Student Activity and Service Fee Advisory Committee
Fact Sheet

ORGANIZATION:

A. Organization Contact Information

1. Address: Undergraduate Student Government
   Unit 3008SG – Room 219
   2110 Hillside Rd.
   Storrs, CT 06269-3008
2. Phone number: (860) 486-3708
3. Fax number: (860) 486-5533
4. Web address: usg.uconn.edu

B. History/Mission of Organization

History

The undergraduate student government has existed at the University of Connecticut in Storrs in various forms and under different name since 1894. Originally, it was composed of nine elected students who worked in conjunction with faculty “upon matters of government of the college.” By 1913, the organization was called the Student Organization, and its members included the two hundred thirty-nine students enrolled at Connecticut Agricultural College.

In 1921, the government was reorganized and a standing committee called the Student Senate was formed as the executive branch. The Senate adopted a constitution and became known as the Associated Student Government (ASG). The constitution details the duties of the executive, legislative, and judicial branches of the ASG, which was modeled after the federal government. The Student Senate continued as the core of student political power until 1973 when the ASG dissolved. In the following academic year, the ASG was replaced by the Federation of Students and Service Organizations (FSSO). The Senate was replaced by a Central Committee.

In 1980, the FSSO was replaced by the Undergraduate Student Government (USG), and the Student Assembly became the representative student body. The Undergraduate Student Government bodies have piloted (and funded) the launch of other major student organizations on campus including the Daily Campus, WHUS, SUBOG, IFC, and RHA.

USG is recognized by the University of Connecticut Board of Trustees as one of five governing bodies on campus (along with the Board of Trustees, and the Graduate Student Senate). USG is the primary voice of
students to all audiences and actively partakes in the university-wide decision making process through representation and advocacy.

The Undergraduate Student Government was established in 1979 and acts as the main advocate of undergraduate students at the Storrs campus. USG voices student opinion to the administration, Mansfield community and state legislature. Leaders are democratically chosen by the student body and work to improve the undergraduate experience. The structure of USG promotes maximum reach to students and facilitates communication of ideas and issues. USG funds student initiatives and also creates programming for students.

C. Mission Statement

The mission of the Undergraduate Student Government is to enrich the lives of the Undergraduate Student Body through advocacy for its interests to the administration and all other appropriate bodies. We strive to help student groups reach their fullest potential through new and continuing initiatives, programs, and resources. The Undergraduate Student Government aims to foster an inclusive and collaborative community that works together effectively.

E. Student Fees – dollar amount students pay per year

Each full-time Storrs undergraduate student pays $45 per semester and $90 per academic school year to fund USG initiatives for the student body.

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

Any fee-paying undergraduate student at the University of Connecticut, Storrs Campus, is eligible to participate in a USG committee or to run for an elected position, attend our events and programs, and benefit from the resources and services provided. This includes students who are residents of the University of Connecticut, Storrs Campus, and take classes at a nearby branch campus - since their student activity fee is split between the main and secondary campus, students qualify to participate in our activities. Further, any event on campus has to be open for all undergraduates to receive 100% of the requested amount. Also, as an organization we hope to be as inclusive as possible by having open senate seats as well as participation in committees.

G. Governance (please identify the governance structure of your organization and identify those who are students and those who are not students)
Executive Officers

All positions are held by undergraduate students of the Storrs campus.

Elected at Large:

President (CEO) – Ama Appiah
Vice President (COO) – Wanjiku (Wawa) Gatheru
Comptroller (CFO) – Priyanka Thakkar

Elected by the Senate:

Speaker of the Senate – Joshua Crow
Chief Justice – Nandan Tumu

Appointed by the President and Approved by the Senate:

External Affairs Chairperson – Damon Reynolds
Student Services Chairperson – Derek Pan
Student Development Chairperson – Sawera Hussan
Academic Affairs Chairperson - Avolly Nieves

Board of Directors

Currently do not have a Board of Directors.

