

Generating revenue for a UNBC Green Fund

Green University Committee budgetary rationale and suggestions for Green fees
12 February 2009

Preamble:

At the November 28, 2008 meeting of the Green University Committee (GUC), President Jago requested that the GUC provide “input on rationale for an increase in the parking fee plus any other items to include (e.g. fee on disposable cups)” for the purpose of funding initiatives that will help green UNBC. On December 16, 2008 members of a GUC sub-committee met, discussed the budgetary rationale for Green fees, and created a discussion document. This was presented to GUC at the January 9, 2009 meeting. Feedback from that meeting and ongoing discussion contributed to this Green Fund report, which includes information about both mandatory and voluntary fees.

GUC sub-committee: Annie Booth, Balbinder Deo, Mark Thompson, Ken Wilkening

Need for a Green Fund

The GUC requires funds to:

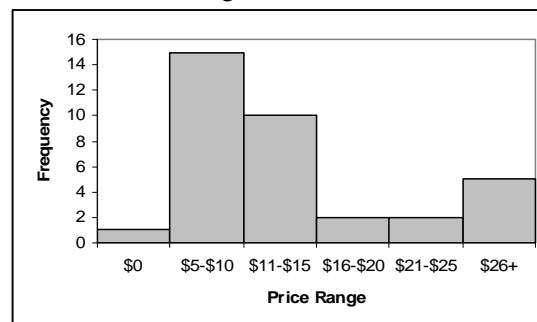
- Assist in achieving UNBC’s goals and objectives as identified in the GUC Green Strategy Discussion Paper (28 November 2008)
- Achieve the goals and objectives to make UNBC “Canada’s Green University”
- Hire a Green University Coordinator.

The recent Green Day saw 600 people vote on their green priorities. This event was intended to identify priorities for implementation. The top three priorities were:

1. Recycling & Composting
2. Transportation
3. Waste reduction.

There is support for Green fees on campus:

- A 2008 survey of 75 UNBC students ranked support for coordinating bus schedules with class times first, followed by an increase in parking fees.¹
- A survey of 35 students on ‘*An appropriate level of Student Green Fees*’ on 2009 Green Day yielded the following:



¹ Montgomery Staats, Robert D. Bell, Lesley-Ann Rolls, Dmitri L. Cody, Kyle T.J. Hillman. (2008). Advancing the “Green University” Initiative at UNBC: A social research study of student support and perceived effectiveness for the implementation of green initiatives at UNBC. UNBC, ENPL 419: Social Research Report.

How to Generate Revenue for the Green Fund

There are many possible ways to generate revenue for the Green Fund. Suggested sources are discussed below.

(1) Raise Parking Fees

Parking fees at UNBC have never been raised since the university opened in 1994. They stand at \$40/month if paying cash, or \$32.10 for a one-month permit.

Ranges of student parking rates at other BC universities are:

- SFU \$43-\$55/month
- UBC \$75-\$90/month
- UVic \$75-\$131/month
- Royal Roads University \$15-\$35/month (Hybrid/Smart car permit \$10/month)

Raising parking fees will help to:

- Generate consistent and substantial revenue for the Green Fund
- Encourage use of public transportation
- Reduce the amount of vehicle traffic flow to and from UNBC
- Help UNBC achieve its goals of reducing air pollution and greenhouse gas emissions.

In comparison, transit fees cost \$80/month without a bus pass, \$50/month using student bus tickets, and \$12/month through the student U-Pass. Undergraduate students voted for the U-Pass in September 2008 and graduate students joined in January 2009.

In order to maximize the environmental effects of raising parking fees, the following incentives/initiatives are also proposed:

- a. Designate reserved areas for car-pooling*
- b. Assist, promote, and coordinate car-pooling*
- c. Designate reserved areas for hybrid and electrical vehicle parking available at a lower cost*
- d. Offer faculty and staff U-Pass options*
- e. Encourage and support alternate modes of transportation including buses, bicycling, and walking*
- f. Lobby for more bike racks on busses and coordinated bus schedules, install more protected bike racks on campus, provide lockers & shower facilities for those who walk or bike, and offer green fitness promotions.*

It is expected that the proposed Green University Coordinator will work with facilities & employee groups to realize these opportunities.

(2) Green Fees

The long-term nature of the GU initiative would suggest that a student Green Fee is appropriate. Such a fee could incorporate the PGPIRG & U-Pass fees already in existence and include an additional amount to fund other priorities. Similar fees are in effect at universities across Canada and at most universities in the US. The implementation of such fees would require collaboration with NUGSS, NBCGSS, PGPIRG, and the VP Admin. It is recommended that the GUC provide a breakdown, summary and comparison of student fees, including environmental, sustainability, and/or Green fees from other university institutions with consideration of our unique identity as a small northern university.

In addition to a student “green fee”, dues from administration, staff and faculty could also be considered as a means of contributing to the same fund.

The above options require extensive consultation before implementation.

(3) Fees on disposable cups

Currently there is a small incentive of a 5-10¢ reduction for bringing your own cup, but no revenue generated. Even with this incentive, approximately 5000 disposable cups still end up in the trash each week. A small fee would generate revenue and increase the incentive for re-usable cups. This option requires background research on energy and materials costs and benefits before serious consideration.

Upside: Fees often force consideration of consumption behavior; a fee could, potentially divert 6% of UNBC’s waste (disposable cups represent this proportion of UNBC trash), and demonstrates UNBC’s leadership & commitment to waste reduction.

Downside: Coordination of the incentives will be a challenge. This will only reduce, not eliminate disposable cups entering the waste stream. Income will be variable.

(4) Savings from Energy Efficiency

Other universities (UBC, for example) have funded their sustainability operations/initiatives through cost savings achieved with increased energy efficiency/offsets. While UNBC is newer, opportunities exist for reducing the consumption of fuel & electricity on campus (especially in the Student Housing buildings). Directing at least a portion of savings to the GUC would require consultation with the VP Admin and likely a policy decision by the Board of Governors.

(5) Voluntary faculty & staff contributions

Faculty & staff can voluntarily contribute to a tax deductible Green Fund set-up through the Office of University Advancement. Anyone can donate to the Green University Fund. To date \$795 has been raised.

Upside: Provides a tax deductible option for the truly green and generous.

Downside: Income is variable.

Use and Oversight of the Green Fund

It is important to establish oversight of the Green Fund. The details of how to do this will be worked out by the GUC.

It is also important that funds from sectors with Green options be directed through a Green financial accounting system that would direct a proportional amount of revenue toward improving the sector from which it was generated; e.g. parking Green fees would be directed toward parking, transportation services and researching the process to understand the communities driving habits and transportation requirements.