and may receive all related or associated activity fees collected by the University;
2. Authorization for the student government and its recognized student organizations to use University space and facilities in accordance with University policies;
3. Contract with the student government's fiscal agent
4. Funds budgeted, in compliance with SUNY Board of Trustees, only to support the following programs for the benefit of the campus community:
  - a. Programs of cultural and educational enrichment
  - b. Recreational and social activities
  - c. Tutorial programs
  - d. Athletic programs, both intramural and intercollegiate
  - e. Student publications and other media
  - f. Recognized student organizations including religious student organizations

- g. Insurance related to conduct of these programs
  - h. Administration of these programs
  - i. Transportation in support of these programs
  - j. Student services to supplement or add to those provided by the University
  - k. Remuneration and reimbursement of travel expenses in accordance with state guidelines to students for service to student government
  - l. Campus-based scholarships, fellowships and grant programs, provided the funds are administered by the campus or a campus affiliated organization
  - m. Payments for contractual services provided by a nonprofit organization to the extent that such services are in aid of an approved student activity during the budget year and which activity serves the purposes set forth above and provided further that such payments may not be exclusively for the general corporate purposes of such organization
  - n. Salaries for professional non-student employees of the student government to the extent that they are consistent with hiring practices and compensation rates of other campus-affiliated organizations
  - o. Charitable donations to a nonprofit organization; provided, however, that such donations may be funded only from the proceeds of a fundraiser held by a recognized student organization
5. Approval of the internal control guidelines in consultation with the University Controller's Office.
6. Documentation confirming that the following forms of insurance are being maintained:
- a. Dishonesty (fidelity) Insurance: for officers, agents, and employees of the student government and the fiscal agent, who are accountable for money or assets to be adequately bonded
  - b. General Liability Insurance: all organizations that are recognized by the student government should be covered by the insurance. Organizations whose activities are not or cannot be insured should not be recognized by the student government

- c. Automotive, Media, and Other Insurance: to cover all of the material risk exposures of the student government
  - d. The State University of New York and the University at Albany must also be named as additional insured on all of the liability insurance policies purchased
7. If all of the aforementioned requirements have been met, the Vice President for Student Success will certify the student government budget.

### Changes to Approved Budget

Changes to the approved budget after certification, either prior to or subsequent to the disbursement of mandatory fees and **including the use of Reserve Funds**, shall be subject to review by the Office of Student Involvement & Leadership and certification by the Vice President for Student Success in the same manner as was applicable to the original budget.

See Appendix C for Budget Preparation and Periodic Adjustment

### Reserve Funds

Each representative student governments, in consultation with the Office of Student Involvement & Leadership and as approved by the Vice President for Student Success, may establish designated reserve funds for specified long-range programs, provided the purposes fall within SUNY and University guidelines.

- ❖ Minimum fiscal unreserved fund balance should be no less than ten (10%) percent of the prior year's operating expenditures and no more than fifty (50%) percent.
- ❖ If the unreserved fund balance falls under this amount, the respective student government organization should budget to bring their reserves to the required level within a reasonable time.

## Use of Reserve Funds

Any reserve funds in excess of 25% of the operating budget should be made available for use on projects benefitting students and student life at the University at Albany. Said projects must be approved by no less than 2/3rds vote of the respective duly-elected student government organization's main voting body.

- ❖ In emergency situations (e.g. enrollment short-fall ...), the respective duly-elected student government organization's main voting body may authorize utilizing reserve funds that reduce the reserve below 10% of the operating budget. Said authorization shall require no less than 4/5ths vote of said body.
- ❖ Reserve Funds should be maintained in a separate bank account and are subject to the approval of the Campus Designee. Reserve Funds and current fiscal year Activity Fee funds should never be co-mingled unless authorized via the aforementioned circumstances.

## Activity Fee Increases

Given that the needs of each representative student government are different and ever-changing, each student government shall be allowed to request an increase to their annual activity fee as needed. For each student government to request an increase they must first meet the following guidelines:

1. Develop a policy for fee increases that must be approved by the Office of Student Involvement & Leadership as being acceptable under SUNY and University guidelines
2. The maximum annual increase shall not exceed 3%
3. Increases may be requested only every two (2) years
4. Total **mandatory** activity fee may not exceed \$200 per student/per year
5. All requests for increases must be authorized by the University budget office before any additional activity fees can be collected

## Financial Authorization

As the authorized University signatory for all activity fee expenditures, all contracts and wire transfers shall be treated as any other activity fee expenditure and shall be subject to review by the Campus Designee prior to execution and the signature of the Campus Designee must be present for any activity fee funds to be disbursed. Financial Authorization from the Campus Designee shall also be required should a student government seek to establish a line of credit in any form.

