

Law Clinic Referendum  
2020-2021 Referendum

**Referendum Title**

Law Clinic Referendum

**Complete Text of the Referendum:**

The University of California, Merced Law Clinic is an expansion of the Law Clinic at UC Merced that was founded in 2012. Since Spring 2018, the University of California, Merced Law Clinic has provided students with legal information and referrals.

It is an independent service of ASUCM and is an entirely student-run organization. We have worked tirelessly to connect students with legal resources. The Law Clinic provides a safe, comforting, and professional haven for students experiencing legal tribulations. As an organization, we strive to assist students, but also uplift underrepresented and marginalized communities. Currently, the UC Merced Law Clinic has heard and handled over 350 cases.

The Law Clinic currently has 35 volunteer student law clerk interns who serve in various departments, meet with concerned students, and handle research. Clerks meet with students, summarize their cases, and upon request of the student, refers the matter to a non-University attorney who may decide to represent the student pro bono or at reduced rates. Students interested in law, civil rights, or business gain a unique experience at the Law Clinic.

The Law Clinic provides additional resources including hosting workshops on campus that educate the students and the Merced community about legal processes (e.g. Housing Rights) and how they can effectively attain their academic and personal success. We want to serve as a vessel of growth at UC Merced that conducts research and generates policies that support and advocate for student demands.

Additionally, the Law Clinic has also established a LSAT Library for individuals interested in pursuing law. We have approximately 200 LSAT prep books we loan out. We have plans to develop a student newspaper focusing on legal issues and Supreme Court cases. Furthermore, the Law Clinic has established 6 inter-departments (City Relations, Bar Associations, UC Relations, Media Relations, Merced City Relations, and Attorney Relations) that grant student interns the opportunity to pursue interests that truly appeal to them.

Apart from being an essential resource to our student body, the UC Merced Law Clinic aspires to collaborate with local businesses within the Merced and Central Valley region. This communal connection allows our organization to increase the number of resources available, encourage sustainability of local businesses, and promote positive community engagement. The Law Clinic hopes to strengthen the university's mission to be a campus dedicated to its diverse students and the community that surrounds us as well.

### **Introductory Statement:**

The creation and establishment of the Law Clinic Fee will expand the capacity of the Law Clinic to provide undergraduate students exclusively with access to legal resources and referrals. Currently, the Law Clinic has no paid professional staff.

### **Background/ Context for Proposal:**

Approximately 80% of student cases are related to housing matters, specifically contract disputes and landlord abuse. The next major category of cases consists of Small Claims followed by domestic abuse and inquiries on filing restraining orders. With growing student enrollment, the Law Clinic has noted a concurrent, significant increase in tenant-related cases, and anticipates an overall increase of cases. Marginalized students of color disproportionately suffer from housing issues and barriers in accessing legal resources.

The Law Clinic is comprised of 100% student volunteers who assist students with securing legal assistance from local attorneys as well as engaging in a plethora of research. However, the Law Clinic does not dispense with legal advice nor legal counsel. We navigate public information released by California Courts pertaining to Housing matters and other subjects of law pertinent to the campus community. We make this information both accessible and digestible to the UC Merced student body.

The Law Clinic receives funding from the Associated Students of the University of California, Merced. However, these funds are specifically assigned for office supplies and workshops, they are not apportioned for covering legal fees.

### **Purpose of the Fee:**

The Law Clinic Fee would fund the salaries of two staff positions to provide information and legal referrals in the areas of Tenant/Housing Rights, Contract Disputes, and Undocumented/Immigration Services. These staff members will serve in the capacity of legal coaches: they will direct students to public court accessible legal information, refer students to non-university attorneys, and provide general information pertaining to case strategy. The proposed UC staff at the clinic are neither practicing law on behalf of the University as a part of UC Legal, nor are they entering into attorney-client relationships with students. Additionally, the referendum would fund a part-time staff position to assist with the overall facilitation of student intern law clerks and assist with the development/coordination of Financial Literacy workshops pertaining to Housing Rights, Taxes, and Loans for all clubs/organizations, and allocate 25% of all revenue for financial aid.

**Breakdown of Fee:**

Twenty-five percent of funds accumulated will be directed to Financial Aid for Fall and Spring semesters. The fee will not be assessed in the summer. In the summer session, student intern law clerks provide limited services.

This proposed new fee of \$7.00 per semester will be assessed to all undergraduate students during the Fall and Spring semesters, beginning in Fall 2021. The proposed fee of \$7.00 per undergraduate student per semester would generate an annual amount of \$126,000.00 in academic year 2021-22.

