

Student Fee Quick Reference Guide

This guide is intended as a quick-reference companion to the [CSU Student Tuition and Fee Policy](#). Universities should use the applicable checklist based on the fee category and approval method. The guide summarizes key procedural requirements but does not replace policy or statutory requirements.

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Summary Overview

The California State University (CSU) [Student Tuition and Fee](#) policy outlines authority, responsibility, and accountability for the required processes to establish and adjust student fees. The process from proposal to approval by the president and, in some cases, the chancellor, may take four months or longer. It is recommended that all fee changes begin a year in advance of the intended effective semester to provide sufficient notice to students and allow for implementation of administrative processes.

Appropriate and meaningful consultation with the campus student body association, faculty senate, and other campus constituencies is critical to ensure that delegated authority is exercised in a manner consistent with policies adopted by the Board of Trustees.

Pre-Approved Increases: Fee increases that were pre-programmed or pre-approved, such as scheduled increases at implementation or annual Consumer Price Index (CPI) / Higher Education Price Index (HEPI) adjustments, do not require further approval, referendum, or alternative consultation. Only increases above and beyond those pre-approved amounts require additional action.

Accountability & Documentation: The president is responsible for ensuring all required policy elements are documented and retained after a fee is established or adjusted. The president provides an annual report of all Category II, III, IV, and V fees to the campus fee advisory committee (CFAC) and to the Chancellor's Office, including current fee rates, total revenue collected, and remaining balances.

Category II – Campus Mandatory Fees

- **Before starting:** The president must obtain chancellor **approval on the process** to be followed before taking any action to increase or implement a new fee. Exception: previously approved inflationary adjustments may proceed without this step.
- **After completing the process:** Chancellor approval is required before implementing any **new** fee. Adjustments to existing fees are within presidential authority and responsibility once the university process is complete.

Category III – Course Fees: Within presidential authority if fees fall within the [approved policy ranges](#). Chancellor's Office approval is required for fees exceeding those ranges.

Categories IV and V – Administrative and Self-Support Fees: Within presidential authority for both new fees and adjustments. No chancellor approval required.

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Advance Notice for Sensitive Changes (All Categories): Regardless of category, any fee change likely to generate significant student, community, or media attention should be communicated to the chancellor in advance. This is not an approval requirement; it is an expectation of good communication so that the Chancellor’s Office can be prepared to respond if questions arise. When in doubt, communicate early.

Chancellor’s Office Resources: Contact the Assistant Vice Chancellor for Finance and Budget Administration/Controller with questions about fee processes, policy interpretation, or whether a specific change warrants Chancellor notification.

Fee Category Definitions and Authority

Fee Category Definitions	Authority
Category I – Systemwide mandatory tuition and other fees that must be paid to apply to, enroll in, or attend the university.	Board of Trustees
Category II – Campus mandatory fees that must be paid to enroll in or attend the university (e.g., health services, student body, and instructionally related activities fees).	New Fees: Chancellor Adjustments: President (with exceptions)
Category III – Fees associated with state-supported courses, specifically for materials and services used in concert with the basic foundation of an academic course offering.	President (within approved policy ranges)
Category IV – Fees, other than Category II or III fees, paid to receive materials, services, or for the use of university facilities. (e.g., augmented health service fees, transcript and library fees).	President
Category V – Fees paid to self-support programs such as extended education (including non-credit or community-based programs), parking, and housing.	President
Category VI – Systemwide voluntary fees (e.g., Student Involvement and Representation Fee).	Board of Trustees

Refer to the [Fee Categories & Examples](#) page for more detailed information.

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Campus Fee Advisory Committee

- The president establishes the campus fee advisory committee (CFAC), comprised of student, faculty, staff, and administrative representatives, in consultation with the student body association and faculty senate.
- The president appoints the CFAC chair.
- Student representatives are appointed by the student body association.
- Faculty members are appointed consistent with normal university processes.
- Students appointed by the student body association constitute a majority of voting members.
- The CFAC includes the student body association president and faculty senate chair, or their designees.
- The president consults with the CFAC before adjusting or requesting the chancellor establish any Category II or III fees.
- The CFAC considers proposals for Category II and III fee establishment and adjustment, and makes a recommendation to the president.
- The CFAC reviews the annual report of all Category II, III, IV, and V fees, including new fees, fee increases, total revenue, and unexpended balances.

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Category II Fee Proposal – Alternative Consultation Checklist

Note: Student Body Association, Student Body Center, and Student Success fees require a referendum and cannot use this process.