Paid Positions

Funding Staff Supervisor- Shreya Narahari and Erin McConnell

Student Officers (elected positions) paid (please list the titles): N/A

§ Method of payment (hourly wages, semester stipend, etc) for each position

§ Rate of payment for each positions
§ History and Rationale for payment for each position

Appointed student positions paid (please list): N/A

§ Method of payment: Hourly Wages
§ Rate of payment for each position: $12.00/hr

§ History and Rationale for payment for each position: This is our first year having the Funding Staff paid. This is because we have noticed more accountability within these positions. As supervisors, they oversee all allocation of funding requests and supervise a team of nine bookkeepers. Thus, they earn a rate of $12 per hour for their work.

Board of Director Positions paid (please list): N/A

§ Method of payment (hourly wages, semester stipend, etc) for each position

§ Rate of payment for each position

§ History and Rationale for payment for each position
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.

Currently, the Undergraduate Student Government (USG) spends a predominant portion of its fees to finance initiatives and events organized by Tier II student organizations. These expenditures range from on-campus open events, equipment, speakers, coaches, refreshments, travel, competitions, as well as conferences across the nation. Our organization also spends our funds on our internal initiatives that span throughout our three branches and four committees, and impact students at-large. USG runs several advocacy projects throughout the year to improve student life, and we continuously engage with students on outreach initiatives to ensure our work is meaningful and impactful to the student population. In order to complete our initiatives we also need to have staff members to aid us in our various processes throughout business hours and office supplies to complete that mission. We have also have created a Funding Student Staff this past year to try to expedite the Funding Request process. Thus, this is the result of a large portion of funds allocated to wages and supplies.

USG has various programs and services that currently benefit the student body and are also in the process of adding more. We run a readership program through our Programs Committee that distributes New York Times to students for free. Our External Affairs Committee utilizes fees for travel to ensure that students are able to testify at the state Capitol regarding the UConn Budget and other legislative priorities. The Student Organization Center by the Programs Committee also operates to benefit Tier II's for printing, advertising, storage, and meeting space. The Student Development Committee utilizes fees to educate and promote diversity and traditions through educational programming such as Cultural Center Open House and Founder's Day. Our Student Services Committee has also rolled out "Tampon Time" which provides menstrual products in various locations on campus for students to use at no cost. This is just a glimpse of the services USG provides and there is a prospective Inventory Program which is reflected in FY 20.

2. Please explain any significant changes in your budget/spending plan for FY19 (July 1, 2017-June 30, 2018) and for FY19 (July 1, 2018-June 30, 2019) fiscal years.

We recently passed a new set of Funding Policies that allows student groups to receive more funding, as we have noticed a slight decline in the amount student groups are receiving funding. We hope that this changes how much we allocate to groups. Within our organization, we have reduced refreshments, giveaways, and large spending with events. We also plan to implement an inventory system in the coming semester to track the equipment that is funded but to also create a rental system and minimize spending on largely requested items such as electronics. In addition to the inventory system, we also have plans to create a new Funding Request system that will
make it much easier and more efficient for our staff and student groups.

3. Do you anticipate any changes in income from other sources (non-student fee) during the FY18, FY19 and FY20 fiscal years? If so, briefly explain.

No, we do not anticipate any changes in income from other sources.

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.

Our current fund balance is $612,986.64 and will continue to decrease where by FY21 our projected fund balance will be $42,310.99. While we do work towards reducing our fund balance, we also still maintain an established level for our fund balance. This is typically used if the maximum amount of funding is requested by groups then our rollover is used to fund these requests or any other miscellaneous expenses.

5. Please describe the organizational priorities in your proposed FY20 budget. Are there any concerns/issues the Committee should be aware of when reviewing your budget?

The USG, with its new Funding Policies, have a mission of serving more students through funding and other programming. We want to maximize student fee money and bring it right back to the students through Tier II funding as well as enhanced student experiences.

6. Are you proposing an increase in your organization fee for FY20? If yes, please provide the rationale for your request (include any information regarding the limits of your organization if the fee increase is not approved). What steps has your organization taken to reduce expenses and/or increase other revenues? What is the dollar increase you are asking per year? On the budget spreadsheet, please complete an additional column for FY20 that outlines how your organization will allocate the additional revenue from the proposed fee increase.

We are not proposing a fee increase in our organization fee for FY20.

7. 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)?

