

# Student Action Committee Report on the Student Comprehensive Fee

April, 2010

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**Executive Summary:** The SGA formally adopted a definition of the Student Comprehensive Fee requiring that all sections support specific services and facilities accessible to all current students. This report details each section of the fee and indicates whether it fits the Student Government Association definition. Finally, we suggest several sections that could be re-examined and request that all further changes to the fee be approved by the SGA before taking effect.

**I. What is the "Comprehensive Fee?"**

**UVM.edu Definition:** “The comprehensive fee supports facilities and services available to students including the Library, Athletic Center, Student Health Center, Dudley H. Davis Student Center and transportation/shuttle bus services.”

**Student Government Association Definition:** "The University collects a semesterly "comprehensive fee" in order to support *specific* services and facilities that either augment students' academic experiences--the Library, Academic Support Programs, the Clean Energy Fund--or grants them access to University infrastructure--Transportation, the Davis Center, Registrar, Athletics, Technology, Center for Health and Wellbeing. Thus, the fee is allocated for specific support services and facilities accessible by *all current students*."

**II. Who pays the CF?**

All full-time students pay the Student Comprehensive Fee. Unlike tuition, the fee is the same for in-state and out-of-state students, including students who are eligible to receive tuition remission. Part-time students, or those enrolled in less than 12 credit hours, pay a part-time fee prorated on the number of credits they are enrolled in.

Type of Student	Total Amount Paid into SCF (Millions of Dollars)
Full-time Undergraduates	17.6
Part-time Undergraduates	1.2
Graduate Students	.6
Medical Students	.7
Non-degree Students	.23
Total	20.3

### III. What is the breakdown of the Fee?

Academic Year 2010-11 vs. 2011-12 Breakdown:

<i>Location</i>	<i>Amount (per year) 2010-11</i>	<i>Amount (per year) 2011-12</i>	<i>% Change</i>
<b>Library</b>	\$44	\$44	0%
<b>Athletics <math>\Delta</math></b>	\$274	\$280	2.2%
<b>Technology Innovation Fund (TIF)</b>	\$75	\$75	0%
<b>Transcript Fee (Also known as "Registrar Student Services")</b>	\$20	\$20	0%
<b>Academic Support (ASP)</b>	\$50	\$50	0%
<b>Davis Center <math>\Delta</math></b>	\$533	\$543	1.9%
<b>Clean Energy Fund (CEF)</b>	\$20	\$20	0%
<b>Student Activity Fee ("SGA Fee")</b>	\$154	\$154	0%
<b>Transportation/Parking Services</b>	\$98	\$100	2.2%
<b>IRA</b>	\$20	\$20	0%
<b>CHWB <math>\Delta</math></b>	\$544	\$570	4.8%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$1,842</b>	<b>\$1876</b>	<b>1.8%</b>

$\Delta$  "allows for compensation increases and position adjustment"

Source: *Board of Trustees February 2010 Report, page 145*

([http://www.uvm.edu/~trustees/board\\_mtg/meetings/2010\\_feb/February\\_2010\\_Board\\_Book.pdf](http://www.uvm.edu/~trustees/board_mtg/meetings/2010_feb/February_2010_Board_Book.pdf))

### III. A Detailed Breakdown

#### **Library:** \$44/year

The library section of the fee was created in 1979 when Bailey and Howe buildings were joined to create the building we have today. Currently, the money is sent to the five libraries at UVM and is used for capital improvements like furniture and keeping the building up to health code. The money is not spent in its entirety every year, rather it goes into a pool where it accumulates and is then used when something is identified as necessary. In the past, the money has been used to do work on the floors and a Heating, Ventilation, and Air Conditioning System in Bailey-Howe Library. Other recent examples include buying office chairs for the computer stations and upgrading the signs.

#### **Does this fee fit the Student Government Association Definition?**

**Specific: Yes**

**Available to All Current Students: Yes**

The fee is specifically earmarked for capital improvements, the libraries can be used by all students, and its services clearly augment the students' academic experience. To the best of our knowledge this fee fits our definition. In addition, the Student Government Association strongly encourages the Bailey Howe Library to consider expanding its hours of operation to 24-hours a day. We see this as an inexpensive and immediate way to improve the academic experience at UVM.

