

**Student Activity and Service Fee Advisory Committee**  
**Fact Sheet**

**ORGANIZATION:**

A. Organization Contact Information

1. Address  
UConnPIRG  
University of Connecticut Student Union Rm. 214  
U-Box 3008  
2110 Hillside Rd., Storrs, Ct 06269
2. Phone number  
(860) 486-5002
3. Fax number  
N/A
4. Web address  
[pirg.uconn.edu](http://pirg.uconn.edu)

B. History/Mission of Organization

1. History

Since its founding in 1974, the University of Connecticut Public Interest Research Group has, with its public interest advocacy and civic engagement mission, pursued the promotion of an ethic of civic responsibility by actively engaging students on a broad range of issues, including global warming, hunger and homelessness, public health, participation in democracy, the cost of textbooks, and improving public transportation at the state and local levels. In doing so, UConnPIRG has made a significant contribution to fulfilling the University of Connecticut's mission of education, research, and public service.

UConnPIRG is unique among organizations on campus in its structure. Being an organization dedicated to creating a culture of activism and generating concrete change on a wide range of public interest issues, it is not what might be traditionally considered a staple of the university experience in the manner a student government, radio station, newspaper, yearbook, or event programming board might be. Because of that, the UConnPIRG fee is a waivable fee, allowing students who disagree with its mission or simply aren't willing to pay the fee to not contribute. Additionally, UConnPIRG has, since its inception, run self-imposed student support reaffirmation votes every three years to stay accountable to the student body. Every vote so far has seen a majority of students voice their support for UConnPIRG's ongoing operation on campus. Ultimately, UConnPIRG works to represent the interests of UConn students with resources and infrastructure that other organizations do not provide.

UConnPIRG tackles the issues of the day, working towards its mission by hiring professional staff to organize, advocate, and do research on behalf of students at UConn as parts of campaigns that UConn students propose and manage. UConnPIRG regularly

interacts directly with half of the student body every semester and engages as many as a quarter to take action.

UConnPIRG has numerous accomplishments. Early accomplishments include helping pass the original Bottle Bill and the first in the nation New Car Lemon Law. Some of our most recent victories include pushing that passage a bill to increase recycling and reduce air pollution in CT, pushing McDonald's and Subway to stop using meat raised with the routine use of antibiotics, working with the university administration to begin an Open Education Resources pilot program at UConn and passing an Open Education Resources pilot bill at the state level, and passing the nation's first Student Loan Bill of Rights through the CT general assembly. Most recently, UConnPIRG spearheaded the New Voters Project on campus, registering 2,500 students and doing get out the vote work that saw turnout at the Mansfield Community Center polling station increase 20% from 2012.

## 2. Mission Statement

The mission of UConnPIRG is simple and twofold: to win real, concrete change on public interest issues and to engage, educate, and politicize students to create a culture of activism and civic engagement.

### C. Student Fees – dollar amount students pay per year

Full time, fee-paying undergraduates at the UConn Storrs Campus pay \$5.00 per semester (\$10.00) per year. This fee is waivable on the fee bill.

### D. Eligible Participants – what students may participate in your activities?

Any student of the University of Connecticut attending Storrs campus that pays the UConnPIRG Storrs fee is considered a member of the organization. However, all students, regardless of whether they pay the fee, are eligible and encouraged to participate in UConnPIRG actions and programs.

Students may participate by volunteering, interning, or taking on organizational leadership within UConnPIRG. Many students participate simply by taking action, attending events, or signing up for our email list. All students have the option of attending our weekly Core and campaign meetings.

### E. Governance (please identify the governance structure of your organization and identify those who are students and those who are not students)

#### 1. Executive Officers

All executive officers are full time fee-paying undergraduate students at the Storrs Campus. The four executive officer positions are:

- Chair (COO): Kharl Reynado
- Vice Chair: Ian Beattie
- Treasurer (CFO): Alexander Pawlak
- Secretary: Casey Lambert

## 2. Board of Directors

The Board of Directors, known as Core, is comprised of all voting members of UConnPIRG. The requirements to participate in voting at Core are as follows:

- Person must be a member of UConnPIRG (as defined above in Section D).
- Person must be a student at the UConn Storrs Campus.
- Person must exhibit general participation in the organization (i.e. an officer, campaign coordinator, tactical coordinator, intern, or active volunteer)
- Person must have attended at least one other Core meeting within the last three academic months to be eligible to vote

