

REFERENDUM SUBMISSION TO ASUCR FOR THE 2022 GENERAL ELECTION

REFERENDUM TITLE:

STUDENT FEE INCREASE NEEDED TO SUPPORT THE CONTINUATION OF AN NCAA DIVISION I ATHLETICS PROGRAM AT UCR AND ENSURE EQUITY WITH OTHER UC CAMPUSES

I. INTRODUCTION

UC Riverside Athletics is a 17-sport, NCAA Division I athletics program competing in the Big West Conference and proudly representing the University of California, Riverside. Throughout the course of the past two years, Athletics (*like many Division I programs around the nation*) has faced significant financial challenges, many the result of the financial impact of COVID-19. In August of 2020, UCR's Budget Advisory Committee (BAC) suggested the possible elimination of Athletics as part of an overall cost-savings plan for the University. Understanding what an Intercollegiate Athletics program means for the student experience and the impact it has on students, alumni and the community, Athletics worked diligently alongside Campus and student leaders, with the Athletics Working Group (AWG), and engaged with key members in the community, donors, alumni and fans; rallying massive support and devising a plan for Athletics to go forward.

In May of 2021, the Chancellor announced UCR Athletics would go forward and remain intact as a 17-sport, NCAA Division I Athletics program competing in the Big West Conference. As part of the agreement to move forward, UCR Athletics has created a new plan to ensure the long-term viability and sustainability of the program. This plan is anchored by the creation of a long-term financial sustainability model, an organizational restructure, increasing externally-generated revenue and philanthropic support, reducing expenses, merging with the Student Affairs Division, deeper engagement with Campus and the community, and creating a new operational efficiency model.

One of the keys to ensuring the program's long-term financial sustainability is the need to increase the student fee, which currently sits at \$35 per quarter (*excluding Summer quarter*) and has not increased in 21 years (*when the program transitioned from Division II to Division I*). Without this referendum increase passing, UCR's Division I Athletics Program may be eliminated altogether due to lack of funding.

II. HISTORY OF UCR ATHLETICS

UCR Athletics is a 17-sport, NCAA Division I program competing in the 11-member Big West Conference. UCR Athletics has only been competing at the Division I level for 21 years, but it has a long and storied history that dates back to the university's founding in 1954. Since that time, many of UCR's athletic teams and student-athletes have achieved high levels of success academically as well as competitively, with numerous individual and

conference championships. Since 2016, the program has reached new heights, including several teams winning Conference championships (*Women's Basketball, Women's Golf, Men's Golf, Men's Soccer*) and multiple individuals winning individual titles (*Men's and Women's Track and Field*). The past two years, the excitement and momentum surging around the program has been led by the success of Men's Basketball, which had its best season ever in 2020-21 thanks to the leadership of first-year head coach, Mike Magpayo (*who is the first Asian-American head coach in NCAA history to lead a Division I Men's Basketball team*).

In 2001, UCR made the leap from Division II to Division I, joining the Big West Conference (BWC) and since that time UCR Athletics has produced 28 Division I All-Americans and a combined total of 344 All-Big West First Team honorees; has sent 36 teams or individuals to NCAA postseason events while capturing a combined 67 Big West regular season and tournament/championship team and individual titles.

In addition, UCR Athletics has produced Olympians (*e.g., Brenda Martinez – Track and Field 800m*), individual NCAA Champions (*e.g., Vesta Bell, Track and Field*), Major League Baseball players (*e.g., Joe Kelly – Los Angeles Dodgers/World Series Champion, Troy Percival – Angels/World Series Champion*), Major League Soccer players (*e.g., Aaron Long/Red Bulls and US Men's National Team Captain, and Daniel Aguirre/LA Galaxy*), PGA/LPGA Golf professionals (*e.g., Brendan Steele/PGA and Savannah Vilaubi/LPGA*), and numerous professional athletes playing internationally in Women's Soccer and Men's and Women's Basketball.

Academically, more than 1,000 student-athletes have been named to the Big West Conference Commissioner's Academic Honor Roll. And, the UCR Athletics Hall of Fame currently recognizes 75 individuals and one team, the 1977 national championship baseball team who brought national recognition and honor to the University and the Department.

III. CURRENT FORM OF FUNDING

UC Riverside's Athletics program is currently funded by a combination of direct institutional support, student fees and externally generated revenue including ticket sales, philanthropic support and NCAA/Big West Conference distributions.

IV. WHEN/WHERE/HOW THE FUNDING WILL BE UTILIZED (NEW SERVICES PROVIDED)

If approved, this referendum will increase the current fee of \$35 per quarter (Fall, Winter, Spring) per undergraduate student by \$90 for a total of \$125 per quarter per undergraduate student beginning in the Fall of 2022. (*Note: No fee will be assessed during the Summer quarter*).

This fee level of this referendum is not subjected to annual inflationary adjustments.

Of the \$90 fee increase collected from undergraduate students, 25% (or \$22.50 per quarter) will go directly to undergraduate student financial aid through the Return to Aid program. The rest of the funding will be utilized to ensure student success and enhance the student experience by funding the sustainment, improvement, and enhancement of UC Riverside's NCAA Division I Athletics program competing in the 11-member Big West Conference which includes five UC's (*Riverside, Davis, Santa Barbara, Irvine, San Diego*), five Cal State Universities (*Long Beach, Fullerton, Cal Poly San Luis Obispo, Bakersfield, Northridge/CSUN*), and Hawaii.

