

INTRODUCTION

This survey was sponsored by the Office of Union and Student Activities. The focus was to gather student feedback on the allocation, use, and amount of the student activity fee. This fee is charged to students each semester and distributed by the University Park Allocation Committee (UPAC) to support and improve student services and cocurricular opportunities for students. This survey, conducted by Student Affairs Research and Assessment, was administered by phone and email/web to full-time, degree-seeking, graduate and undergraduate students at University Park. A similar survey was conducted in 2004.

In total, 1,162 students completed the survey for a 29% response rate. By phone, 336 participated, and 826 completed the survey on the web. Of the respondents, 55% were female; 75% were White domestic students, 16% were domestic Students of Color, and 7% were international students (2% were of unknown race); 47% were 18 to 20 years old; and 65% lived off campus. The confidence interval for the data is $\pm 2.8\%$. For additional information about Penn State Pulse, please visit: <http://studentaffairs.psu.edu/assessment/pulse>.

FINDINGS

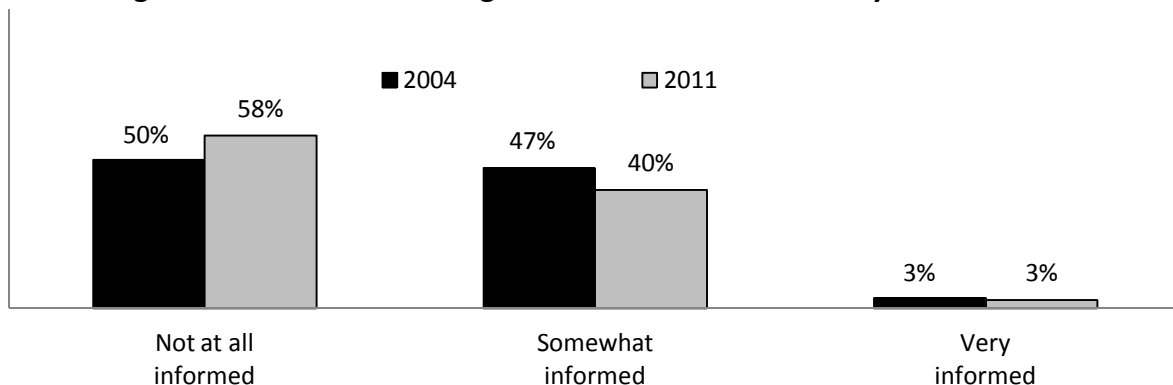
Awareness of the Student Activity Fee

Students were asked a series of questions to gauge their awareness of the student activity fee. In 2011, 58% indicated that they were not at all informed about the way in which the student activity fee was being used (Figure 1).

- 60% were not aware that only students are members of the University Park Allocation Committee (UPAC), which distributes the student activity fee.
- 70% were not aware that individual students, faculty, and staff, as well as student organizations, are eligible for funding from UPAC.

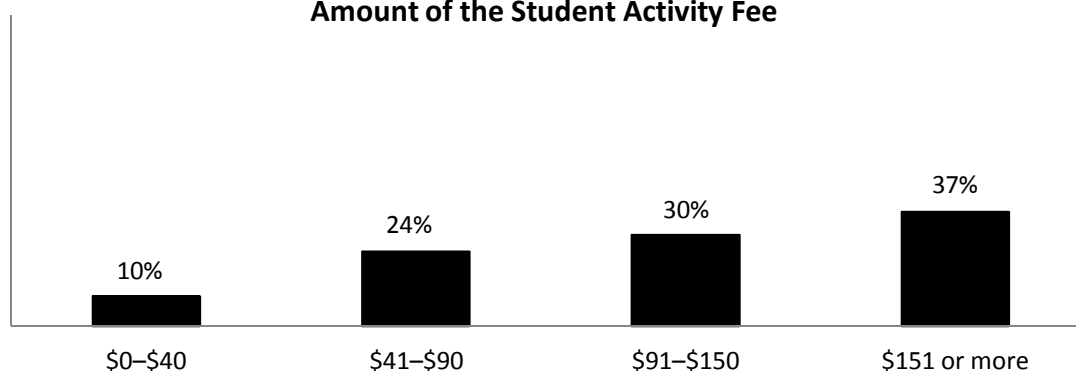
The focus of this survey was to gather feedback on the allocation, use, and amount of the student activity fee.

Figure 1. Students' Knowledge of How the Student Activity Fee is Used



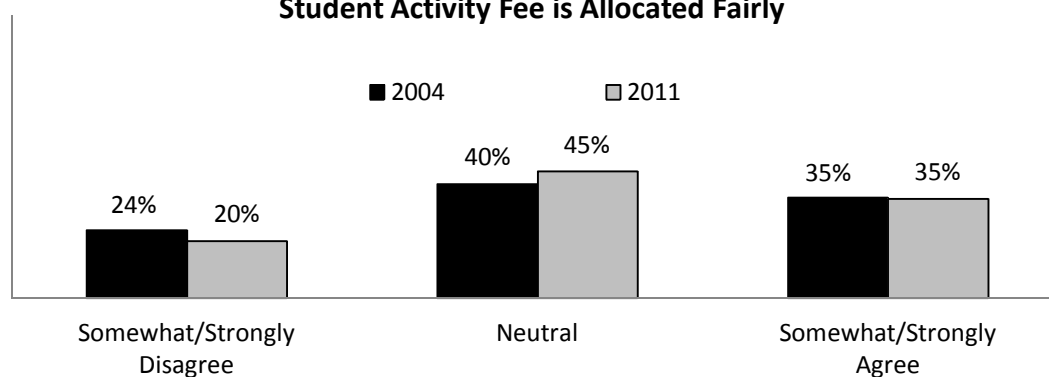
As in 2004, more than half of students overestimated the amount of the student activity fee, which was \$82 per semester for University Park students registered for nine or more credits in 2011–12. Specifically, 68% thought that it was more than \$82 and 28% thought it was less. Only 3% knew (or guessed) the correct amount. Aggregating the responses, 30% of students thought the fee was \$91–150, and 37% thought it was \$151 or more (Figure 2).