#### **Athletics:** \$275/year

Before 2003, the fee, which was \$150 per year, went to capital projects in the athletics facilities. The Fee was increased to support recreation (classes, intramurals, etc), because at the time, they were struggling to fund these services. The increase was proposed to the SGA. The increase made it so they were able to cap the recreational program fees, like intramural sports fees, fees for yoga and spin classes, and physical education class electives. However, the money goes directly into the Athletic Department's General Fund and is dispersed from there along with all other forms of income, making it impossible to know exactly which services the money is supporting. Currently the Student Comprehensive Fee is providing \$2.4 million or 15% of Athletics \$15.4 million dollar general fund. Students are also given the equivalent of \$350,00 in tickets a year. This is, of course, not enough to allow all students to see a game, but before free space was reserved for student, they had a very difficult time getting seats. In hockey, for example, 18.7% of the space is reserved for students and rest is sold to paying customers, which brings in a significant amount of revenue for the Athletic Department.

Some recent physical plant improvements are: the turf field, construction of the gym and fitness center.

#### **Does this Fee fit the Student Government Association Definition?**

**Specific: No**

**Available to All Current Students: Unclear**

Unlike the Library fee, which earmarks its fee for specific projects, the Athletics fee is directly added to their overall budget and spent concurrently with other sources of income. The Athletics Department clearly offers specific services available to all students, but the lack of clarity makes it difficult to know if all of the fee supports services provided to all students. The SGA is concerned that as long as fee goes into the athletics general fund, it could be spent on services for varsity athletes, which would not fit the SGA definition. This ambiguity makes judging the impact of increasing or decreasing the fee nearly impossible. The SGA would like to see the athletics fee separated from the Athletic Department's General Fund and used for specific services available to all students.

**Technology Innovation Fund: \$75/year**

This fee was first instated for the fall of 2006. Uses of the fee have included: classroom tech/media, expanding wireless in Bailey/Howe library, the switch from WebCT to BlackBoard, wireless in large classrooms, wireless in the Davis Center, half-year of Blirpfit, and a new student-information-service programming projects in Registrar's office for two years. The total annual income is approximately \$800,000. Roughly \$250,000 goes to maintain the classroom technology that already exists, another \$250,000 goes to wireless, and the remaining \$300,000 is for proposals, student-directed information technology investment. The fee was first created to be allocated to concerns recognized in the student faculty surveys, and additional revenue was supposed to be allocated through a proposal process.

**Does this fee fit the Student Government Association Definition?**

**Specific: Yes**

**Available to All Current Students: Yes, with reservations**

This fee seems to fit the Student Government Association's definition of the comprehensive fee since the technological advances that the fee is funding do help all current students. However, the technological priorities that were outlined in the results of a survey that was taken during winter and spring 2009 have not all been addressed. The top six of these priorities are the following: more wireless coverage in student-centric areas, more elaborate course descriptions made available on Course Registration page, wireless networking in residence hall rooms, course syllabi made available on Course Registration page, software volume licenses (Microsoft office, Adobe products, others) for students, and course evaluations made available on Course registration page. We are unsure why a new student-information database was funded over the above priorities and question how much this initiative will immediately benefit students. As long as the TIF remains a fee, the SGA would like to see follow up on the results of the survey, specifically by facilitating the additions of course syllabi and course evaluations on the course registration page.

**Transcript Fee (Also known as Registrar Student Services): \$20/year.**

Before the creation of this fee, students had to pay for each transcript they wanted to order. The \$2 charge did not cover the entire cost of paper, printing, or labor to process the requests. In addition, students often would not have money with them and it bogged down the whole process. The Office of the Registrar considered raising the fee to \$5, but instead, they proposed the fee to streamline the process. The fee covers all the transcript requests you do at UVM and after you have graduated. The process is apparently much quicker, but there is still a \$5 fee if you need a transcript expedited. There were 19,998 transcripts requested last year. Many of these are multiple pages. There has been a 41% increase in transcript requests while the number of students has increased 21% since 2001.

**Does this fee fit the Student Government Association Definition?**

**Specific: Yes**

**Available to All Current Students: Yes**

19,998 transcripts were produced last year equating to approximately \$10 a transcript, more than five times the old fee of \$2 and twice the proposed \$5 fee. The service is available to all students and seems to have made the process more efficient, although it does beg the question: how much longer will transcripts be sent as a hard copy? The SGA suggests that this fee be reconsidered and possibly lowered due to the current volume of transcripts.

**Academic Support Programs Fee (ASP): \$50/year**

The fee began in the 2008-2009 school year and has continued since. Before the creation of the fee, students paid \$10 an hour for subject-area tutoring. This service is now free and the number of student receiving subject area tutoring has increased 99% from the fall of 2007 to the fall of 2009. They now offer drop-in tutoring, group tutoring, and individual tutoring depending on the needs of students. Before the creation of the fee, tutoring was not offered for any class at the 100 or 200 level. They now try to find tutors for all classes regardless of level. During the 2008-2009 year (first year of fee) 2,682 unduplicated students received ASP services for a total of 13,261 times. That means 27.2 % of undergrads used the fee, and of the students who did, they used it an average of 4.9 times.

