Recreation & Athletics  
Campus Based Fee Proposal

1. Referendum Title

Competitive Sports Fee Increase

1. Ballot Language

The Recreation & Athletics Department is proposing an increase to the current Competitive Sports Fee.  The Competitive Sports Fee of $75 per fall and spring semester for undergraduate students was approved during the spring 2011 elections.

Our competitive sports programs (intramural sports, sport clubs and intercollegiate athletics) have experienced growth in participation and costs associated with the growth of our athletics program.  This fee increase would provide additional resources support to sport club allocations, to help reduce sport club members out of pocket expenses, would hold intramural registration fees at an affordable level and would provide funding for the additional costs created by the growth of our athletic conference.  Our athletic conference has grown from seven schools in Northern California to 15 schools throughout California, Nevada and Arizona creating additional travel costs for our program mandatory travel.  In addition, our teams continue to be successful qualifying for conference, regional and national post season tournaments which has increased operating costs.  Additionally, this fee would continue to allow undergraduate students to receive free admission to all home athletic contests.

The fee increase of $50 per fall and spring semester for all undergraduate students for a total fee of $125 per semester (fall and spring) would be collected starting in the fall 2020 semester.  Beginning fall 2024, the fee would increase every four years by an amount equal to the Consumer Price Index (CPI) for Fresno, California or 3%, whichever is greater.  The return to aid portion of the fee would be 25%.  The 25% ($31.25/semester in academic year 2020-2021) return to aid portion of the fee would be returned to campus based financial aid.

**Do you support increasing the Competitive Sports Fee from $75.00 (current rate) to $125.00 (proposed new rate) per semester to support the growth of our competitive sports programs at UC Merced?**

\_\_\_\_\_ Yes, I hereby support the increase to the Competitive Sports Fee

\_\_\_\_\_ No, I hereby do not support the increase to the Competitive Sports Fee

\_\_\_\_ I abstain from voting on the Retention Programs and Services Fee.

1. Referendum Language

The increase in the Competitive Sports Fee would provide for an increase in funding to support the competitive sports programs (intramural sports, sport clubs and intercollegiate athletics) within the Recreation & Athletics Department. For intramural sports, the fee increase will allow for the intramural entry fees to be maintained at an affordable level to help ensure access to intramural sports by as many students as possible. For sport clubs, the fee would provide additional allocation funds for the clubs to keep individual dues as affordable as possible and would support growth of additional sport clubs on campus. In addition, the increased fee would provide funding to continue to provide an athletic trainer for the sport club program as the UC Office of the President grant providing this position has ended. This is a key position to help ensure the health and wellbeing of our sport club athletes.

The fee would also support the growth of the intercollegiate athletics program. The conference has grown dramatically since we joined in 2011. The Cal Pac Conference grew from a 6 team Northern California Conference to a 15 team California, Nevada and Arizona Conference, increasing the cost of travel to conference games and has increased the amount of time required for coaching. Due to the increased travel time and coaching responsibilities, we have had to hire full time coaches as opposed to part time. The additional costs to travel out of state for conference travel and for more conference games has had an impact on the current budgets. This fee increase would provide the funding to support these changes. In addition, the teams continue to be competitive nationally, which increases travel cost to attend conference and NAIA national championship competitions. This fee would provide financial support for this additional travel to allow for more appropriate modes of travel to reduce risk and reduce missed class time. The fee would continue to provide for free admission to home athletic events for undergraduate students, who, with the growth of the program, have access to more home athletic events currently than when the fee was implemented. These funds would also support the addition of two new varsity sports in the future.

1. Background

The Competitive Sports Fee was passed by undergraduate students in 2011 to provide funding for sport clubs, intramural sports, and varsity intercollegiate sports. Both intramural sports and sport clubs continue to grow in terms of student participation and number of clubs. To maintain affordability for the students who participate in the intramural and sport club programs, we continue to need more funding to support these programs. We have been provided short term funding from the UC Office of the President, which has expired, for athletic training staff to support club sport athletes and funding is needed at the campus level to continue this valuable service for our sport club athletes.

When athletics began competition, there were six schools in the conference all in Northern California. Now there are 15 schools from Northern California, to San Diego, to Arizona and Nevada causing a significant increase in travel for our teams. In addition, our teams have proven to be very competitive at a conference and NAIA national level creating additional travel expenses for conference tournaments and NAIA National Championship events. In addition to the increased travel costs, we have had to make more of the coaches full time to manage all of the expectations around travel for competition and practice requirements for the growing and competitive conference.

Along with the increased costs from the growth of all the programs supported by the current Competitive Sports Fee, we continue to face increased mandated charges from the campus for administrative overhead which were not in place when the original fee was developed. These administrative fees continue to grow annually, without an increase in the student fee revenue.

These programs impact a large number of students Including 170 sport club student athletes, 150 varsity student athletes, 845 students who participate in intramural sports, 180+ students who work in the Recreation & Athletics Departments in support of these programs and the over 4,000 students who attend athletic events. These programs benefit a significant percentage of the student body and they provide school spirit as well as regional and national exposure to UC Merced.

The Recreation & Athletics Department continues to actively seek additional funding opportunities through sponsorships, donors and revenue generation. While we continue to be successful in these areas, the costs to operate these programs is too significant to be supported through just the generation of outside revenue. While we continue to make this a priority for the department, the additional student fee to support these programs is the best course of action.

Without this increase to the Competitive sports Fee, programs within the Recreation & Athletics Department would see increased user fees (intramural entry fees, sport club participation fees) and could possibly see reduction in programs which are valued and utilized by many UC Merced students.