## 3. Paid Positions

### **Appointed non-student positions paid:**

#### Chapter Coordinator:

- Method of Payment
  - Hourly wages via special payroll (University employee)
- Rate of payment
  - \$20.00 per hour, at an average of 10 hours per week over the course of the academic school year.
- History and Rationale
  - The Chapter Coordinator position was created as a part of the restructuring of UConnPIRG's finances and billing systems in response to the audit we received in 2011. Formerly, the Chapter Coordinator's responsibilities were included in the position of Campus Organizer. Under the new system, the Chapter Coordinator is responsible for working with UConnPIRG members to recruit students into the internship program, teaching an intern class, working with faculty to oversee interns, working one on one with interns, as well as other organization-specific tasks to ensure growth and leadership development in UConnPIRG.

## Storrs Student Activity Fund

### Budget Narrative Questions

Please answer the following questions in support of your budget proposal:

1. How are you **spending your funds** now? Briefly describe the programs and services provided.

UConnPIRG works with students, faculty, and community members, as well as a network of nonprofits including ConnPIRG, U.S. PIRG, and Environment Connecticut to run and win campaigns on important public interest issues. In addition, we provide valuable training and experience for students in the areas of leadership, civic engagement, and community organizing.

The majority of our funds are spent on contractual campaign services from the state organization ConnPIRG. These campaign services encompass almost all of the training, materials, and staff hours necessary to run effective campaigns. This system was put into place starting with FY14, and is still being worked on to improve efficiency and clarity. The campaign contracts include:

- Specific campaign expenses, such as posters and other advocacy materials, a website and professional email management systems;
- On-campus programming and events.
- Contracted staff time to work with the UConnPIRG chapter on campaigns.

Besides the contractual services, the rest of our funds are spent on:

- UConnPIRG special payroll staff (Chapter Coordinator) to recruit for and run our on-campus internship program.
- Office materials, campaign materials not accounted for in campaign packages, travel expenses, equipment, and other similar expenses.

The timeline for the new process is as follows:

- At the end of each semester, UConnPIRG members determine a campaign mix they want to run on campus for the next semester. These campaigns are selected from a number of campaign proposals written by students.
  - The typical amount of campaigns run is six: one lead campaign, four other campaigns, and one campaign of “quick hit” efforts designed to be run on a smaller scale or as a collection of shorter actions.
- UConnPIRG communicates this campaign mix to the state organization ConnPIRG. ConnPIRG creates purchase orders with prices for these campaigns according to the campaign proposals submitted, and how UConnPIRG wants each campaign to be prioritized on campus.
- At the beginning of the next semester, UConnPIRG members consider the purchase order prices, and if they are found to be agreeable, vote to approve the eventual expenditure pending services rendered. If they are not satisfactory, negotiation will take place between UConnPIRG and ConnPIRG until an agreement can be reached.
- Campaigns are implemented and run on campus over the course of the semester.

- ConnPIRG invoices UConnPIRG by the end of the semester for each campaign. Depending on how the campaign unfolds, deliverables received may differ from the preliminary items on the purchase order. If so, adjustments are made on the invoice.
  - Campaign Coordinators work with the Treasurer to ensure that each invoice accurately reflects how the campaign was implemented.
- UConnPIRG votes to approve invoiced amounts once they are reviewed, intended to occur by the end of the semester in which the campaigns were run.

2. Please explain any **significant changes in your budget/spending plan** for the FY17 (July 1, 2016-June 30, 2017) and for FY18 (July 1, 2017-June 30, 2018) fiscal years.

Our updated spending plan maintains the lower costs budgeted in almost all of the general chapter operating expenses at this time last year. However, we did slightly increase our budget for organizational and event supplies and telephone as we discovered that we did not budget enough to realistically cover all costs last year.

