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Assembly California Legislature



TASHA BOERNER HORVATH
ASSEMBLYMEMBER, SEVENTY-SIXTH DISTRICT

COMMITTEES
AGING AND LONG-TERM CARE
COMMUNICATIONS AND
CONVEYANCE
JOINT LEGISLATIVE AUDIT
LOCAL GOVERNMENT
VETERANS AFFAIRS

June 13, 2019

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The Honorable Rudy Salas
Chair, Joint Legislative Audit Committee
Legislative Office Building
1020 N Street, Room 107
Sacramento, CA 95811

RE: State Audit Request of Student Fees at California State University Campuses

Dear Assembly Member Salas:

I respectfully request the Joint Legislative Audit Committee approve a state audit to examine the increase in the number of, and the amount of, campus-based student fees for select California State University campuses. The California State University (CSU) is the largest system of higher education in the country, with 23 campuses, 50,000 faculty and staff and 484,000 students.

College affordability is a significant concern for students and families in California. For the 2018-19 academic year, tuition of a full-time undergraduate student is \$5742. However, in addition to the cost of tuition there has been an increase in the last few years of campus-based fees such as "student success" fees, materials services & facilities fees, and student center fees, amongst others that can add thousands of dollars to the total cost of attendance.

The increase in the types of fees and in the amounts of these fees comes at a time when students are already trying to address increased housing and transportation costs and the high cost of living in our campus communities. Specifically, recent research indicates that 41% of CSU students reported food insecurity and 10.9% of students reported experiencing homelessness one or more times in the last 12 months.

Every penny counts for many of our students and so it is critical that the CSU provide additional transparency on campus-based student fees. In order to properly assess the impact of these fees on students, **I respectfully request an audit of student fees that have been adopted on the following campuses: CSU Chico, CSU San Luis Obispo, CSU San Diego, and CSU San Jose.**

In preparing this request, there were 6 categories of campus-based fees identified which are often imposed on students (this excludes "Student Association" fees which are subject to approval by the student body.) These fee categories include Health Facilities, Health Services, Instructionally Related Activities, Materials Services & Facilities, Student Success, and Student Center. The audit should provide

information on how often, and by how much, fees were increased over the last 5 years in each of these 6 available categories on each campus, and answer the following questions:

- What is the existing process to originate, approve and implement a student fee? Are there different processes for each type of fee, if so, how do they differ? Does the process differ from campus to campus?
- Do any of these campuses require a student vote to adopt the student fee? What if students vote to reject the fee? Would the fee still be implemented?
- How much do student fees add to the total cost of attendance at these specific campuses? Are there any fees that are optional for students? Are both mandatory and optional campus-based fees covered by financial aid?
- Once campus fees are collected, are the funds kept in separate accounts per fee or are these funds commingled with other accounts? How can a student find out how these funds are being spent on campus?
- What accountability measures, if any, are in place to ensure these funds are spent appropriately (i.e. as originally intended when the fee was adopted). Are any fees being spent improperly or spent on items that they were not originally intended for? Are these fees being spent on services that the CSU is currently required to provide to students?
- How are students paying for these campus based fees? How many are receiving financial aid support from the campus to pay for these fees, are using federal financial aid, and how many are paying out of pocket for these fees?

Furthermore, I would like the audit to provide system wide information related to student fees, including the following:

- Does the Board of Trustees have policies in place for the adoption of campus-based student fees or are these determined on a campus by campus basis?
- Identify the categories of fees and the specific purposes/items for which those fee-generated funds can be expended.

Thank you for your time and consideration of this request. For more information or any questions, please contact Rob Charles in my office 916-319-2076.

Sincerely,



TASHA BOERNER HORVATH
California State Assemblymember
76th Assembly District