

**UNIVERSITY:** The University of Arizona\_

***SPECIAL PROGRAM FEES FEE REQUEST***

**College/School:** College of Social and Behavioral Sciences\_

**Department:** School of Geography and Development

**Program:** B.S. Regional Development; B.S. Geography; B.A. Geography

**Is this a graduate or an undergraduate program fee?**

UNDERGRADUATE PROGRAM X

**Is this a new fee or an increase to an existing fee?**

NEW FEE X Amount requested: \$ 50 per semester (Fall and Spring only)

**BACKGROUND**

Program description. The School of Geography and Development (SGD) is a top-twenty ranked unit at the University of Arizona. The School's 22 faculty members cover all major aspects of contemporary geography. In addition to the BA degree in Geography, the BS degrees in Regional Development and Geography, and the MA and PhD degrees in Geography, the School offers Graduate Certificates in Water Policy and Geographic Information Systems.

The program's focus at the undergraduate level is to provide students with the critical thinking and technical geographical skills to become informed citizens and decision-makers in business, government, and the non-profit sectors. Geographic knowledge is key to this objective and such knowledge is central to understanding how Arizona works, and to improving the lives of its people and protecting its natural environments. A recent study by the US Department of Labor identified geotechnology to be one of the top three areas of high-technology labor force demand in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. We have a responsibility to see that students in our School stay current with rapidly developing spatial analysis technologies and field methods.

**DISCUSSION**

Information concerning the establishment of the fee. We are proposing a new \$50 program fee per semester for our upper division majors. The School has already implemented *course* fees on students enrolled in courses that employ our high-end spatial analysis computer labs, involve hands-on training with field equipment, or require field excursions to explore real world settings. Currently these fees can only be used to benefit the enrolled students. The program fee would enhance access for undergraduate majors to technology, equipment, additional field experiences, student-developed activities, and professional development opportunities. It would further provide additional funding for teaching staff, academic support staff, and support general unit operations. Specific student support includes:

- Additional lab monitors will be added to our 30-seat Spatial Analysis Laboratory (SAL) and 10-seat Geovisualization Lab and expanded hours for lab open times during the early evening hours and on weekends during the final weeks of the semester.
- Printing and file/data storage privileges to our majors.

- Acquisition and maintenance of equipment and tools for special class projects.
- Travel events such as: the annual meeting of the Association of American Geographers; transportation costs to attend the annual meeting of the Association of Pacific Coast Geographers; faculty-led field trips with the School's chapter of national geographic honor association, Gamma Theta Upsilon.
- Support for the student organization for majors, such as student-driven initiatives, assistance, and career planning activities.

Cost comparisons. The program fee being proposed here is relatively small, adding \$100/year during the student's junior and senior years, leaving UA's ranking among peers essentially unchanged. The School also sought comparison data on program and course fee structures from the Chair's Discussion List of the Association of American Geographers and found that technology and field based fees are quite common, ranging from \$3-\$1400 per course, student, or semester, however, the undergraduate programs did not have program fees that were separate from university tuition and general university fees. Even with fee, the university tuition and fees and the program fee would total only \$6,942, well below the median of our peers.

Affordability. Within the School we will set aside 17% of the fee for need based financial. We also have a number of scholarships already in place, ready to be delivered to students in the school. We hope to have one-half of our majors on scholarships based on need and merit.

Increased earnings potential of program graduates. Graduates who receive the most advanced training during their university years will be the most competitive for jobs in established and emerging geotechnology industries and will command the most competitive salaries. This is especially true for undergraduate students emerging from a program with critical thinking, analytic, *and* technology skills, and combined with experiential fieldwork.

Benefits to the university and state: It is crucial for this University to have a strong program that links its already demonstrated excellence in environmental science with the social sciences and with policy. Geography's focus on integrative analyses of people, places, and environment is needed more than ever in today's world. Whether one is studying how to predict the spread of a new species of disease-carrying mosquitoes in advance of climate change or predicting the routes that undocumented migrants will take in the face of stricter controls over the border, an understanding of spatial analysis is crucial and requires the theories, methods, and techniques taught by the School's faculty.

Student consultation and support. The proposal was presented to approximately 30 undergraduate majors, generating a number of questions and comments. Students liked the benefits outlined in this document, including: the ability to use the labs at any time, enhanced resources for field trips and the student organizations, and priority registration for program fee-paying students. Student complaints were largely focused on the ever increasing costs of education at the University.

Number of students impacted. The fee would apply to all undergraduate students majoring in either Geography or Regional Development beginning with the fall 2010 semester. This figure fluctuates from year to year, typically between 350 and 450 majors. If we take a relatively conservative figure of 350 majors, we anticipate the following returns for the 2010-11 academic year, including both program fees and historic enrollment by non-majors.

Financial impact of the request on revenue and expenditures: The **new program fee** will generate **\$35,000** in revenue next year.

Program fee (\$100/year) X 350 majors = \$35,000 in program fees.  
Financial aid = \$5,950; Administrative service fee = \$3,500.  
Program fee yield = \$25,550.

Programs fees will be used to provide part-time salary for academic support personnel to coordinate internships, field trips, student organization activities, meetings with professionals in the field, increased computer hardware and software for program students, student printing of projects, and some field equipment and supplies for student use.

Accountability. The School will prepare an annual report of program fee revenues and expenditures for review according to applicable ABOR and university procedures.

Alignment with ABOR policy. This program fee request is being made under the ABOR policy that allows additional amounts to be charged to students in undergraduate programs “that have demonstrably higher costs of delivery because of special equipment, technological, and/or key personnel expenses”. A maximum of four semesters will be charged to upper division students beginning their junior year, increasing the total additional cost of an SGD undergraduate degree by \$200.

## **RECOMMENDATION**

The School of Geography and Development recommends ABOR’s approval of a \$50/semester program fee, per upper division major students, effective for Fall 2010.