

FUTURE ACTION ITEM #5

WSU Pullman, Proposed Chinook Student Center Mandatory Student Fee Rate Change (Leslie Brunelli/Dave Cillay/Romando Nash/Sean Greene)

TO ALL MEMBERS OF THE BOARD OF REGENTS

SUBJECT: WSU Pullman, Proposed Chinook Student Center Mandatory Student Fee Rate Change

PROPOSED: That the Board of Regents authorize a rate change for the Chinook Student Center mandatory student fee effective academic year 2025-2026.

SUBMITTED BY: Leslie Brunelli, Executive Vice President, Finance and Administration/CFO
Dave Cillay, WSU Pullman Chancellor

SUPPORTING INFORMATION: The Chinook fee was established in 2017 after being approved by undergraduate students through a student referendum in 2015. To create a pathway for future fee increases to address inflation and other rising costs, a referendum was held in March 2024. The 2024 referendum was successful, with 88.8% of students voting in favor of the proposal. As outlined in the language of the referendum, students now have the option to increase the fee by no more than 5% annually, upon the recommendation of the University Recreation Advisory Group to the ASWSU Senate, and with approval by a two-thirds vote of the ASWSU Senate.

The University Recreation Advisory Board comprises 16 members, including 11 students (GPSA executive officer, ASWSU executive officer, first-year student, graduate student, and 7 students-at-large) and 5 representatives from non-student stakeholders (Academic Affairs, Student Affairs, Alumni, President's Office, and Finance & Administration). Following the referendum, the ASWSU Senate voted to approve the 5% fee increase, with 15 members in favor and 1 abstaining.

Please see the table below for the current and proposed change effective academic year 2025-2026.

Rate	Current	Proposed	Change	% Change
Chinook (Undergraduate Only)	\$206	\$216	\$10	4.9%

The Chinook fee has not kept pace with inflation since its opening in 2017. Fees remained static from academic year 2017-2018, when the building opened, until academic year 2023-2024, when a 5% increase was approved through a student referendum. These minimal increases have not been sufficient to cover rising costs, particularly in salaries, wages, and goods and services. Additionally, a 20% decline in enrollment post-COVID has reduced Chinook fee collections by over \$600,000 annually.

To minimize fee increases, University Recreation has reduced operating expenses at the Chinook by over \$200,000 annually. This has been achieved through strategies such as summer closures, reduced staffing, and shorter academic hours. However, if the fee is not increased, further service reductions will be inevitable. This includes reducing the Chinook's building hours and deferring critical maintenance and equipment replacement, which would negatively impact the student experience and could compromise safety standards.

An increase in the mandatory Chinook student fee is essential to cover the \$1.92 million annual bond payment and maintain the facility's operations at standard levels, including hours of operation, maintenance, and custodial support. Despite the fee increase, the Chinook will continue to face significant budgetary challenges due to the ongoing inflationary impact on operational costs and maintenance needs. Prioritization will still be required for equipment replacement and building maintenance as the facility ages.

Since repairs and equipment replacement are funded by reserves, it is critical that the Chinook budget includes a yearly transfer to reserves to support both current and future projects.

Please find additional supporting documentation here:
<https://budget.wsu.edu/documents/2024/12/chinook.pdf>