

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, ACADEMIC SENATE

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Assembly of the Academic Senate, Academic Council
University of California
1111 Franklin Street, 12th Floor
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March 10, 2004

ROBERT C. DYNES, PRESIDENT

Re: Proposed Surcharge for Extra Units

Dear Bob:

As you are aware, the governor's budget proposes that undergraduates taking more than 110 percent of the credit hours required for graduation be charged at a higher fee rate, such as the nonresident rate or at the full cost of instruction. While the Senate believes that this is bad educational policy, should UC be required to implement this state mandate, it would be desirable to do so in a way that is the least harmful to the University's educational mission. With that in mind, the University Committee on Educational Policy (UCEP) developed four principles that UC should adhere to, if forced to implement this surcharge.

1. Any elevated fee structure should apply only to units taken at UC.
2. Elevated fees should not be imposed for courses taken prior to the completion of 8 semesters or 12 quarters (pro-rated to 4 semesters and 6 quarters for junior transfers).
3. Elevated fee calculations should be made after considering to specific major graduation requirements.
4. Extra fees should not be imposed on students in legitimate pursuit of a double major.

At their March 3, 2004 meeting, members of the Academic Council unanimously endorsed these principles, and I am pleased to forward them to you together with UCEP's accompanying rationale for each principle.

Members of the Academic Council took one other action with respect to the proposed fee surcharge. They asked to go on record as strongly disagreeing with the LAO's projection that, if implemented, the surcharge would result in a \$9 million savings in the first year. At this time, there is no credible estimate on what the savings would be, if any.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Larry".

Lawrence Pitts, Chair
Academic Senate

Encl: UCEP's 2/20/04 Letter
Copy: Academic Council



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February 20, 2004

PROFESSOR LAWRENCE PITTS
CHAIR, ACADEMIC COUNCIL

Re: Implementation of state budget mandate regarding higher fees

Dear Larry,

UCEP has been asked to consider how UC might implement a state mandate to charge higher fees for students who exceed more than 10% of the minimum number of credit units required for graduation. UCEP believes that this mandate is, in general, bad educational policy, and the committee does not endorse the proposal. Nevertheless, in the interest of fulfilling the committee's charge, UCEP has examined various implementation options that were seen by members of the committee as being least harmful to the educational mission of the university. Therefore, we hope that the following four principles will be adopted if a new fee structure for elevated units is adopted:

1. Any elevated fee structure should apply only to units taken at UC.

The University should not financially punish students who enter with Advanced Placement credits or community college credits. For instance, a freshman arriving with AP or community college science credits who goes on to major in the humanities would be unfairly affected, because those science credits would not count toward the eventual major, but would count toward the student's quota of units. Such students might be forced into a situation of not claiming AP credits to avoid the higher fee structure.

2. Elevated fees should not be imposed prior to the completion of 8 semesters or 12 quarters (pro-rated to 4 semesters and 6 quarters for junior transfers).

Students driven by intellectual curiosity who choose to work harder and enrich their educational experience by taking on the challenge of more coursework should be encouraged, not penalized financially. UC should not punish students for taking more courses than required within the framework of a four-year degree program.

3. Elevated fee calculations should be made according to specific major graduation requirements.

The state budget document assumes an across the board graduation requirement of 120 units (180 for campuses on a quarter system). However, the number of units required in many majors—for example, some majors within engineering—is sometimes higher, and students in those majors should not be financially penalized.

4. Extra fees should not be imposed on students in legitimate pursuit of a double major.

UCEP members agreed that imposing extra fees on students who pursue pedagogically legitimate double majors would be poor educational policy. That is, UCEP recognizes that in many cases, students pursue double majors out of a desire to become competent in an interdisciplinary field or to creatively pursue a topic not adequately covered by any individual major. At least a few campuses have policies allowing students to remain enrolled longer to complete a double major. UCEP recommends that local campuses be granted the authority to determine whether individual students are pursuing pedagogically legitimate double majors and to develop student specific allowable unit levels to accommodate these double majors.

UCEP recognizes that arguments in favor of the proposed fee structure might be made on the basis of cost efficiency—that students in pursuit of a double major or those who graduate with excess units represent a drain on the system. However, UCEP suspects the marginal cost of providing a few extra units for students already in the system is minimal and the costs of implementing a new structure may exceed any returns in savings. Further, the number of students that would be denied double majors in order to make room for one additional student at any campus would be extremely high, resulting in a net negative cost/benefit analysis.

UCEP recognizes that students do have to eventually live with the choices they make in life; and although the system should not protect the so called dilettante who remains enrolled and directionless at UC for years, it should allow for someone to legitimately switch his or her major or to study an interdisciplinary topic.

In general, restricting a student's capacity for educational breadth with a unilateral elevation of fees at some predetermined level is poor educational policy. Moreover, the policy may disproportionately affect underprivileged students who have a longer development curve and take more time to determine what they want to do. Such a policy would send an unfortunate message that UC is more concerned with graduating large numbers of students in the manner of an assembly line, rather than with fostering a quality educational experience where knowledge can be pursued liberally and freely.

Sincerely,

Lisa Alvarez-Cohen
Chair, UCEP

LAC/ml

CC: UCEP members
Academic Council Director Bertero-Barceló