The signature of the Campus Designee indicates **ONLY** that the purpose of the fiscal commitment is in compliance with the provisions of the 'Trustee' policy governing Student Activity Fees and the commitment does not constitute a fiscal obligation of the State of New York, the SUNY, or the University at Albany.

## Financial Reconciliation Process

To Be Determined...

## Competitive Bidding for Services

Periodically request proposals for the following contract services to augment the services provided by the University:

1. Independent accounting & audit services,
2. Legal services, and
3. Insurance

Services should be re-bid every three (3) years to ensure quality and value to the organization. Bidding timelines should be approved and submitted by the student government organization to the Campus Designee for approval along with the annual budget.

The Office of Student Involvement & Leadership shall assist with the bidding process and should be involved in the selection process, which shall include but not be limited to, having a non-voting representative in attendance at any interviews of potential candidates for services.

## **Annual Audit Process**

The representative student governments shall have the authority to engage the services of an independent auditor (licensed, independent, certified public accounting firm or sole practitioner) who will prepare an annual financial statement in accordance with generally accepted auditing standards. The following must be adhered to by the representative student government:

- ❖ Annual audit must be completed no later than September 30 following the close of the student government organization's fiscal year.
- ❖ The auditor's report, including any communication to student government management by the independent auditor of any internal control matter(s) noted during the conduct of the audit, shall be made available to the student body by campus newspaper and/or any other approved means and be submitted directly to the Vice President for Student Success and the Office of Student Involvement & Leadership by the auditor upon its release.
- ❖ An acceptable corrective action plan will be submitted for all internal control findings and recommendations within sixty (60) days of the report to the independent auditor, the Vice President for Student Success, the University Controller, the student government organization's Fiscal Agent, and the Office of Student Involvement & Leadership.
- ❖ The independent auditor may be appointed for no more than a one-year term. A request for proposals for auditing services should be made every three years.
  - No independent auditor shall be eligible to serve more than three (3) consecutive one-year terms, after which the firm is not eligible to serve again as the independent auditor until not less than a one-year intervening period has elapsed.

**Please Note:** These audits **do not** preclude audits by the New York State comptroller's office, SUNY system administration, the University controller's office or at the request of the Vice President for Student Success.

## **MyInvolvement.org**

Each representative student government shall be responsible uploading all the appropriate information into the MyInvolvement Financial Management System based upon their annual budget as approved by the Vice President for Student Success in consultation with the Office of Student Involvement & Leadership. Each representative student government Treasurer or equivalent will be responsible for the following:

- ❖ Developing a Guide for their respective student organizations explaining the system and how it is to be utilized under their respective policies.
- ❖ Creating an internal control program—subject to review by the Office of Student Involvement & Leadership—that outlines ways to maintain the security and integrity of the Finance system.
- ❖ Uploading budgetary information and ensuring that the Finance System is reconciled regularly with the accounting system of their respective Fiscal Agents.

Ensuring that there is a policy for any over expenditures by student organizations that includes educational outcomes as well as punitive not limited to warnings, meetings with the Office of Student Involvement & Leadership to discuss finances, or attending a mandatory financial management workshop.

# Appendix A: Referendum Guidelines

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The referendum on student activity fees required by the State University Board of Trustees should be conducted in accordance with established procedures of the campus for elections and referendums.

Special efforts should be made to assure:

1. Wide dissemination of the provisions of the policy of the State University Board of Trustees to inform the student body.
2. Extensive campus publicity concerning the referendum and any other measures, including holding the referendum on the same day as student government elections, to encourage maximum student participation and voter turnout.
3. A polling period which will be convenient for the greatest number of voters.
4. An advantageous location of polling places to provide easy access for students (including students with disabilities) and alternative formats to accommodate the needs of students with disabilities.

In the event that the referendum is contested, normal campus procedures for the adjudication of such challenges should be followed.

A standardized ballot (see below) has been prepared to assure that the issue voted upon in this referendum is presented in a uniform manner throughout the University.

A sample standardized ballot for voting on student activity fees can be found below.

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## University at Albany, State University of New York

### REFERENDUM OF STUDENT ACTIVITY FEES

Pursuant to Resolutions 71-90 and 02-65 of the SUNY Board of Trustees be it enacted:  
(Vote for A or B by placing a mark in the box adjoining the letter)

A  
That the "student  
activity fee" be  
MANDATORY for all  
\*\*students.