Figure 2. Students' Perceptions of the Amount of the Student Activity Fee



Thirty-five percent of students agreed that the student activity fee is currently allocated fairly and 20% disagreed. These proportions are similar to those found in 2004 (Figure 3).

Figure 3. Students' Belief that the Student Activity Fee is Allocated Fairly



Funding Specific Programs and Events

Students were asked to indicate the extent to which they agreed that the student activity fee should be used to provide funding for a variety of activities (Table 1).

- Students expressed the strongest support (81%) for using the activity fee to fund discounted passes for on-campus fitness facilities.
- Over two-thirds of students agreed with using the activity fee to support discounted Bryce Jordan Center (BJC) event tickets, student club and organization programs and operations, large outdoor concert events, and discounted student tickets for the performing arts.
- Graduate students were significantly more likely than undergraduates to support discounted tickets for the performing arts and expenses for travel to conferences, but less likely to support leadership and service learning activities, discounted Bryce Jordan Center event tickets, LateNight programs, and large outdoor concert events.
- First-year and sophomore students were significantly more likely to support student activity fees being used for student government associations than juniors and seniors.
- Women expressed significantly greater support than men for using the student activity fee to provide funding for all of the listed activities except for intramural sports and student travel, where there was no significant difference by gender.

Table 1. Students' Support for Using the Student Activity Fee to Fund Specific Programs and Events

Events or programs	Percent who somewhat or strongly agree	
	2004	2011
Discounted passes for on-campus fitness facilities	65.8%	81.2%
Discounted student tickets for BJC events	68.4%	77.2%
Student club and organization programs and operations	*	70.1%
Large outdoor concert events	*	68.5%
Discounted student tickets for the performing arts	74.5%	68.1%
LateNight-Penn State programs	79.6%	62.3%
Intramural sports	63.1%	60.5%
Leadership and service learning activities	*	60.5%
Student travel to conferences and competitions	66.4%	53.4%
Student government associations	*	47.9%

* Not asked in 2004.

Criteria for Making UPAC Funding Decisions

Students were asked about the importance of several factors in determining student activity fee allocations (Table 2).

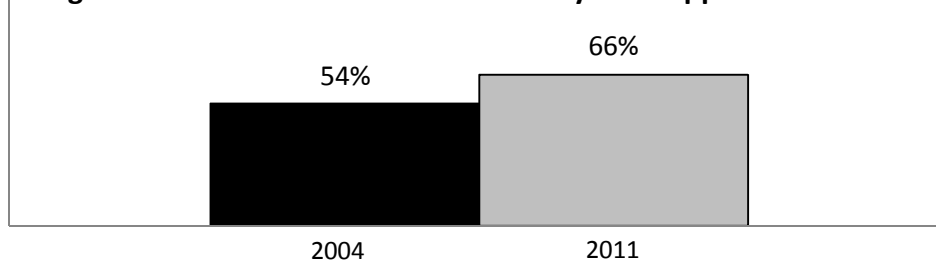
- Overall, students most frequently indicated that a program's ability to create a sense of community (81%), its educational value (75%), and its cost compared to the number of students who attend (74%) were important.
- Women and Students of Color were more likely to believe a program's ability to create a sense of community and to increase multicultural awareness were important criteria for allocation than their counterparts.
- Undergraduate students were significantly more likely to believe a program's ability to create a sense of community, its entertainment value, and its cost compared to attendance were important in funding decisions than were graduate students.

Table 2. Importance of Various Criteria in Activity Fee Allocation Decisions

Criteria	Percent who indicated somewhat or very important	
	2004	2011
Ability to create a sense of community	78.5%	80.7%
Educational value	76.5%	74.7%
Cost compared to attendance	71.6%	73.8%
Entertainment value	72.6%	68.4%
Ability to increase multicultural awareness	60.6%	53.3%

Students Benefiting from the Activity Fee

More than three-quarters (77%) of students indicated that they belonged to a student club or organization. Nearly half (48%) indicated that they personally, or an organization that they had belonged to, had applied for activity fee funding through UPAC. Nearly two-thirds (66%) of students indicated that they had attended campus events during the fall 2011 semester that were supported by the activity fee (e.g., Homecoming, LateNight). This is a substantial increase over 2004 (Figure 4).

Figure 4. Students who Attended Activity Fee-Supported Events

Support for an Increase in the Student Activity Fee

Students were asked whether they would support an increase in the student activity fee greater than \$1 per semester in order to fund more student activities or increase the support of current activities.

- More than half (59%) indicated that they would support raising the activity fee by more than \$1 next year (Figure 5).
- Among those who supported an increase, the majority (57%) supported an increase of at least \$5 (Figure 6).

Figure 5. Support for Increasing the Student Activity Fee by More Than \$1

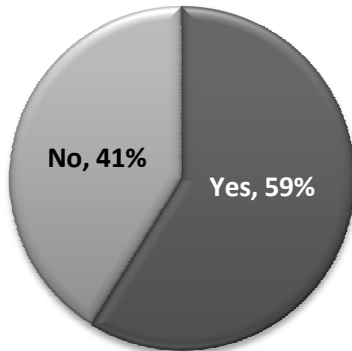


Figure 6. Amount of Fee Increase Supported by those Willing to Pay More to Increase Support of Activities