**Appendix A:**

		<b>Fall Semester</b>	<b>Spring Semester</b>	<b>Annual Amount</b>
	<b>% of fee</b>			
<b>UC Merced Law Clinic</b>	<b>75%</b>	<b>\$5.25</b>	<b>\$5.25</b>	<b>\$10.50</b>
<b>Financial Aid</b>	<b>25%</b>	<b>\$1.75</b>	<b>\$1.75</b>	<b>\$3.50</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>\$7.00</b>	<b>\$7.00</b>	<b>\$14.00</b>

**Appendix B: (Potential budgetary breakdown of Law Clinic Fee)**

<b>*Assuming an enrollment of 9,000 students</b>	<b>% of fee</b>	<b>Fall Semester</b>	<b>Spring Semester</b>
		<b>~26 weeks</b>	<b>~26 weeks</b>
<b>Staff Position #1 (Housing/Tenant/Contractual Law)</b>	<b>33.5%</b>	<b>\$21,125</b> <b>Notes:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 4 hours per week = \$203.12/per hour</li> <li>• 6 hours per week = \$135.42/per hour</li> <li>• 8 hours per week = \$101.56 per hour</li> </ul>	<b>\$21,125</b> <b>Notes:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 4 hours per week = \$203.12/per hour</li> <li>• 6 hours per week = \$135.42/per hour</li> <li>• 8 hours per week = \$101.56 per hour</li> </ul>

<b>Staff Position #2 (Undocumented Services and Immigration Law)</b>	<b>33.5%</b>	<b>\$21,125</b> <b>Notes:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>4 hours per week = \$203.12/per hour</b></li> <li>• <b>6 hours per week= \$135.42/per hour</b></li> <li>• <b>8 hours per week = \$101.56 per hour</b></li> </ul>	<b>\$21,125</b> <b>Notes:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>4 hours per week = \$203.12/per hour</b></li> <li>• <b>6 hours per week= \$135.42/per hour</b></li> <li>• <b>8 hours per week = \$101.56 per hour</b></li> </ul>
<b>Part Time Staff Position #1: Volunteer Coordinator</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Assist with facilitation of student volunteers</b></li> <li>• <b>Assist with the development of Financial Literacy Workshops and other campus wide events.</b></li> </ul>	<b>8%</b>	<b>\$5,000</b>	<b>\$5,000</b>
<b>Return to Students Financial Aid</b>	<b>25%</b>	<b>\$15,750</b>	<b>\$15,750</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>\$63,000</b>	<b>\$63,000</b>

**Oversight of the Fee:**

The Student Fee Advisory Committee is charged with evaluating Student Fee Funded Units and making recommendations on allocations of the Student Fees that every undergraduate and graduate student pays while attending UC Merced. SFAC will ensure that the proposed Student Fee is used in the best interests of students, the UC Merced community, and in compliance with existing University policies and guidelines. SFAC will have oversight, make recommendations, meet regularly with Student Life and request/review annual reports on the use of student fees. SFAC consists of twelve voting members, three non-voting advisors, and four non-voting ex-officio representatives from the Associated Students (AS) and the Graduate Students Association (GSA) and meets weekly during fall and spring semesters.

**Ballot Language:**

The Law Clinic Fee would fund the salaries of two staff positions to provide information and legal referrals in the areas of of Tenant/Housing Rights, Contract Disputes, and Undocumented/Immigration Services. These staff members will serve in the capacity of legal coaches: they will direct students to public court accessible legal information, provide general information pertaining to case strategy, and refer students to non-university attorneys. The proposed UC staff at the clinic are neither practicing law on behalf of the University as a part of UC Legal, nor are they entering into attorney-client relationships with students. Additionally, the referendum would fund a part-time staff position to assist with the overall facilitation of student intern law clerks and assist with the development/coordination of Financial Literacy workshops pertaining to Housing Rights, Taxes, and Loans for all clubs/organizations, and allocate 25% of all revenue for financial aid.

This proposed new fee of \$7.00 per semester will be assessed to all undergraduate students during the Fall and Spring semesters, beginning in Fall 2021. The proposed fee of \$7.00 per undergraduate student per semester would generate an annual amount of \$126,000.00 in academic year 2021-22. Twenty-five percent of funds accumulated will be directed to Financial Aid for Fall and Spring semesters.

**If this referendum does not pass, undergraduate students at UC Merced may experience delays obtaining access to legal resources and referrals. Do you support a fee of \$7.00 per undergraduate student per semester to support the Law Clinic?**

\_\_\_\_\_ Yes, I hereby support the Law Clinic Fee.

\_\_\_\_\_ No, I hereby do not support the Law Clinic Fee.

\_\_\_\_\_ I abstain from voting on the Law Clinic Fee