

## R516, General Student Fees<sup>1</sup>

**R516-1 Purpose:** To outline the process for establishing, reviewing, revising, and repealing general student fees for institutions in the Utah System of Higher Education (“USHE”).<sup>2</sup>

### R516-2 References

- 2.1. [Utah Code § 53H-1-203](#), Establishment of Board – Power, Duties, and Authority – Reports
- 2.2. [Utah Code § 53H-8-202](#), Combined Requests for Appropriations – Appropriation Formulas
- 2.3. [20 U.S. Code § 1091b](#), Institutional Refunds
- 2.4. [Board Policy R510](#), Tuition
- 2.5. [Board Policy R514](#), Refunds of Tuition, Fees, and Other Student Charges
- 2.6. [Board Policy R511](#), Tuition Disclosures and Consultation
- 2.7. [Board Policy R590](#), Issuance of Bonds for Colleges and Universities

### R516-3 Definitions

- 3.1. **“Degree-granting Institution”** means an institution of higher education described in [Utah Code section 53H-1-102\(1\)\(a\)](#).
- 3.2. **“Food Pantry Program”** means a USHE institution’s program to distribute staple foods and groceries, including hygiene supplies, to individuals at no cost.
- 3.3. **“General Student Fees”** means institution-wide mandatory fees assessed to students in order to benefit students broadly and to support student belonging, enrichment, and success as a campus community.
- 3.4. **“General Student Fee Advisory Board”** is an institutional committee comprised of students, faculty, and administrators that oversees the establishment, review, revision, or repeal of general student fees.
- 3.5. **“Technical College”** means an institution of higher education described in [Utah Code section 53H-1-102\(1\)\(b\)](#).

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<sup>1</sup> Amended September 16, 2022; March 21, 2024; and March 26, 2026.

<sup>2</sup> Technical edits December 1, 2025.

**R516-4 Affordability in the Utah System of Higher Education:** The Utah Board of Higher Education (“Board”) has established affordability as a top priority. To support that priority, USHE institutions and boards of trustees should consider all alternatives before recommending new fees or fee increases. Boards of trustees should rigorously scrutinize requests for student fees and fee increases, ensuring they are justifiable, reasonable, and benefit students broadly, as described herein.

**R516-5 Authority for Establishing General Student Fees:** The Board is statutorily responsible to establish all general student fees. The Board normally establishes general student fees concurrently with tuition rates. Technical colleges are not authorized to charge general student fees. Therefore, the provisions of this policy shall not apply to technical colleges.

**5.1. General Student Fee Purpose:** Institutions must identify the specific purpose for which revenue generated from a general student fee will be used. Institutions may not use revenue from general student fees to fund instruction, academic support, general administrative expenses, or other expenses that should reasonably be covered with state appropriations or tuition. Institutions may request general student fees for the following purposes:

**5.1.1. Student-Approved Facility Construction:** Revenue from general student fees may be pledged to secure bonds to construct or renovate a specific facility that the student body approved in accordance with subsection 6.6. Such facilities shall be for the enrichment of the student experience and may not be for the construction of instructional space.

**5.1.2. Student-Approved Facility Operation:** Revenue from general student fees may be used to fund operation and maintenance, capital improvements, and other necessary operating expenses for student-approved facilities in subsection 5.1.1.

**5.1.3. Student Activities, Programs, and Services:** Revenue from general student fees may be used to fund activities, programs, and services from which the general student body may benefit.

**5.1.3.1. Food Pantry Programs:** An institution seeking the Board’s approval to assess a new or increase an existing general student fee to fund a food pantry program must demonstrate the following:

**5.1.3.1.1.** The student need for a food pantry program;

**5.1.3.1.2.** That, if approved, the funds generated from student fees will be used by the food pantry program to benefit students;

**5.1.3.1.3.** That the institution is working to leverage and connect low-income students to community resources, including federal, state, and local government programs that provide services directed at reducing poverty, improving opportunities for low-income children, revitalizing low-income communities, empowering low-income families and low-income individuals to become self-sufficient, or otherwise helping people in need; and

**5.1.3.1.4.** That other funding sources for the food pantry program are not viable.

**5.1.3.2.** An institution that receives approval to assess a new or increase an existing general student fee to fund a food pantry must report to the Office of the Commissioner of Higher Education first-year data on utilization, number of students served, and other information the Board may request.

**5.1.3.3.** By June 30, 2026 an institution that currently uses a general student fee to fund a food pantry program must report on food pantry program utilization and the number of students served and demonstrate to the Office of the Commissioner of Higher Education that it meets the requirements described in subsection 5.1.3.1.

**5.2. Publication of General Student Fees:** Institutions shall publish tuition and general student fees on their websites.

**5.3. Revenue from General Student Fees:** Revenue from general student fees is restricted to the specific program areas, facilities, and services for which they are approved and shall be established to cover budgeted expenses. Institutions may accumulate fund balances for large expenditures or reserves needing multi-year revenues only if planned, budgeted, and pre-approved by the institution's board of trustees. Institutions shall annually budget general student fee revenue and expenses and shall account for the revenue of each general student fee individually and separately from other sources.

**5.4. Policy Implementation for Existing General Student Fees:** An institution's general student fee advisory board, president, and board of trustees shall review existing general student fees to determine if the fees align with the categories in subsection 5.1. Existing fees

that do not align with subsection 5.1 shall be considered for repeal, transition to tuition, or for an exception to this policy as granted by the Board.

## **R516-6 Process for Creating, Revising, and Repealing General Student Fees**

**6.1. General Student Fee Advisory Board:** Each institution shall establish a general student fee advisory board which shall oversee establishing, revising, maintaining, or repealing general student fees.

