



SOUTHERN OREGON UNIVERSITY

TUITION ADVISORY COUNCIL

The Tuition Advisory Council (TAC) is Southern Oregon University's official advisory group charged with reviewing and recommending tuition and fee proposals each year, prior to their submission to the President and Board of Trustees (HB 4141, § 2(1))¹. Established after the passing of [SB242](#) which required Universities to obtain student input in tuition and enrollment fees, the goal of the Tuition Advisory Council (TAC) is to provide a shared governance opportunity for students on campus to become familiar with university finances. Ultimately the council strives to create an environment where students, faculty and administrators can provide meaningful feedback prior to the University formally submitting proposed tuition rates to the Board of Trustees and then to the Higher Education Coordinating Commission (HECC).

Effective fall 2018, TAC will fill the formal advisory body role required by House Bill 4141, and will further be charged to carry out all relevant parts of that bill.

TAC charge

Specifically, the President charges TAC with advising on all matters that pertain to the cost of attendance at the University, including undergraduate and graduate tuition, mandatory fees, non-mandatory fees (such as housing costs and non-instruction related course fees), and the structure of tuition (including, for example, differential tuition levels or comprehensive graduate program rates). In addition, TAC helps to promote communication and engagement about tuition with the students of the University in a manner encouraged by the shared governance philosophy respected at SOU.

TAC membership

TAC membership consists of the required members defined in HB 4141. Additional voting members may be added upon agreement by required members of the TAC. Membership may vary slightly depending on the particular tuition and fee questions that are likely to be under consideration in any given year (HB 4141, § 2(2)(a)).

The TAC shall be comprised of:

- Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs (Chair)
- A group of at least four students that must have the following characteristics:
 - At least two students representing the recognized student government (ASSOU)²
 - At least two students from historically underserved student populations³
- Two faculty members
- One additional administrator

¹ Per HB 4141, starting in FY19, TAC will be advisory to the President who will then recommend tuition and enrollment fee rates to the Board of Trustees.

² Ideally, ASSOU provides nominations to TAC by June 15 or at the latest by September 21.

³ SOU uses the HECC definition from the Student Success and Completion Model (SSCM) to "historically underserved students" as those students who come from one or more of these groups:

- Underrepresented minority students
- Low income students (Pell Grant recipient)
- Veteran students
- Rural students

Other members of the University community who may participate and advise the TAC include:

- Vice President for Finance and Administration
- AVP of Budget and Planning (or their designee)
- Vice President for Enrollment Management and Student Affairs (or designee)
- Director of Institutional Research
- Director of Financial Aid
- A representative from the classified staff
- University Registrar
- Academic Division Director

TAC is also supported by the university communications offices and provided with appropriate platforms for widespread dissemination of tuition and fee-related information.

TAC timeline

TAC meetings normally begin in October and run until a month before the SOU Board of Trustees meets to consider tuition. Work may be interrupted for several weeks in December and January due to fall term exams and the holiday break. The first few meetings are usually dedicated to providing TAC members with critical information and training necessary for them to make informed recommendations. This information typically includes current and historical SOU budget information, projected cost increases, sensitivity analysis on tuition increases, historical and comparative tuition and fee rates, enrollment trends and enrollment planning parameters.

Starting fall 2018, training offered will also include mechanisms by which moneys are appropriated by the Legislative Assembly to the Higher Education Coordinating Commission (HECC) for allocation to public universities; and training on historical data regarding the relationship between the amount of resident tuition and mandatory enrollment fees charged by the SOU and the amount of state appropriations that the HECC allocates to the SOU (HB 4141, § 2(3)).

Beginning in January of each year, TAC meets regularly in order to review and discuss specific tuition and fee proposals. The meeting schedule, as well as anticipated agenda topics, are posted on the University's tuition advisory council website ([TAC website](#)). This website also provides information regarding the SOU budget, tuition, and the documents reviewed in TAC meetings (HB 4141, § 2(7)). TAC meetings are open meetings and non-advisory group members are welcome to engage in the discussion, as appropriate. High-level notes (e.g., record of topics discussed, direction given to groups) are posted on the website following each meeting.

In January, TAC (often in collaboration with the student government) organizes a public student forum to share information related to the University's budget situation and to solicit feedback and ideas from students. This forum is important as it provides input into the tuition-setting process, per SOU policy, before TAC develops its final recommendations. The President generally hosts a second forum for students after TAC has developed its recommendations in order to receive additional feedback.

TAC recommendations

TAC is not a decision-making body, but rather an advisory group to the President. For this reason, the group does not operate through formal voting. Instead, the group uses a variety of processes, including open dialogue and straw polls, to discuss and analyze issues. TAC strives to come to consensus on recommendations where possible. In situations where TAC cannot come to consensus on a particular recommendation, care is taken to provide all opinions and feedback to the President. This is done via a written memo that is drafted by the council chair or their designee(s) and circulated to the entire advisory group for review and editing before it is submitted to the President (HB 4141, § 2(6)(b)).

The goals of that memo are:

1. To provide the President with recommendations related to proposed tuition and fee increases, and
2. If there is not consensus on particular issues, to make sure that the President is provided the full range of opinions and concerns raised by members of the advisory group.

Members of TAC may also attach a minority opinion memo to the final TAC recommendation memo. TAC generally needs to provide recommendations to the President 3-4 weeks in advance of the date upon which the Board plans to consider tuition.

In the event that the TAC intends to recommend that tuition and mandatory enrollment fees be increased by more than five percent, the TAC will document its consideration of the impact of its recommendation on SOU's mission and its students, with particular emphasis on the impact to historically underserved students. In addition, the TAC shall document its consideration of alternative scenarios that involve smaller increases to tuition and mandatory enrollment fees.

As noted above, once TAC submits its recommendations to the President, the President typically holds a second forum to discuss the proposal with students. After this forum, the President will post information online regarding the tuition rate increases that they intend to submit to the SOU Board of Trustees. Per SOU Policy, the President also establishes a process to collect feedback from students, faculty, and staff on the proposed increases.