- Obtain chancellor approval on the **process** for establishing or adjusting the fee before proceeding.
- Have the campus chief financial officer develop a statement of revenues and expenditures for the president's consideration.
- Confirm that the campus fee advisory committee (CFAC) membership complies with policy.
- Demonstrate to the CFAC the president's reasons why alternative consultation is more effective than a referendum and inform them of intent to proceed.
- Develop alternative consultation strategies with input from the student body association and CFAC.
- Prepare written materials providing objective analysis of the proposed fee action, including statements for and against the proposal, as solicited and selected by the CFAC.
- Conduct appropriate and meaningful consultation with the faculty senate, student body association, and other affected constituencies.
- Summarize alternative consultation results in writing for consideration by the CFAC and the president.
- The president consults with the CFAC, having considered all materials and consultation results, before making a final decision on establishing or adjusting the fee.
- Obtain a CFAC recommendation to the president.
- The president issues a final determination including the fee rate, any pre-programmed increase, effective date, spending restrictions, and reporting requirements.
- For new fees only: president submits a written request for chancellor approval with documentation that all checklist requirements were satisfied.

Exception: If a Category II fee for a capital project must be raised to meet minimum debt service revenue bond requirements that were not anticipated when the fee was established, the president may make that adjustment without a full alternative consultation process. The president must present the debt service requirements and revenue projections to the CFAC prior to making the adjustment.

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Category II Fee Proposal – Referendum Checklist

- Obtain chancellor approval on the process **before** proceeding.
- Have the campus chief financial officer develop a statement of revenues and expenditures for the president's consideration.
- Confirm that the campus fee advisory committee (CFAC) membership complies with policy.
- The president, in consultation with the student body association and faculty senate, develops guidelines to ensure the student fee referendum is open, fair and objective.
- The CFAC issues a voter pamphlet providing objective analysis of the proposed fee action, including statements for and against solicited by the CFAC.
- Make the voter pamphlet, ballot, and polling information available to students and publish it in the university newspaper and other public locations around campus at least thirty days prior to the referendum.
- Conduct appropriate and meaningful consultation with bodies such as the campus faculty senate, student body association, and other affected constituencies affected by the proposed fee increase.
- Conduct the referendum.
- The president consults with the CFAC, having considered all materials, consultation, and referendum results, before making a final decision on establishing or adjusting the fee.
- Obtain a CFAC recommendation to the president.
- The president issues a final determination including the fee rate, any pre-programmed increases, effective date, spending restrictions, and reporting requirements.
- For new fees only: president submits a written request for chancellor approval with documentation that all checklist requirements were satisfied.

Note: Student Body Association, Student Body Center, and Student Success fees have additional requirements. See Category II Fee Proposal – Referendum: Additional Requirements.

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Category II Fee Proposal – Referendum: Additional Requirements

These additional requirements apply to specific fee types and supersede the standard referendum process where noted.

Student Body Association Fee (Education Code [89300](#))

- Fee changes may only be approved by a majority of students voting in a referendum.
- The fee is subject to referendum at any time upon petition to the university president by 10% of regularly enrolled students.
- A fee successfully modified via referendum takes effect at the beginning of the following academic year.

Student Body Center Fee (Education Code [89304](#))

- A new fee may only be established upon a two-thirds favorable vote in a referendum.
- A referendum is not required for fee adjustments.

Student Success Fee (Education Code [89712](#))

- May only be established or increased, if not already scheduled, upon approval by a majority of students voting in a referendum.
- Proposals may not be brought before students more than once per academic year.
- Conduct a rigorous consultation process to inform and educate students on uses, impact, and cost before the referendum.
- Clearly communicate to students that any portion of the fee supporting ongoing/long-term obligations will remain in place until those obligations are satisfied, regardless of a subsequent vote to rescind.
- If the fee supports direct instructional purposes historically covered by tuition and state funding, the chancellor must consult with Board of Trustees chair before final approval.

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Category III Fee Proposal – Checklist

- Have the campus chief financial officer develop a statement of revenues and expenditures for the president's consideration.
- Confirm that the campus fee advisory committee (CFAC) membership complies with policy.
- The president consults with the CFAC before establishing or adjusting the fee.
- Obtain a CFAC recommendation to the president.
- The president issues a final determination including the fee rate, any pre-programmed increases, effective date, spending restrictions, and reporting requirements.
- If the fee exceeds the president's authority as defined in the Student Tuition and Fee policy, submit a written request to the Chancellor's Office, Assistant Vice Chancellor for Finance and Budget Administration/Controller for approval with documentation that all checklist requirements were satisfied.