

UC WATCH

First Draft 10/14/2009

What?

A new organization of and for undergraduate students at the University of California, whose purpose is to oversee the use of student fee revenues collected by the UC administration.

Why?

Student fees have been rising rapidly and there are serious concerns about how that money is being used. UC is a multi-mission university – a public trust, according to the California Constitution – yet the public has little trust about UC's financial affairs. Total student fee revenues are now as large as state appropriations. The largest contribution comes from undergraduate students paying the Educational Fee. (For 2009-10, the official estimate is that this income will amount to about \$1.5 billion.) The first priority for the use of this fee revenue should be to provide the educational program that those students are paying for. But it seems that as students pay more to UC, they are getting less from UC.

How?

The first objective of UC WATCH is to make sure that the UC administration is accountable and transparent in its spending of student fee money. A second objective will be to offer its advice as to the priorities that should guide UC in the allocation of those funds.

Where?

There should be an active chapter of UC WATCH on each campus, in close contact with the Chancellor; and there should be a statewide coordinating group in contact with the UC President.

Who?

The details for establishing this organization, defining its total membership and selecting its active representatives remain to be worked out. Fee-paying parents should be involved along with the students. This effort can certainly start with the existing student government apparatus; but it may need to define itself as more independent from the existing UC authority.

Precedent?

The Registration Fee (different from the Educational Fee) has been long established as a means of funding student services that lie outside of the core instructional program of the University. Each campus has a Registration Fee Advisory Committee, through which students give their suggestions to the Chancellor regarding those funds. A recent study (initiated by former Student Regent Dartagnan Scorza), found some faults that needed correction in that advisory system. The present proposal enlarges upon those ideas, in recognition of the much larger size of the Educational Fee (more than 7 times the size of the Registration Fee) and its more critical importance to students.

Graduate Students?

The financial picture for graduate students is much more varied and complex than it is for undergraduates. Perhaps a separate, but coordinated, structure should be established for the oversight of graduate student fees.