Panther Union Reinvestment (PUR) Project Resolution

WHEREAS, the students are given the primary responsibility and right to manage and regulate their fees in accordance to state statute 36.09(5) (Artifact III).

WHEREAS, the primary responsibility means that students have the obligation and authority to initiate policies concerning student life, services, and interests, and to review existing and proposed policies in these areas before they are amended or adopted by the other constituencies of the university. Where approval of such policies rests with the faculty or administration, the basis for changing or denying the student recommendations shall be substantial and shall be communicated to the recommending student agency in a timely manner (Artifact IV).

WHEREAS, students should be given an opportunity to review and offer advice upon the budget of each program and activity that is funded primarily with non-allocable segregated university fees (SUF) (Artifact I).

WHEREAS, the University of Wisconsin – Milwaukee is an access institution and any segregated fee increases should be examined carefully with extensive deliberation.

WHEREAS, “80 percent of working professionals with student loan debt said it is a source of ‘significant’ or ‘very significant’ stress” (CNBC – Dickler).

WHEREAS, “a 2013 study published in Anxiety, Coping and Stress, found that ‘those with greater financial strain perceived more stress, had more symptoms of depression, anxiety, and ill-health.’ And significant or growing debt, can be a major cause of overall financial stress” (The Atlantic – White).

WHEREAS, the Institute of Education Sciences (ed.gov) reported that, “Results indicate, among other findings, that financial stress contributes to an increased likelihood of discontinuing college” (ed.gov).

WHEREAS, “Northwestern University published a 2013 study, which found that higher levels of relative debt—that’s relative to household assets—were particularly problematic, causing subjects to report higher levels of stress, depression, and poorer self-reported general health. Feelings of significant indebtedness also raised diastolic blood pressure, which can increase the risk of hypertension and stroke” (The Atlantic – White).
WHEREAS, the Student Union segregated fee and/or other capital projects should be reduced to mitigate and/or lessen the burden on students that the new Panther Union Reinvestment (PUR) Project fee would create.

WHEREAS, $75/semester fee generates $3.028 million dollars annually, which would generate approximately $60 million dollars over a 20-year period.

WHEREAS, any proposed major remodeling or major new construction project as defined by section 20.924(1) (a) Wisconsin Statutes that will increase the non-allocable portion of the segregated university fee (SUF) on any campus shall be reviewed by the Chancellor with appropriate student representation (Artifact II).

WHEREAS, a referendum in 2018 to establish an increased fee, from $75 to $199, to build a new union was denied by the student body. This referendum lost with a support of only 35% of the student body (18,460 votes).

WHEREAS, the University of Wisconsin–Milwaukee administration have agreed to explore fundable ideas for the reinvestment project.

WHEREAS, the Student Association Senate passed legislation (SB1819-022) that no longer provided support for the “Student Union Capital Project” fee.

WHEREAS, a reason for not trying to increase operating revenue, by charging Restaurant Operations a greater amount to use the Union space, is that Restaurant Operations is operating primarily at a deficit (Artifact XII). Moreover, the deficit is being subsidized by the residential student fees (meal plans).

WHEREAS, the University of Wisconsin–Milwaukee is continually receiving gifts (Artifact VII & VIII) and pursuing grants (Artifact VI) over hundreds of millions of dollars that could be used to pay for a new or improved student union (Artifact V).

WHEREAS, Administration and SFC have advised on the stipulations and legislation.

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED; the Student Association adopts the Panther Union Reinvestment (PUR) capital project fee, with the expectation that all reductions in other segregated fees and stipulations to the capital project fee will be met.

THEREFORE, BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED; in an effort to reduce the debt on students, starting in fiscal year 2021 (FY21), the Student Association requests that the Union segregated fee shall be reduced by $10/semester in FY21, $10/semester in FY22, and $10/semester in FY23. In total, the Union segregated fee would be lowered by $30/semester over a 3-year span. While cuts are never easy, the Student Association represents the students of the University of Wisconsin—Milwaukee, which means the continued growing financial, emotional, and health crises facing college students must be considered paramount in any decision to increase segregated fees (Artifact XI).

THEREFORE, BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED; the stipulations that must be met for the Panther Union Reinvestment (PUR) project to receive support from the student body includes:
The PUR Project fee shall begin in fiscal year 2020 (FY20) at a rate of $75/semester.

The PUR project fee shall never exceed $75/semester.

The PUR project leaders shall give an update on progress of the project to the entire Student Association Senate annually in the Fall.

If bonding is received from the state, the PUR Project fee may not continue for more than 20 fiscal years past the bonds issuing year.

The PUR Project fee shall only provide 94% of the total project cost. Union Operating revenue and donations/gifts/grants shall cover the other 6% which is approximately $4 million dollars (Artifact X).

Changes to these stipulations must abide by the policy set forth in Regent Document [30-5], and Regent Document [30-3], where the primary responsibility of SFC is to review amendments to the fee stipulations. Furthermore “the basis for changing or denying the students recommendation shall be substantial.”

Any PUR Project committee and/or Union project committee must have, at a minimum, 33% student representation.

Any increases to the Union segregated fee following FY23 and until the PUR Project capital fee ends shall be capped at 0.5%.

**THEREFORE, BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED:** the Student Association suggests that increasing the Union operating revenue be an important piece in the reconstruction and/or renovation process.

**THEREFORE, BE IT FINALLY RESOLVED:** this resolution will be forwarded to the Director of the University of Wisconsin – Milwaukee Student Union, the office of Vice Chancellor of Student Affairs, the office of the Chancellor, the UW Board of Regents, and the impacted University of Wisconsin – Milwaukee students.

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Alyssa Molinski
Student Association President