



DATE: March 1, 2021

TO: University of Oregon Board of Trustees

FROM: Michael H. Schill, President, and Professor of Law 

RE: Academic Year 2021-22 Tuition and Fee Recommendation for March Consideration

Enclosed is my tuition and fee proposal for the 2021-22 academic year, which is based on the recommendations I received from the students, faculty, and staff who comprise the [Tuition and Fee Advisory Board](#) (TFAB). In making this decision, I reviewed the TFAB recommendations, accepted direct feedback from students and other stakeholders as part of a virtual open forum, reviewed feedback provided online, and discussed tuition issues with a wide variety of stakeholders.

Oregon Guarantee

Before I discuss the upcoming year's tuition and fee proposal, it is worth reminding you of the new guaranteed tuition program that you approved last year, the Oregon Guarantee, which dramatically changed the institution's tuition model. That model sets a guaranteed tuition rate for each new incoming class of undergraduate students, which means tuition and administratively controlled mandatory fees do not change for those students for five years. As part of the transition plan for the new program, last March you also locked annual tuition and administratively controlled mandatory-fee increases for undergraduate students who started prior to the summer of 2020 at 3 percent annually for a four-year period. As I noted last year, one of the other major benefits of guaranteed tuition is that students who receive scholarships and grants will see the real value of their financial aid packages stay consistent during their enrollment instead of diminishing due to annual tuition increases.

Undergraduate Tuition

Thus, the undergraduate tuition rates that you will be considering only impact next year's incoming class. For these incoming students, I support TFAB's recommendation that the tuition rates be set at \$266.08 per student credit hour for resident students (4.5 percent higher than the rate set for this year's cohort) and at \$844.83 per student credit hour for non-resident students (3 percent higher than the rate for this year's cohort). As always, we will continue to support those Oregonians most in need through the [PathwayOregon](#) scholarship and advising program, which pays 100 percent of tuition and fees for qualifying Federal Pell Grant-eligible Oregonians.

Graduate Tuition

I also support TFAB's recommended graduate tuition rates. The schools and colleges proposed increases vary from zero to 5 percent, depending upon the program (see meeting materials for



details). Please note that the proposal includes implementing one set of changes to current academic year graduate tuition rates for one program, the new College of Arts and Sciences (CAS) online psychology program, starting spring term 2021. This action will reduce the official tuition rate charged to students in this new program, which will be lower than CAS's standard graduate program rate, and will correct a technical error that occurred last year in the rate tables.¹

Administratively Controlled Mandatory Fees

In addition, all administratively controlled mandatory fees are part of the new guaranteed program. Again, this means that once set, these fees will not change for five years for entering undergraduate students. Administratively controlled mandatory fees are currently locked for first-year students. Last year, you approved 3 percent annual increases in total administratively controlled mandatory fees for undergraduate students who started at the university prior to the summer of 2020. With these rates already set, TFAB reviewed the existing administratively controlled mandatory fees and provided recommendations (see meeting materials for details). I support TFAB's recommendations which include:

- Fee rate for the incoming cohort of undergraduate students: 3.76 percent higher than previous cohort
- Fee rate for graduate students: 3 percent total increase
- Allocation of 3 percent increase in fees for continuing undergraduate students: recommendations in TFAB meeting materials

ASUO Incidental Fee

Let me turn now to student fees that are set by the Associated Students of the University of Oregon (ASUO), our student government. This is not something I typically write a lot about in my tuition memo each year, but this year is a bit different.

In their formal recommendation to me, the ASUO proposed an incidental fee (I-Fee) of \$270.00 per student, per term. I am proposing a lower rate, \$268.25, as their recommendation contained an unallocated reserve intended to serve as a financial cushion against lower-than-expected enrollment next year. However, the university's I-Fee allocation policy already includes such a reserve for this purpose—the Prudent Reserve—which is more than fully funded. Under these circumstances, I believe recommending a lower I-Fee is appropriate. I have communicated this change to ASUO President Isaiah Boyd and he has expressed support for this action.

¹ There was no impact to students in the program due to this technical error. Since there was no specific listed rate in last year's fee tables for the new online psychology program, students were charged the standard CAS graduate rate, which was higher than the new program intended for tuition to be set. To address this situation, remissions were provided to ensure students paid the desired, lower amount that the program had advertised.



As part of their I-Fee recommendation, the ASUO decided to stop providing the UO athletics department with funds that were historically used to provide access (ticket lottery for football and men's basketball/unlimited access to other sports) for students to attend intercollegiate athletics events (roughly \$1.8 million for 2019-20, including overhead). This allocation has remained relatively flat for the last five years, increasing only \$34,000 since 2015. On January 19, the ASUO Contracts and Finance Committee voted to recommend that the ASUO stop funding the agreement and instead use some of the money to fund a series of basic-needs initiatives for students using I-Fee funds. A student forum was held on January 29 and the ASUO Senate voted in favor of this action on February 9.