The most significant highlight is that we increased our budget for contractual services. The amount paid in FY17 is so high because some of the contractual services from FY16 were not paid until this year. As you can see in the budget, only \$191,500 were paid in contractual services in FY15 (615), far lower than budgeted 285,000. These were paid in FY17, leading to an increased projected budget. However, with considerable help from SABO, particularly Kimberly Miller, in supporting us to streamline our system for collecting documentation for our payments, as well as our essentially two-treasurer system we have been operating on since December, we foresee the process getting back to a normal timeline and the contractual services being around \$190,000 for FY18 before tapering off in FY19, leaving us with a roughly 10% of our income. This number is higher than what we would consider a normal projection, i.e. approximately \$135,000, because the separation of the ConnPIRG executive director into the state director and organizing positions two years ago has yielded more opportunity for victories than originally expected. The tangible benefits of utilizing both staff fully to maximize the benefit to students is illustrated by the quantity of significant victories we've seen just in the past two years (see fact sheet), and the fact that we have directly trained over 200 members of the student body just this semester and have engaged with more than 10,000 students through our actions on campus. This is being funded through our large fund balance and will be temporary.

We increased our budget for promotional items to \$1,000 because our board judged that using a small portion of the budget on visibility would provide an overall benefit to the student body. This year we purchased reusable bottles and stickers for our campaign to reduce plastic waste on campus by campaigning against

We also increased our budget for equipment in this fiscal year as we hope to buy a functional office computer to centralize important documents and improve continuity. The budget returns to \$100 for future fiscal years as we do not envision any extraordinary expenses in that time.

The decrease budget for postage is based on the fact that we developed an improved relationship with the Mansfield registrar of voters wherein they would accept student voter registrations and

distribute them to appropriate registrars across the state. During previous New Voters' Projects, it was incumbent on us to mail out voter registrations. As that is no longer expected to be the case moving forward, that budget has decreased.

3. Do you anticipate any **changes in income from other sources** (non-student fee) during the FY17, FY18 and FY19 fiscal years? If so, briefly explain.

We don't anticipate any income from other sources over the next three fiscal years.

4. What are the current and projected **levels of your reserves/fund balances**? If you have a fund balance, please describe the use/purpose of these resources.

The current fund balance in our account is \$218,798.25. Knowing full well that the standard purpose of a fund balance is to fund an irregular or short-term activity and that the way the income is structured in the budget suggests a long term plan of greater expenditure than income, we want to explain that the adjusted increase in contractual services is meant to accurately reflect what UConnPIRG CFO Saman Azimi presented to the SASFAC Board last fiscal year, i.e that the increased presence of ConnPIRG allows us to utilize more staff and accommodate a larger breadth and depth of student campaigns with full staff support.

5. Please describe the organizational priorities you address in your proposed FY19 budget. Are there any concerns or issues the Committee should be aware of when reviewing your budget?

Our primary goal is to refocus and continue our priority of spending money efficiently and being good fiduciaries of UConn student funds, which includes spending as little money on the organization's operation and its members but rather on maximum advocacy and training to create a culture of activism and win concrete social change.

6. Relative to your fund balance (if you have one), what do you anticipate your accounts payable (items to pay for) and accounts receivable (money to collect) will be over the last two months of the fiscal year (May and June)?

We expect to be paying for the Spring 2016 campaigns in May (approximately \$95,000), but no expenses are anticipated for June. We expect no other income besides student fees, which we estimate to be approximately \$3,500. Relative to our fund balance, these expenses will be significant, as they are the bulk of our expenses for the second half of FY16.

7. Please describe how students (number and/or percentage of total student population) **utilize your services and/or participate** in your programs? Do faculty/staff (number/percentage) benefit? Do members of the local community (number/percentage) benefit?

- i. While primarily working on behalf of students, the work UConnPIRG does benefits not just the campus, but the surrounding community, state, and even nation. By working on issues that are in the public interest, we help bring about

change on issues like the environment, textbook affordability, hunger and homelessness, and public transportation, which are net positives for our communities.

- ii. UConnPIRG also gives students the opportunity to make real, significant, and ongoing impact on the most pressing issues of our day through their participation. Many student organizations provide students with the opportunity to engage on important issues, but none provide students with the opportunity to connect their involvement and action with ongoing campaigns and results like UConnPIRG does. It is one thing to collect petitions on a statewide issue, but another when those petitions are combined with a substantial media campaign, advocacy staff working with decision makers, and an institution to affect that issue for years or even decades.