**Does this fee fit the Student Government Association Definition?**

**Specific: Yes**

**Available to All Current Students: Yes**

The \$50 fee allows all students to receive tutoring for one hour a week in each of their classes for the entire semester. The average student received approximately 81 minutes of tutoring in the 2008-2009 academic year, so under the old system they would have paid an average of \$13.40. Under the new system they pay almost seven times that much, or about \$37/hr of tutoring. We recognize that these numbers do not take into account the extra administrative costs incurred from the program's increased services, and in relation to some of the other fees, ASP fee is relatively small and has been able to increase tutoring by 99%. It is also worth noting that the program employs about 200 students. The SGA would like to see the fee continue as we believe it offers an important service. However, the SGA would also like to see the fee re-examined and potentially lowered to where it more accurately reflects the price of tutoring.

**Davis Center Fee: \$533/year**

The Davis Center fee began in 1996 when students approved a new fee for a future student center. At the time it was much smaller. The current Davis Center fee went into effect around 2003 to provide funding for a down payment on the future building. Today, the Davis Center gets about \$6.3 million in fee revenue, or 83% of its \$7.9 million budget. See the table below for the breakdown:

**Davis Center: Where does the money go?**

Category	Sub-Category	Cost	Cost as % of DC Total	Approx. cost to student/year
Staff		\$1.8 Million	23%	\$121
	DC Operations	\$775,000		
	Custodial	\$530,000		
	Student Life*	\$414,000		
Operating		\$2.6 Million	33%	\$175
	Events and Programming	\$666,000		
	Utilities	\$722,000**		
	Facility	\$1.2 Million***		
Debt Service		\$2.6 Million	33%	\$175
Surplus		\$800,000	10%	\$54
Totals		\$7.8 Million	99%	\$525

Notes on the Table

The numbers are rounded estimates from Pat Brown and do not quiet add up.

Further details from parts of table

\*The DC Budget covers about 15% of Student Life's total budget.

\*\*Facility costs are mainly reserves (\$475,00 set aside yearly for improvements to the building and equipment) and Maintenance (\$250,000), plus custodial supplies, insurance, cameras, landscaping, etc.

\*\*\*Utilities are 80% electricity (\$320,000) and steam (\$379,000)

Note that the debt service on the Davis Center is part of the overall budget. Therefore students pay 83% of the debt on the building each year, or about \$175 per student.

Interestingly, the Davis Center has run a budget surplus for both its years of operation thus far. Last year, the surplus was \$800,000. As fees account for 83% of the budget, students paid \$664,000 of the surplus out of fee money. All the money was eventually spent.

**Does this fee fit the Student Government Association Definition?**

**Specific: Yes, with reservations**

**Available to All Current Students: Yes**

The Davis Center is a specific service available to all students. Furthermore, something like the Davis Center was repeatedly supported by past SGAs (1996 and 2003). Therefore, the DC fee largely fits the SGA definition. One area of concern is the \$800,000 budget surplus, because a budget surplus by definition cannot be budgeted for specific items, and therefore does not fit our definition. Because the DC is so new it is understandable that it might be working out budgeting kinks. The SGA would like to see future budgets carried out without a surplus with the savings passed on to the students.

**Clean Energy Fund: \$20/year**

The Clean Energy Fund Fee began in the 2008-2009 school year and has continued since. The proposal, created by the Campus Energy Group, was approved by the Board of Trustees in May 2008 after the SGA passed a resolution in support of the concept of the CEF. It's worth noting that the SGA resolution supported the fee being "financed at least in part by a student [comprehensive] fee of at least \$5 *and no more than \$10 per semester.*"

The CEF Committee requests proposals for projects that promote the research, demonstration, development and implementation of cost-effective renewable energy resources on the University campus. Projects focusing on education of clean energy-related topics are also welcome. All members of the University community (not just students!) are invited to submit proposals.

**Does this fee fit the Student Government Association Definition?**

**Specific: Yes**

**Available to All Current Students: Yes, with reservations**

The Clean Energy Fund is theoretically available to all students, but the vast majority of projects that were chosen by the Committee to receive funding were submitted by faculty and staff with little to no student involvement. Despite the fact that the original proposal approved by the BOT stated that the CEF would also be funded through donations, matching funds, federal grants, etc., the Fund is currently only supported by the Student Comprehensive Fee. The SGA would like to see a guarantee that student projects receive a certain proportion of the funds in the future.

