



Student Shared Governance  
Friday, February 10, 2017

On February 7, 2017, Governor Scott Walker announced portions of his 2017-2019 executive budget, which included funding proposals for the University of Wisconsin System (UW System). Among these was a proposal to allow students to “opt out” of allocable segregated fees. Governor Walker states “allowing an opt-out helps students make the decisions on what they do and do not want to fund.”

At the University of Wisconsin Oshkosh (UW Oshkosh), allocable fees fund the Oshkosh Student Association, Student Legal Services, the Green Fund, Intramurals, and over 160 registered student organizations. The student organizations provide opportunities for students to get involved outside the classroom, and many of these groups are related to students’ academic programs: Advertising Club, Chemistry Club, Finance Club, History Club, Spanish Club, and the Student Nurses Association, just to name a few.

UW Oshkosh administers allocable segregated fees through a system of shared governance, which includes students, faculty, staff, and administration on every decision. UW Oshkosh has worked hard to ensure that these fees remain only a small portion of the overall cost of attendance for students, with a rate that is below the System average. In 2016-17, full-time students only paid \$114/year for the allocable portion of the segregated fee. UW Oshkosh also already exempts special students, like those in online programs or our CAPP students. While keeping costs low, UW Oshkosh has also provided great value. Services funded through these fees have a great impact on students’ day-to-day lives, for example:

- The 160 registered student organizations provide hands-on leadership experience, supplement classroom instruction, allow students to represent the University and the State of Wisconsin, promote and facilitate conversation around important issues, and, along with intramural activities, foster a greater sense of community, which the UW System has recognized as all being consistent with its Mission.
- Titan Transit connects students to the larger Oshkosh and Fox Valley communities and increases student safety.
- The Green Fund continues the spirit of stewardship that has propelled UW Oshkosh to third place on the Sierra Club’s Coolest Schools List.
- Student Legal Services provides low-cost legal advice for students, while the Titan Readership Program, which provides copies of four daily newspapers, keeps students informed and connects them to the wider world.
- The Model United Nations team, which has ranked in the top 10 schools in the National MUN competition for the last 32 years, allows students to gain firsthand, practical experience in negotiation and diplomacy.
- The Theatre Art Board provides opportunities for all students to participate in theatrical performances.

In addition to the direct benefits of these services, allocable segregated fees provide intangible benefits to all students at UW Oshkosh, separate from any direct participation in these services. All students are impacted by the experiences others bring to the classroom from campus participation, benefit from a safer campus and community, and can enjoy cleaner, more sustainable surroundings.

In light of all of the good that allocable segregated fees do, we, representatives of students and student governance at UW Oshkosh, are gravely concerned by the governor's opt-out proposal. First, this has the potential to significantly reduce funding for the aforementioned services thereby reducing the impact these services provide—services that benefit all students regardless of participation. Second, there will be greater uncertainty and difficulty in budgeting for these services with unreliable estimates of revenue, inhibiting the Segregated Fee Committee and responsibly managing funds. Many of these services will lose funding and the cost per student will rise if students are allowed to opt out. Finally, the administration of such an opt-out system would be prohibitively difficult—how can we ensure that no one that opts out is able to use services that they haven't paid for?

We are sympathetic to the governor's goals of reducing the cost of attending college for students, while also ensuring a quality education for each student. We invite Governor Walker, Senator Feyen, and Representatives Hintz and Schraa as well as any other interested party to visit UW Oshkosh and witness firsthand the benefits that allocable segregated fees bring to our campus. We hope that in seeing these effects, you will come to understand the view of the students and reconsider this proposal.

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