While students alone decide the issues UConnPIRG works on, and while the vast majority of people who work on UConnPIRG campaigns are students, other community members will participate from time to time. Through faculty endorsements we actively seek collaboration with faculty on our campaigns, e.g. many faculty members have contributed to our Transportation Campaign and we are currently working with faculty members and members of the administration on our Affordable Textbooks campaign.

- iii. UConnPIRG provides students the opportunity to build and develop skills not taught in the classroom. It is one thing to learn how a bill becomes a law, and another to learn how to deliver effective testimony before a legislative committee. Students involved with UConnPIRG learn a host of civic engagement skills including advocacy, grassroots organizing, running meetings, recruiting volunteers, training volunteers, working with the media, building coalitions and more.
- iv. Students have the opportunity to work on these campaigns and gain these skills as volunteers but also as interns, on both a for-credit and not-for-credit basis. Doing this work as an intern gives students the opportunity to devote more time and learn more than they otherwise would be able to as a volunteer. It also gives students the opportunity to more directly link the work they do with UConnPIRG with their academic experience by working with faculty sponsors. If a student is unable to earn credit for their internship through their department, UConnPIRG has a guaranteed 1-credit course through the Center for Career Development that any student involved in the internship program is eligible for. We also have a longstanding relationship with several members of the faculty, especially within the Department of Sociology, and participating interns can earn up to 7 credits in a semester for their work.
- v. Students and community members have the opportunity to participate in UConnPIRG campaigns even while not volunteering, interning or taking organizational leadership. Thousands of students will go through their campus

career never going to a UConnPIRG meeting or volunteering, yet will sign petitions, take action online, donate to charity, or take other small actions to participate in our campaigns.

- vi. Students and community members benefit from the educational work UConnPIRG does. Every semester, UConnPIRG does approximately 100 classroom presentations about our priority campaign for the semester, educating thousands of students about an important issue that affects their lives. Over 5,000 UConn students are currently on our email list, getting regular communications about the work we are doing. Every time a student signs a petition or takes a similar action, we educate them about a specific problem as well as a solution and opportunities for them to get further involved. Our campaigns regularly involve educational components such as speakers, informational tables, and media events. The media attention we generate for our campaigns educates students and community members.
  - vii. Our collaborative efforts with other students and community organizations help develop a more civically engaged community. We regularly partner with and Community Outreach on our Hunger and Homelessness campaign. We regularly bring issues to the Undergraduate Student Government and encourage them to take action on them. By actively engaging in the community and helping to create a community that encourages civic participation, we help create more opportunities for students to be involved whether through us or through other organizations.
  - viii. We estimate that about 5% of the student body directly volunteer with us during their time at UConn and that we engage with at least 25% of the student body on political actions. The victories that we win on public interest issues, however, are meant to benefit 100% of the student body, UConn community, and local community.
8. When was an **audit last performed** by the University's Office of Audit, Compliance and Ethics? Please list the date the final Audit report was submitted to you, the list of any financially related Recommendations, and a status report on the actions taken to comply with the Recommendation(s).

The last audit performed on UConnPIRG was in 2011. Following the recommendations of that audit, our funding was administratively revoked. We worked to comply with the recommendations in a satisfactory manner, and led a student referendum to have our funding reinstated in the spring of 2013. All concerns and recommendations in the audit have therefore been addressed.

9. When reviewing the results from the Tier III Awareness, Familiarity and Use survey from last spring, what is your organization's focus on regarding areas for improvement? What actions have you taken so far this year to improve? What results are you proud of and are working to maintain?



The results from the survey mostly indicated that people were confused by our messaging, unsure of what our mission was, and found us less than accessible. As an organization, we felt that most of these issues were issues of visibility on campus. We have taken numerous steps to increase our visibility:

- We have been aggressively improving our social media presence and have seen a substantial increase in interactions on social media.
- Working with campus media to increase coverage of our events, such as the Daily Campus and WHUS.
- Holding more high-visibility events on campus to increase recognition. This semester,
- Running a concerted effort to survey students on their interests as well as meeting with faculty and administrators to gain their understanding as leaders on issues that are pressing to the student populations they work with.
- Doing effective recruitment and engaging many students, shown by having 150 students volunteer with us just during the first two and a half weeks.
- Maintaining and publicizing a new website with a uconn.edu URL, making ourselves easier to find for students.
  - The website is also completely administered by students, which makes it easier to update on a regular basis.
  - URL: [pirg.uconn.edu](http://pirg.uconn.edu)