**6.1.1. Composition of Board:** The majority of the General Student Fee Advisory Board shall be comprised of currently enrolled students. Administrators and faculty may also be appointed to the advisory board. The board shall be chaired by a currently enrolled student.

**6.1.2. Appointment and Procedures of the Board:** Each institution will adopt policies and procedures for appointing members of the general student fee advisory board and for the operation of the board consistent with this policy.

**6.2. Institutional Policy:** Each institution shall develop a general student fee policy to govern the institution's processes for establishing, reviewing, revising, or repealing general student fees. The institutional policy shall include the following elements:

**6.2.1. Establishing Fees:** Establishing new student fees shall be supported by a demonstrated need, a clear statement describing the purpose of the fee, and a sound budget plan.

**6.2.2. Reviewing Fees:** Each institution's general student fee advisory board and board of trustees shall annually review each general student fee to ensure the fee still meets established objectives. The general student fee advisory board shall require an annual report from each student fee program manager, review institutional enrollment projections and enrollment impact on general student fee revenue, examine whether each general student fee maybe proportionally adjusted with enrollment change, and assess the adequacy of fund balances as allowed in subsection 5.3. The general student fee advisory board shall provide a report of their annual review of each general student fee, including any recommendations for revision or repeal, to the board of trustees, which shall review the information and may make recommendations or revision or repeal of a general student fee.

**6.2.3. Revising Fees:** Proposed revisions to general student fees must include a rationale for the proposed change and a revised budget plan.

**6.2.4. Repealing Fees:** Institutions may recommend the repeal of a general student fee when pledged revenue is no longer needed for debt service or when programs, services, or activities are discontinued, or an alternative funding source is identified.

**6.2.5. Five-Year Comprehensive Review:** Beginning in 2020-21 and every five years thereafter, the general student fee advisory board and the board of trustees shall comprehensively review all general student fees and determine whether each fee should be retained, transitioned to tuition or state appropriations, or repealed. The board of trustees shall submit a report of their comprehensive review including the justification for each fee determination to the Board.

**6.2.6. Sunset of Student Approved Facility Construction Fees:** Each general student fee established for constructing or renovating a student-approved facility under subsection 5.1.1 shall be repealed by the beginning of the academic year after bond obligations end. Fees created or adjusted for student-approved facility operation under 5.1.2 shall continue and be annually reviewed and adjusted according to the procedures set in this policy.

**6.3. Student Notice and Student Hearing:** Institutions proposing a new general student fee, revising an existing general student fee, or repealing a general student fee shall:

**6.3.1.** Notify currently enrolled students using a method(s) that the institution determines best reaches the majority of students (e.g. email, text, social media, student newspaper, digital signage, etc.) of the proposed change and the date, time, and location of a student hearing on the proposal.

**6.3.2.** Hold a student hearing which shall be attended by at least one student representative from the general student fee advisory board. The student representative shall provide a summary of student comments received during the hearing to the institution's board of trustees. The hearing may be held in conjunction with the institution's' truth-in-tuition hearing.

**6.4. Board of Trustees Oversight and Review:** The institution's board of trustees shall review requests to establish, revise, or repeal a general student fee and make a

recommendation. The board of trustees shall consider the general student fee advisory board's recommendations and accompanying documentation of demonstrated need, purpose, and budget plan and shall ensure the recommendations comply with the purposes stated in this policy, including that they are justifiable, reasonable, and benefit students broadly, as described herein. The board of trustees shall provide its recommendations to the Board for approval.

**6.5. Board of Higher Education Approval:** The Board shall consider a board of trustees' recommendation and, by majority vote in a public Board meeting, approve, modify, or deny the establishment, revision, continuance, or repeal of a general student fee.

**6.6. General Student Body Voting for General Student Fee Funded Facility**

**Construction and Operation:** Except as provided by subsection 6.6.4, institutions proposing new general student fees for student-approved facility construction or renovation projects shall conduct a vote of the student body.

**6.6.1.** Institutions shall notify currently enrolled students and provide them the following information regarding the purpose and amount of the proposed fees at least 30 days prior to a vote:

**6.6.1.1.** Details of the proposed facility and estimated costs for construction;

**6.6.1.2.** The projected amount of the general student fee needed to fund the debt service for the cost of facility construction or renovation;

**6.6.1.3.** The estimated length of debt service;

**6.6.1.4.** The estimated costs, over the life of the facility, for the operation of the facility including operation and maintenance and capital improvements;  
and

**6.6.1.5.** The projected amount of the general student fee to cover the cost of facility operation including operations and maintenance, capital improvements, and other necessary operating expenses.

**6.6.2.** A majority of voting students must vote in favor of the proposal to move forward to the board of trustees.

**6.6.3.** In establishing a general student fee for student-approved facility construction, the board of trustees shall consider the results of the student body vote including the percentage of the student body who voted in the election and the percentage of students who voted in favor of the proposal.

**6.6.4.** General student fees that are proposed to renovate or replace an existing student-approved facility do not require a vote of the student body if the project does not expand the facility's capacity and does not exceed \$10,000,000 for institutions with a research mission, \$6,000,000 for other degree-granting institutions with more than 10,000 student headcount and \$4,000,000 for other degree-granting institutions.

**R516-7 Audit:** In conjunction with the annual review of USHE institution tuition use required by Board Policy R510-4, the USHE auditor shall review the selected institutions' general student fees for compliance with this policy.

**R516-8 Option to Waive General Student Fees:** Institutions may waive general student fees in whole or in part for students without prior Board authorization.