B  
That the "student  
activity fee" be  
VOLUNTARY for all  
\*\*students.

If a term other than "student activity fee" is used, it may be inserted in parenthesis at this point for clarification.

\*\*Indicate on the ballot the student body to whom the fee would apply (e.g., undergraduate, graduate).

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# Appendix B: Resources

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## State University of New York Board of Trustees Policies and Procedures

- ❖ [Mandatory Student Activity Fees Guidelines](#)
- ❖ [Mandatory, Fiscal and Accounting Procedures for Student Activity Fee Programs](#)

## University at Albany Policies and Procedures

- ❖ [Student Code of Conduct](#)
- ❖ [Student Involvement & Leadership Promotional Policies](#)

## Student Government Organization Policies and Procedures

- ❖ Student Association
  - [Constitution](#)
  - [Bylaws](#)
  - Treasurer's Handbook
- ❖ Graduate Student Organization
  - [Constitution](#)
  - [By-Laws](#)

# Appendix C: Budget Preparation and Periodic Adjustment and Review

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## **I. Maintain a Cash Flow Statement Mechanism**

**Purpose:** A cash flow statement will provide an overall picture of the cash generate and used within the program. This statement should be reviewed and updated on a quarterly basis, and should allow for any necessary adjustments to be made throughout the fiscal year.

**Instructions:**

- Add up total anticipated revenue for the current fiscal year
- Determine total overall projected expenditures for the current fiscal year, including all recurring and one-time expenses for the current fiscal year
- Total all financing activities, if any
- Construct a cash flow statement by taking total revenue less expenditures less total borrowing, in order to determine a true cash balance
- This cash balance represents the total surplus of cash available

## **II. Construct a Contingency Budget as Part of Initial Student Government Budget**

**Purpose:** Creating a budget process to help obtain accurate totals for revenue and expenditures, adjust for revenue shortfalls, and thus prevent overspending.

**Instructions:**

- Make sure all expenditures are paid using prior year revenue. Do not carry expenditures into the new budget year (fiscal year).
- Develop a new-year budget by projecting total overall expenditures for the new budget year, including all reoccurring and one-time expenses.
- Be sure to remove all prior year expenditures and pull out all previous one-time expenses that will not recut in the new budget (e.g., new printer, computer). This total is your projected total overall expenditures for the upcoming year.
- Estimate new-year projected revenue using the most recent official University projections for enrollment (undergraduate or graduate respectively) and approved activity fee rate (SA or GSO respectively).
- Adjust projected revenue for the spring semester to reflect percentage drop in enrollment (undergraduate and graduate respectively) from fall to spring semesters.
- Using this calculated revenue projection and proposed new-year expenditures; determine if your initial budget has a surplus or a deficit. Adjust expenditures accordingly to produce at a minimum a balanced budget—or a surplus if one is needed or desired.
- Now, prioritize the new-year expenditures such that the lowest prioritized expenditures can be eliminated if initial revenue levels projected at the time of budget development do not materialize. Low priority expenses will be eliminated until the budget is back in balance.

- Plan to revise the revenue projection at the end of the enrollment add/drop period each fall using official University enrollment (undergraduate and graduate respectively) figures to reflect actual graduate enrollment for the coming year and adjust low priority expenditures, as instructed above, needed to eliminate any deficits.

### **III. Monitor Budget Projections**

**Purpose:** To adjust budget to reflect revenue shortfalls or expenditure overages to maintain a balanced budget.

**Instructions:**

- Monitor actual to projected revenue collections monthly to identify any potential revenue shortfalls.
- Should a shortfall begin to occur, adjust expenditures accordingly, or utilize reserves (if available) to keep budget balanced.
- Monitor expenditures to ensure that they match the budgeted amounts. Identify and investigate any deviations from budgeted expenditures and adjust expenditures accordingly, or utilize reserves (if available) to keep budget balanced.

### **IV. Accumulating a 10% Budget Reserve**

**Instructions:**

- Set aside a specified amount each year in order to build up a reserve that can be used for cash flow stabilization and to maintain a balanced budget in times of revenue shortfalls.
- Create a surplus of funds until the student government (SA or GSO respectively) believes the reserve is sufficient.
- If the reserve is utilized for any purpose and therefore the balance falls below the desired level, be sure to budget for the replenishment of the reserve in the next year's budget.

# Appendix D: Internal Controls

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To Be Determined...