10. Is there any **additional information** that the committee should be aware of in reviewing your budget proposal?

University of Connecticut  
Student Activity and Service Fee Advisory Committee  
Activity Fee Budget Update & Projection Form - Fiscal Year 2016-2019

Organization: UCSAP/PIRG  
Contact Person: Rosann Aedel  
Phone: (860) 341-2633

	FY16 Actual	FY17 Original	FY17 UPDATED	FY18 Original	FY18 UPDATED	FY19 PROJECTED
Sub code Description	Amount	Amount	Amount	Amount	Amount	Amount
<b>Revenues:</b>						
501 Donations	\$	\$	\$	\$	\$	\$
502 Dues						
512 Advertising						
513 Awards and Prizes						
515 Contractual Services						
516 Co-Sponsorships						
517 Food Sales						
518 Merchandise Sales						
519 Participation Fees						
522 Registration Fees						
523 Rental						
524 Travel						
530 Penalties and Fees						
531 Miscellaneous						
532 Prior Year Income						
533 Change Fund Returns						
540 Business Taxes (Tier III/Univ.)						
546 Interest (Univ.)	691					
547 Student Fees (Tier III/Univ.)	148,516	150,000	150,000	150,000	145,000	145,000
<b>Total Revenues:</b>	\$ 149,207	\$ 150,000	\$ 150,000	\$ 150,000	\$ 145,000	\$ 145,000
<b>Expenditures:</b>						
601 Donations	\$	\$	\$	\$	\$	\$
602 Dues						
603 Gifts	23	30	30	30	30	30
604 Photocopying		5	10	5	5	5
605 Postage	24	100	100	5	5	5
606 Printing						
607 Promotional Items			1,200		1,000	1,000
608 Refreshments - Organization						
609 Subscriptions						
610 Supplies - Organization	331	250	350	250	350	350
611 Telephone	367	350	375	350	375	375
612 Advertising						
613 Awards and Prizes						
615 Contractual Services	195,100	190,000	285,000	190,000	190,000	175,000
616 Co-Sponsorships						
617 Cost of Goods Sold - Food Sales						
618 Cost of Goods Sold - Merchandise Sales						
619 Participation Fees						
620 Refreshments - Events/Programs		100		100		
621 Supplies - Events/Programs	246	300	300	300	300	300
622 Registration Fees	220	500	500	500	500	500
623 Rental	160	70	20	70	20	20
624 Travel	1,351	3,000	3,000	3,000	3,000	3,000
625 Equipment		100	1,000	100	100	100
626 Equipment - Capital						
627 Insurance						
628 Repairs and Maintenance						
629 Utilities						
630 Penalties and Fees						
631 Miscellaneous						
632 Prior Year Expenses						
633 Change Funds						
640 Business Taxes (Tier III/Univ.)						
641 Employee Benefits (Tier III)						
642 Wages - Student (Tier III)						
643 Wages - Non-Student (Tier III)	6,875	7,200	7,200	7,200	7,200	7,200
644 Wage Taxes - Student (Tier III)						
645 Wage Taxes - Non-Student (Tier III)	611	650	650	650	650	650
<b>Total Expenditures:</b>	\$ 205,310	\$ 202,655	\$ 299,735	\$ 202,560	\$ 203,535	\$ 188,535
<b>Revenues Less Expenditures:</b>	\$ (56,103)	\$ (52,655)	\$ (149,735)	\$ (52,560)	\$ (58,535)	\$ (43,535)
<b>Use of Surplus:</b>	\$ 56,103	\$ 52,655	\$ 149,735	\$ 52,560	\$ 58,535	\$ 43,535
<b>Total (Must be equal to or greater than zero.):</b>	\$ 0	\$ 0	\$ 0	\$ 0	\$ 0	\$ 0
<b>Fund Balance At Beginning Of Year:</b>	\$ 325,496	\$ 177,836	\$ 269,393	\$ 125,181	\$ 119,658	\$ 61,123
<b>Fund Balance At Year End:</b>	\$ 269,393	\$ 125,181	\$ 119,658	\$ 72,621	\$ 61,123	\$ 17,588