

SUBJECT: Student fees at UT-San Antonio

COMMITTEE: Higher Education — favorable, without amendment

VOTE: 5 ayes — Rangel, Solis, Cuellar, Dunnam, E. Reyna
1 nay — Rabuck
2 absent — Bailey, Kamel

SENATE VOTE: On final passage, April 9 — 31-0

WITNESSES: For — Rob Killeen
Against — None
On — Samuel A. Kirpatrick, University of Texas at San Antonio

BACKGROUND : The University of Texas System Board of Regents may levy a fee of up to \$30 per semester and \$15 per summer term at the University of Texas at San Antonio (UTSA) for the sole purpose of financing, constructing, operating, maintaining, and improving a student union building for the campus. The fee may be levied only if approved by a majority vote of the student body.

DIGEST: SB 850 would set UTSA student union fees at \$20 to \$75 per semester or summer session, assessed in proportion to the number of credit hours for which a student registered. The bill would delete construction from the list of purposes for which the fee could be used.

The bill also would delete the requirement that the fee be levied if approved by majority vote of the student body. The board of regents could not increase the fee by more than 10 percent in any academic year without approval from a majority of students in an election held for that purpose and by a majority of the student government.

SB 850 would take immediate effect if finally approved by a two-thirds record vote of the membership in each house. The bill would apply to fees imposed in a term beginning after its effective date, but would specify that

the maximum amount of the fee per student for the 1997 fall semester would be \$44.

**SUPPORTERS
SAY:**

SB 850 would provide greater flexibility for the University of Texas at San Antonio to meet its changing needs. In 1996, UTSA dedicated its expanded student union, which more than tripled the space available for student programs and activities. Use of the new union has been heavy, and the current student union fee is insufficient to cover costs and growing student demand for programs. SB 850 would allow the school to respond to the demand and provide the highest quality of service to its student body.

Providing for proportional levying of the student union fee would allow students to pay for services relative to how much they use them. A student taking only one course would unlikely to spend much time on campus, for example, while one taking six courses would probably draw heavily on student union resources.

The bill would require approval by the student body and student government for any fee increase greater than 10 percent to ensure that students were not unduly burdened financially and had an opportunity to participate in the decisions governing their fee structure.

**OPPONENTS
SAY:**

SB 850 would be unfair to the students of UTSA, revoking their authority to approve fee increases levied upon them unless the increase was more than 10 percent. If the board of regents has a compelling case for increasing the fee, it should not have a problem making that case successfully to the student body. This bill would remove the necessity that there be a convincing need to raise the fee and allow the regents to raise it at will incrementally each year, without approval from students.

The regents should have planned ahead for the costs associated with the new student union. SB 850 would penalize UTSA students for a lack of administrative foresight.