



Kum-Kum Bhavnani
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*Chair of the Assembly of the Academic Senate
Faculty Representative to the Regents
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April 30, 2020

ACADEMIC SENATE DIVISION CHAIRS

Re: Oversight of Student Fees Beyond Tuition

Dear Colleagues:

The Academic Council has endorsed the enclosed letter from the University Committee on Educational Policy (UCEP) offering guidance to campuses on the use of student fees that fall outside of the usual Course Materials and Services fees required by campuses.

UCEP recommends that Divisions review local oversight of those fees via their Course Materials and Services Fees Committees, to ensure adequate review and consideration of 1) transparency, 2) financial aid, and 3) potential conflicts of interest. UCEP also recommends that campus-based Course Materials and Service Fees Committees be empowered to provide oversight and opine on potential conflicts of interest.

I ask Senate Division Chairs to send the UCEP document to your respective Committees on Education Policy/Undergraduate Councils for follow up.

Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have additional questions.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Kum-Kum Bhavnani".

Kum-Kum Bhavnani, Chair
Academic Council

Cc: UCEP Chair Serences
Senate Directors
Hilary Baxter, Executive Director, Academic Senate



UNIVERSITY COMMITTEE ON EDUCATIONAL POLICY (UCEP)
John Serences, Chair
jserences@ucsd.edu

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Tuesday, April 7, 2020

RE: Student Fees Beyond Tuition

Dear Kum-Kum,

In the Spring of 2019, UC Irvine convened a task force to evaluate student fees that were being assessed in addition to costs approved by the local Course Materials and Service Fees Committee. The UCI task force was charged with identifying fees, evaluating the structure of the fee oversight committee, and developing guidelines for determining which fees should be left up to the discretion of faculty members and which should be subjected to additional oversight.

The task force articulated a set of five principles to guide the assessment of course and material fees, and the Irvine divisional senate adopted these suggestions on June 18, 2019. The complete charge and the resulting set of recommendations can be found here:

<https://senate.uci.edu/files/LMS-Memo-7.1.19.pdf>

In response to the new policies developed locally at UCI, UCEP began a discussion of this issue with a focus on transparency, ensuring that fees can be included in financial aid packages, and avoiding conflicts of interest. We based our discussion around the new guidelines from UCI as well as on system-wide guidelines that were already in place (effective 10/07/2009):

<https://policy.ucop.edu/doc/3100634/CourseMaterialsAndFees>

We note that under existing policy, many fees associated with additional course materials, such as the learning management system used by a campus, would be covered as a service required for a class. However, for custom LMS systems or course materials, Divisions should consider making use of the “Course Material and Service Fee” mechanism defined in existing policy, as it has several benefits outlined in the Fee Assessment section on page 3:

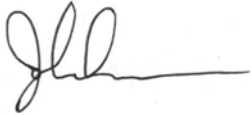
- Using the Course Materials and Service Fee provides "adequate notice of the Fees to students".
- Using the Course Materials and Service Fee is consistent with the idea that "Campuses are encouraged to include Course Materials and Service Fees in the financial aid student budget for determination of financial aid awards".
- Having departments purchase materials/services ensures review by local Course Materials and Service Fees Committees (or similar) that include Senate representatives. These committees can then provide oversight to address potential conflicts of interest. This is especially important when

considering the use of course materials that might duplicate the functionality of existing LMS platforms or services.

- Particularly in courses where all instructors use a set of common materials, leveraging the buying power of the UC might help to lower costs compared to having students in individual courses to purchase the materials on their own.

Thus, adhering to current policy would promote transparency and would allow for course and materials fees to be included in financial aid considerations. However, UCEP also recognizes that faculty should be encouraged to design novel and valuable services, and regulations should not be put into place that stifle innovation and that may impinge on academic freedom. Thus, in lieu of suggesting system-wide changes in policy around course materials and fees, we suggest that Divisions should review local oversight via their Course Materials and Service Fees Committees (or similar) to ensure that issues surrounding transparency, financial aid, and conflicts of interest are receiving adequate review and consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'John Serences', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

John Serences,
Chair UCEP
jserences@ucsd.edu