**Transportation Services: \$98/year**

Transportation Services receives 78% of their funding from the Student Comprehensive Fee. They spend 82% of their budget on the CATS Bus Service, which provides students with safe transportation around campus and downtown. The remaining 18% is spent on giving students free access to the Chittenden County Transportation Authority bus services.

Table: Breakdown of Transportation Services' Budget

<i>Revenue</i>	Dollar Amount (\$)	Percentage of Total Revenue
Revenue from Comprehensive Fee	1,114,848	78%
Other revenue	320,860	22%
<i>Total</i>	1,435,708	100%
<i>Expenses</i>		
		Percentage of Total Expenses
<b>Total CATS Bus service</b>	<b>1,183,708</b>	<b>82%</b>
Labor and Benefits	713,202	
Vehicle Fuel	149,000	
Vehicle Maintenance	114,841	
Vehicle Equipment Reserve	95,447	
Vehicle Insurance	15,865	
Security	35,000	
Other Operating	60,353	
<b>CCTA-Off Campus Service</b>	<b>252,000</b>	<b>18%</b>
<i>Total</i>	1,435,708	100%

**Does this fee fit the Student Government Association Definition?**

**Specific: Yes**

**Available to All Current Students: Yes**

The Transportation Services Fee provides a very useful service to all students and its budgeting is transparent. The Student Government Association does not see any issues with the current fee, but is curious to see if the fee could also be used to support more sustainable modes of transportation for students like bicycles.

**Center for Health and Wellbeing (CHWB):** \$544/year

**Total Budget**            **\$6,415,532**

- 85% of which is funded by the Student Health Fee
- 15% from laboratory fees, fees for administration of the student health fee, psychiatry reimbursement

Lab	4.2%
Student Insurance	0.8%
Athletic Medicine	8.6%
Health Promotion	9.5%
Counseling	20.4%
Women's Health	7.8%
Primary Care	33.5%
Center*	9.7%

\*According to Jon Porter, this figure includes rent that the Center pays for its eight sites on campus (currently approximately \$210,000 annually) as well as a number of other expenses related to student and community wellbeing.

**Trends in the Student Health Fee– last five fiscal years.**

<u>FY</u>	<u>Health Fee</u>	<u>% change from previous FY</u>	<u>New</u>
2006	\$417	0%	New counselor position
		(cost increases covered by increased enrollment)	Health educator
2007	\$450	8%	Nurse practitioner
Women's Health			Increase 1 FTE Nurse Practitioner
Women's Health			0.5 FTE Administrative Assistant
Primary Care			1 FTE Athletic Trainer position
			1 FTE Counselor
			1 FTE Admin. Support Front Desk
Primary Care			
2008	\$488	8.5%	1FTE Counselor –
Men's Advocate			0.5 FTE Alcohol/Substance Health
Promotion			0.5 FTE IT Support
			0.5 FTE Team Physician
			Subsidize influenza vaccine cost

2009	\$527	7.99%	1 FTE Triage
Counselor			
Care			Director of Operations Primary
Student/Campus Life			Support for Diversity Initiatives –
position – Care Team			0.5 FTE support Assistant Dean
2010	\$544	3.29%	Base increase 2%
salary, 1% fringe			
Services			Elimination Physical Therapy
position			Elimination Health Promotion

The Student Health Fee—part of the Comprehensive Fee--covers a number of services provided by the Center for Health and Wellbeing. Specifically, these include:

- Primary health care/women's health care visits/appointments with Center for Health & Wellbeing physicians, physician's assistants, nurse practitioners and registered nurses
- Short-term focused psychotherapy and counseling at the Counseling Center
- Health education and health promotion services through Health Promotion Services
- Alcohol and drug education
- Athletic training for varsity athletes
- Public health/control of communicable diseases
- On-campus sexual assault prevention education
- Nutrition Services

The Student Health Fee does not cover laboratory fees, x-rays, emergency room visits, and specialty visits, including psychiatry, hospitalization or prescriptions.

**Does the fee fit the Student Government Association Definition?**

**Specific: Yes**

**Available to All Current Students: Mostly**

Partially. Certain services that the Student Health Fee Covers—'Athletic Training' for Varsity athletes includes physical therapy—are not accessible to all students who pay the fee. Athletic Medicine receives 8.6% of the Center for Health and Wellbeing’s total budget—which is just under \$6.5 million, 85% of which is fee-funded—and so it’s definitely a cause for concern.