Funding secured through the approval of this referendum would:

1. Provide for the long-term financial sustainability and competitive viability of UC Riverside's NCAA Division I Athletics program.
2. Ensure that UCR students would have the same access to and the same benefits of a Division I Athletics program (e.g., increased national media recognition – ESPN, USA Today, CBS This Morning, Sports Illustrated, etc.) access to Athletics events, increase in applications, wider and broader campus appeal, school pride, etc.) that opportunities as their peers on six other campuses in University of California system with Division I Athletics programs (*i.e., Berkeley, UCLA, Irvine, Davis, Santa Barbara, and San Diego*).
3. Ensure UCR student-athletes have the appropriate level of resources and support (*e.g., health and safety needs, staff support, facilities, etc.*) so that the quality of UC Riverside's Athletics program is more closely aligned with its Big West Conference peer groups (*which includes four other UC campuses – Davis, Irvine, San Diego and Santa Barbara, five Cal State campuses – Long Beach, Fullerton, Northridge/CSUN, Bakersfield and Cal Poly San Luis Obispo, and Hawaii*). This will enable UCR Athletics to compete consistently and at the highest level both athletically and academically with its peers.
4. Keep UCR Athletics events free for UCR undergraduate students.
5. Bring back (and keep) the UCR student pep band and reinstate the UCR dance and cheer teams to make sure these organizations are always part of the UCR student experience and ensure opportunities for UCR student participation and engagement.
6. Protect the long-term success of the UCR Athletics and its support of women student-athletes through the creation of a "Women's Success through Sport Initiative." This program will promote mentorships, create coaching and professional development opportunities, and prepare women student-athletes for opportunities in the professional workforce through sport.
7. Assist with the Big West Conference-mandated production costs for school-based ESPN+ productions (*a minimum of 60 home UCR Athletics contests including all women's and men's basketball games*), which broadcasts UCR across the country enhancing the visibility of UCR and UCR Athletics.
8. Create more student-focused programming resulting in an enhanced UCR student experience through social/spirited special event opportunities around game day on campus (*e.g., tailgate, concert/performance and other festive activities celebrating our students*) and increased UCR pride through UCR Athletics.

9. Accommodate rising operational costs.

V. GOVERNANCE AND RESPONSIBILITY

In 2021, Athletics became part of the Student Affairs Division and Athletics is working in concert with Student Affairs. Financial oversight of the Athletics budget now resides with the CFAO for Student Affairs with the Director of Athletics working in lockstep with the CFAO to ensure the proper management of all of Athletics' financial resources.

Specific to the student fee referendum and increase, the CFAO for Student Affairs and the Director of Athletics along with key members of the Athletics Business Office will work directly with the President and leadership of ASUCR to provide full transparency in how the student fees will be implemented and managed.

VI. REFERENDUM PASSAGE (Required Language)

In compliance with UC and UCR policies, this referendum must meet the following criteria during elections to be approved by the student body:

1. At least 20% of the student body must vote on the issue.
2. A majority of the votes cast must vote in favor of the issue.

BALLOT LANGUAGE:

Specific Ballot Language: *Do you support a \$90 increase to the quarterly fee for a total of \$125 per undergraduate per quarter for the Fall, Winter and Spring quarters of each academic year, beginning in the Fall of 2022 (Note: Fee would not include the summer quarter) for the continuation of the current NCAA Division I Athletics program at UC Riverside?*

YES_____ **NO**_____

The current student fee to support UC Riverside's NCAA Division I Athletics program is \$35 per quarter (*fall, winter and spring quarters – no fee in summer quarter*) and has not increased in more than 20 years – since UCR Athletics transitioned to the Division I level in 2001 and began competing in the Big West Conference.

Without this referendum increase passing, UCR's Division I Athletics Program may be eliminated altogether due to lack of funding.

Passage of this referendum will ensure students at UCR have access to and are not deprived of the same opportunities as their UC peers at other nationally-renowned R1 (*Research 1*) institutions (*i.e., Berkeley, UCLA, Irvine, Davis, Santa Barbara, San Diego*), and the opportunities a Division I Athletics program brings for both students and student-athletes at UCR while encouraging and celebrating Highlander spirit. Also, it will ensure that as one of the nation's top 50 public research institutions ranked by *U.S. News and World Report*, UCR remains one of the 47 that sponsors NCAA Division I Athletics programs; a status that

provides UCR the opportunity to maintain an affiliation with the institutions UCR largely aligns with both in the UC system and nationally.

Support (i.e., Voting YES for this referendum) this referendum will ensure:

1. The long-term financial sustainability and competitive viability of UC Riverside's NCAA Division I Athletics program,
2. UCR students would have the same access to opportunities as their peers on other campuses in University of California system,
3. UCR student-athletes would have a level of support more in line with the 10 other schools in the Big West Conference,
4. UCR games would remain free for undergraduate students,
5. UCR student pep band, dance and cheer teams would remain intact,
6. Long-term success for the UCR Athletics and its support of women student-athletes through its "Women's Success Through Sport Initiative,
7. Consistent national exposure for UCR and UCR Athletics through a minimum 60 games produced for ESPN+ as part a Big West Conference mandate,
8. The creation of more student-focused programming resulting in an enhanced UCR student experience through social/university spirit special event opportunities centered on game days on campus, and,
9. UCR Athletics ability to accommodate rising operational costs.