In meetings with me over the last month, the ASUO president and ASUO Senate president repeatedly expressed a desire to work toward a solution that would provide athletics access to students. We reached a compromise on support for a new mandatory athletics tickets fee that would be phased in over four years with each new class, and for using I-Fee funds that had already been collected and approved for athletics tickets this year (but were not paid to the athletics department because of COVID-19) to continue access for current students next year. Unfortunately, the ASUO Senate rejected this compromise. I subsequently strongly suggested that the ASUO refund the money collected for the ticket agreement this year to the students who paid it but were unable to access athletics events, something it has agreed to do. We will work with the ASUO to administer these refunds.

The athletics department subsequently proposed instituting a new mandatory athletics tickets fee of \$29.50 per term (equal to the current pro rata share it received from the I-Fee). Under this plan, students who paid this fee would be able to enter the lottery for no-cost tickets. Because of the university's Guaranteed Tuition Program, however, the fee could only be required of new students, so only new students would have access to a similar ticket and admission system as currently exists. Continuing students who wanted to attend games would need to purchase tickets separately.

At a student tuition forum I held on February 18, the primary topic in each of the breakout sessions was the proposed athletics tickets fee. Similarly, the fee was the major subject in written comments received during a weeklong comment period. While there was some division among students for and against the fee (with most opposing a fee), there was almost total consensus among students I heard from that athletics is a crucial element of the student experience and that it is vital that students have access to games. The ASUO officers I met with, the students who participated in the student forum, and those who submitted written comments appreciated the role of intercollegiate athletics on campus. Many said that they came to the University of Oregon to be part of a community that had a great athletics program. Others talked about how athletics contributed to school spirit. This is consistent with the anecdotal conversations I have had with



students, faculty, and staff over my tenure as president, and worthy of emphasizing, in contrast to a different narrative sometimes put forward on campus.

Thus, there appears to be consensus about the value of athletics and the importance of access to sporting events, at least among the students I heard from. The main difference was over who should pay for that access—students or the athletics department.

ASUO senators also introduced a resolution at the February 24 meeting of the University Senate, which was approved by a substantial majority of those voting. The resolution, which supports the students in creating basic-needs programs with the money that had in the past been allocated to the athletics department, also opposes a new mandatory athletics fee, and “calls on President Schill to work with the Athletic Department to provide adequate funding for student tickets from the Athletic Department’s other sources of funding, or adopt a voluntary plan by which those students who want to attend intercollegiate sporting events can purchase a package of tickets from the Athletic Department for the student section at reduced prices.”

While this resolution is just a suggestion (under the UO’s constitution, the Senate has the ability to pass resolutions on any matter, but its jurisdiction covers academic matters only and does not extend to tuition and fees), I always appreciate the input of our university’s elected representatives. In this instance I have decided that it makes sense to adopt a course of action consistent with the resolution. I am not recommending a new mandatory athletics fee for next year.

So, to review the situation: Our students and the University Senate believe that students should have access to athletics tickets; they just do not want the students to pay for them. The athletics department is running a deficit in the tens of millions of dollars this year because of COVID-19. All athletics department employees have taken salary cuts—pain that has not been shared by employees of the university more broadly. All other PAC-12 public universities have some variety of general fund- or student fee-subsidized plans for free tickets or reduced-rate ticket plans. Therefore, I do not feel it is possible or appropriate for athletics to be asked to fund access to free tickets.

I join our students in believing that athletics plays an important role on our campus. I have previously expressed the reasons for this view in an [Open Mike](#) on July 21, 2016. In light of this, I have decided to provide the athletics department with \$1.2 million next year, from university licensing revenue (non-education and general funds) in return for its commitment to offer 5,000 discounted sports passes at \$100 per pass to our students. These passes will entitle the holders admission to all home football games and some men’s and women’s basketball games for no additional charge. If a student were to purchase the sports pass and attend all home football games and no basketball games, the cost would be \$14.29 per game, an amount significantly below



the face value of football tickets. The athletics department will also continue to sell single tickets to games subject to availability and will provide additional information about the sale of the sports passes as details are worked out.

It is unclear what the consequences of shifting to this “pay-to-play” model will be. In a normal year 65 percent of our students benefited from the tickets and free access provided through the I-Fee, which is more than the 5,000 sports passes that the \$1.2 million in licensing revenue will subsidize, implying that significantly fewer students will benefit. Furthermore, students whose tuition and mandatory fees are covered by scholarships (e.g., PathwayOregon students) will now have to pay for tickets that they previously could get for free. I remain concerned about the impact of this change on the student experience. I would encourage the ASUO to review their action in a year or two to determine whether its impact on the students they represent has been desirable.

I want to thank all the members of TFAB for their hard work and dedication. This proposal I am recommending to the Board of Trustees is the product of their time and effort, including nearly a dozen open meetings, hours, and hours of analysis, and work by a group of students, faculty members, and staff who care deeply about the UO and our ability to deliver quality, affordability, and accessibility.