

THE FACTS: HISTORY OF STUDENT FEES

The debate over what fees, if any, UC students should be charged is as old as the university itself. The first serious attempt to impose a student fee came in 1899 when the UC Board of Regents approved by a nearly unanimous vote a fee of \$10 per semester. With then-governor Henry Tiff Gage adamantly opposed to fees, a spirited debate on the pros and cons of charging students ensued in California's newspapers. The opponents of fees won that debate, and it took slightly more than two decades for the University of California to impose its first student fee.

This is a summary of the history of fees at the University of California:

- 1921 – Student fees were first charged to California residents by the University of California in July 1921 with the establishment of an incidental fee to cover university-provided student services not related to instruction.
- 1930s-1950s – UC continued to charge the incidental fee, which was used to support recreational programs, student health services, laboratory fees and other services not directly a part of the basic educational program.
- 1960 – The California Master Plan for Higher Education affirmed that UC should remain tuition-free (a widely held view at the time) but allowed that fees could be charged for costs not related to instruction. It also stipulated that fee charges should be as low as possible, and that program quality should be maintained.
- 1968 – In April that year, the incidental fee was renamed the registration fee, and its use was expanded to include financial aid as well as student services.
- 1970s – The educational fee was established in 1970-71 and was originally intended to fund capital outlay.
- 1990s – A special fee for law and medicine students was first established in 1990 as required by the State Budget Act. In January 1994 the Regents approved professional school fees, which are levied on top of the educational and registration fees, for graduate students in various professional programs.
- 1994 – The University of California student fee policy established that the educational fee may be used for general support of the university's operating budget, including all costs related to instruction.
- 2010 – In May, the registration fee was renamed the student services fee to more accurately reflect the purposes for which the fee revenue is used. The policy governing the uses of the fee was clarified and amended to include, among other things, a component that would set aside for financial aid a portion of any future increases.

Final note: At its November meeting, the Board of Regents will decide whether to change the name of the educational fee to tuition. The general distinction between tuition and fees at many institutions of higher education is that tuition covers instructional costs, while fees pay for services not related to instruction. The proposed change acknowledges the fact that UC's educational fee supports core instructional costs, such as faculty salaries, and is essentially interchangeable with tuition at other institutions.