Also, there are problems associated with access; the Counseling Center is notoriously overbooked, making it difficult for students who wish to use this service to make appointments that suit their schedules. In this sense, the service might be available to all current students, but might not be *accessible* by all current students.

A quick look at the trends in the Student Health Fee over the last five years tells us that between 2008 and 2009, the fee increased by just under 8%. At this time, two new budget items were added: Director of Primary Care Operations and support for “diversity initiatives” through Student Life. It might be concerning for students to know that while the undergraduate population has increased—probably increasing competition over appointments--not only was the last full time counselor added in back in 2008, but that position was added with the focus of being a “men’s advocate.” A more important take away point, though, might be a concern about adding administrative positions (Director of Primary Care Operations) rather than more directly improving the care students receive by hiring additional primary care doctors or counselors.

It’s also unclear how the University-provided health insurance fits in, seeing as those students who pay for health insurance provided by the University receive no discount on the Student Health Fee. University-

provided insurance can go to support the cost of services not covered by the Student Health Fee—x-rays, lab work, psychiatric services—but because revenue from the insurance provides approximately 15% of the CHWB’s total budget, it’s clear that the funds raised by providing insurance also go to support some of the services that are covered by the Student Health Fee.

Finally, the recent proposal to increase the Student Health Fee by \$100 in order to start collecting funds that would go to pay for a new University Health building—though it has since been tabled—would not fit the SGA’s definition because it would involve using funds paid by current students to build a building they’ll never take advantage of.

#### Other Non-tuition based Fees

**Student Activity Fee** (also known as the "SGA Fee"): \$154 a year

This fee pays for the SGA budget, which goes to fund both the 153 SGA-recognized student club and the internal business of the SGA. It includes the salaries of the SGA Office Coordinator (\$28,976/year), Club Sports Coordinator (\$28,155/year) and Business Manager (\$48,051/year) along with weekly stipends for Committee Chairs, the Speaker, Treasurer, President and Vice-President. Committee Chairs and the Speaker of the Senate make \$65/week, while the Treasurer, President and Vice-President make \$200/week. The SGA budget is entirely fee-funded. It's worth noting that the number of clubs the Student Activity Fee goes to support has increased in recent years, but there will be no increase in the Student Activity fee for FY 2011. Between FY 2010 and FY 2011, a larger share of the SGA Budget will go toward clubs, as the internal budget of the SGA has been decreased.

#### **Does the fee fit the Student Government Association Definition?**

**Specific: Yes, with reservations**

**Available to All Current Students: Yes**

Because clubs are accessible by all students, the part of the Student Activity Fee that supports clubs clearly meets the definition. The money that pays for staff and SGA infrastructure is justified on the grounds that they’re necessary to support clubs

**IRA: \$20/year**

The report does not include a breakdown of the IRA fee because it is not part of the Comprehensive Fee. We did, however, include the Student Activities Fee above because we felt it was important to examine our own organizations transparency.

#### **IV. Related Background:**

The General Fund, which is tuition driven, is completely separate from the Student Comprehensive Fee and supports all academic related departments. However, there are some gray areas between the two revenue sources. Within the SCF, the Library, Technology Innovation Fund, and Academic Support Programs have specific academic goals, but are generally seen as augmenting the academic experience rather than providing basic services. With the General Fund, 5.6% goes to "Student Services" which supports the Dean of Students Office, the majority of the Athletics department, and Admissions. In addition, 8.0% of the General Fund goes to "Academic Services" which include "Libraries and Learning Resources, Research support and a range of smaller academic/research related commitments." An additional 13.6% goes to "Institutional Support" which funds University wide services and administration.

Sources: VP Cate’s budget presentation, page 4: [http://www.uvm.edu/budgetplanning/budget\\_update\\_ppt\\_jan10.pdf](http://www.uvm.edu/budgetplanning/budget_update_ppt_jan10.pdf)  
Email Correspondance with Ted Winfield, Associate Vice President for Budget and Resource Management

## **V. Proposal:**

The SGA believes that a definition with specific guidelines of the comprehensive fee should be adopted by the University. We propose our aforementioned Student Government Association Definition requiring that all sections of the fee, "specific support services" and facilities accessible by *all current students*. In addition, akin to the faculty senate's decision-making power over curricular issues, we believe the SGA should have decision-making power over non-tuition based fees. Specifically, we request that the *creation or alteration of any section* of the Comprehensive Fee be approved by the SGA before it goes into effect.

Appendix 1: Changes in Fees and Tuition compared to Inflation 1973-2009