Our accounts receivable is usually low towards the last two months of the fiscal year as our revenue from student fees is collected in the beginning of the year and isn't typically in our 4Q bill. The bill is predominantly payroll, telephone, mail, procard, KFS purchases, internal payments, and any lagging purchases from groups/vendors that are slow in providing invoices.

8. 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?

All undergraduate students have access to our programs, services, and the ability to directly participate in our organization through an elected position or through as a committee member. The $90 activity fee that students pay is what allows USG to provide those programs and
services. Many students also participate in our funding process and receive funds for Tier II organizations, this fiscal year alone over 250 student groups have received funds. Some examples of programs that students utilize are our New York Times readership program and the Student Organization Center. As mentioned earlier, our four committees and three branches do events for students on campus throughout the year that are geared towards student interests. An extremely low number of faculty and staff, as well as the local community benefit from our events because our fees come from students so we want to make sure that any funds spent are used by students and impact students. Thus, USG limits the benefit of the expenditure of student fee money to undergraduates who pay the fee.

9. 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, and provide a list of any financially related Recommendations. If any of the Recommendations are still open, please provide a status report.

Student Activities was audited in Spring 2015 which included a review of USG transactions but no issues were found. The Undergraduate Student Government as an entity has not been audited in the past four years.

10. 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?

After viewing the last Tier III Awareness, Familiarity and Use survey we need to continue branding our organization in order for students to learn more about our programs, opportunities, and events. We are extremely proud that close to 80% of students who took this survey stated that our central mission is to represent student interests to the University faculty, staff, and administration. With that being said approximately 13% of the survey respondents said that giving money organizations was central to our mission and we definitely want to increase this because all students should know that if they are a part of a Tier II that funds are accessible to them.

Focusing on successes, four of our projects including menstrual products, open source textbooks, finals care packages, and eliminating single use water bottle sales on campus had huge support from students. Our open source textbooks initiative had support from 90% of survey respondents. This shows us that what we are spending our time and resources is on is something that students care about. Seventy percent of survey respondents were also aware that we sponsor student organization events that are open to all undergraduate students for free, and this is something we want to continue to grow because it is a priority for us that students feel the impact of the way student fees are used. Lastly, a majority of survey respondents believed that we completely, considerably, or moderately are working in the best interest of the student body.

Areas of opportunity include spreading the word more about organization membership as well as what we do. Close to 60% of students did not know they could join student government
without running. We want to ensure that students know that they are always welcome to join our organization. Continuing to spread the word about what we do as well would help us increase the amount of people who believe we spend student fees well because 43% of students were not sure about this. Lastly, the survey feedback showed that a majority of respondents felt that we were not responsive to their opinions and outputs which shows us that we can do more to hear about what students want us to work on.

In order to be more transparent we have focused a lot on social media. USG during the 2015-2016 created a Public Relations Chair in the cabinet, and we have continued that. Since April, we have doubled our followers on Instagram and have frequently posted advertising events we are hosting and initiatives we are working on. When our committee chairs or any member of USG are hosting events, we utilize our PR chair to spread the word on social media. Due to our social media presence, all of events this semester have met room capacity. To engage students more we have been holding "Open Houses" where students can receive a shirt if they follow us on social media. During these meetings, many students ask questions about how to get involved and what we are working on. Additionally, we are updating our website and hoping to implement a section where students can leave comments on things we should work on. In order to increase membership we also have utilized social media to inform people about how to get involved by featuring information about meetings and project held an SFAC Town Hall to hear input from students regarding the entirety of our budget and how funding has been working. Students were informed about this through social media as well as a mass email to all Tier II’s from Kristen Carr.

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

Although we are not seeking a fee increase, there may be an interest in one in future years. The Undergraduate Student Government has seen an increase in the amount of requests submitted by Tier II organizations for two reasons: (1) as our university continues to grow, so are the number of student organizations, and (2) we have also made funding more accessible to Tier II’s. Therefore, we have been seeing an increase in the amount of student groups that are submitting requests.

We, the undersigned, confirm we sought input from our constituents and members via an item on a meeting agenda. Further, we attest that this budget packet was presented to, and approved by our organization at an open meeting on the following date:

x Ana Appiah
Undergraduate Student Government
President

x Priyanka Thakkar
Undergraduate Student Government
Comptroller
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