



ONWARDS+UPWARDS

To the UWM Student Body:

Beginning November 6th, all UWM students registering for spring semester classes are going to be asked to vote on an important question that will impact future students: Would you support an additional student fee of no more than \$124 per semester to be phased in over five years starting as early as Fall 2019 in order to support the renovation and/or replacement of the existing Student Union?

For those that did not know, students passed a referendum in 2012 to support the building of a new Union. The Board of Regents, however, did not approve the project and UWM did not get a new Union (which could have been completed as early as 2018). Since that 2012 referendum, problems with the Union's electrical, plumbing, and heating/air-conditioning systems have continued. In a 2014 Facility Condition Report, engineers and architects found around \$34 million in urgent or emergency repairs needed by 2024 for the maintenance of these 60-year old systems. In response, the Student Association supported the creation of a "Capital Project Fee" in 2015, which today stands at \$75 per semester. This money is currently being set aside to go towards the Student Union Building Project and/or emergency repairs to keep the facility safe for the time being. It is likely that this fee will need to increase as additional repairs and improvements will be needed over the next ten years and beyond.

That is why we are once again back to a student referendum. UW System Policy indicates that student unions can only be funded through user fees and segregated fees and not taxpayer dollars. That either means dramatic increases to burgers in the Gasthaus or bowling prices in the Union Rec Center or increases to segregated fees to support improvements and renovations to the union. Unless someone knows a UWM alum who wishes to donate the projected \$129 million needed for a new Union, student fees will need to fund the project.

The circumstances are far from ideal. Nobody wants to see their segregated fee increase. The Student Association Executive Board understands that students at UWM struggle to afford our annual tuition and fees. That is why the UWM Student Association has been working diligently to ensure student participation and transparency in the Segregated Fee process. Additionally, student leaders from across the UW-System are working with administrators and the Board of Regents to ensure that segregated fees are standardized across the UW-System and to keep segregated fees low. Maintaining college affordability is essential to student success, especially for students at UWM.

The reality is the segregated fee to support the union is going to increase no matter the results of the referendum. The question then becomes: would you like the fee to increase at an unanticipated rate to pay for urgent repairs to simply maintain the current union for the next few decades, or stabilize and control the increase to build a



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brand new union. The Student Association Executive Board urges you to pick the latter and vote "yes" in the 2017 UWM Student Union Referendum.

By voting "yes", you will not see the Union Fee increase until the Union project is approved by the Board of Regents and is included into the state budget. The earliest the fee could increase is Fall 2019. Even then, the full potential \$124 increase will not be in effect until 2023. If the Board of Regents, the State Legislature and Governor do not approve the union project as part of the State Budget, this increase will not be implemented.

By voting "yes" you are approving a more sustainable and LEED certified student union. A student union that will feature more natural light and greater connection to the outdoors. A student union with improved dining options and enhanced collaborative spaces for student organizations and services. A student union with state-of-the-art meeting spaces and up-to-date technology. A student union that becomes a point of Panther Pride.

If the project is approved, a committee made up of students and campus staff will work with architects to design the building. Student input will be a major component of the design process through surveys, focus groups, and student info sessions. This is student's money, so student input will be essential throughout the implementation process.

The Student Association Executive Board encourages students to check out <http://uwm.edu/yourunion/> for more information about the Student Union Project and to provide your feedback. If you have a smart phone, download the app Aurasma and connect to "Your Union" to watch videos about improvements needed in the Union and for more info about the history of the UWM student union.

Thank-you for your consideration and the Student Association Executive Board hopes you are informed to make an educated decision when you vote in the UWM Student Union Referendum.

Sincerely,

The UWM Student Association Executive Board