

University of Washington, Seattle

Services & Activities Fee

Fiscal Year 2026 Budget Request



Unit Lead

Glenna Chang, Interim Director
glennac@uw.edu

Contributors

Katie Beth, Associate Director for Facilities & Operations
kbeth6@uw.edu

Marilyn Carruth, Director Wellness Shared Services
carruthm@uw.edu

Gregory Reinhardt, Associate Director for Programs & Assessment
greinuw@uw.edu

Cass Sanders-Curry, Assistant Director for Marketing & Staff Development
csc14@uw.edu

Budget Request Highlights

In this section, please list all line items for any changes in request amount greater than \$1000, along with a short description of each line item and the amount requested. For all other changes under \$1000, please list the total summed figures in a final "miscellaneous expenses" item at the bottom. Please ensure that all the SAF funded line items below and previous SAF allocation total add up to the requested amount. Our goal with this section is to provide an overview of the current financial state, along with any changes in SAF funding that are being requested this year.

Each unit's FY26 request may only represent a maximum increase of 6% or \$35,000 over the unit's allocation for FY25 (whichever is higher in context of the unit's FY25 allocation).

While we would love to fund everyone's full request, SAF is financially constrained by the Washington State Legislature. RCW 28B.15.069 limits the amount that the Services and Activities Fee (SAF) is allowed to increase each year. For FY26, the SAF amount can be increased by a maximum of 3.55%.

Our unit's request in FY22 was **\$3,922,145** and our award was **\$2,901,432**.

Our unit's request in FY23 was **\$3,778,015** and our award was **\$3,052,599**.

Our unit's request in FY24 was **\$3,296,807** and our award was **\$3,109,501**.

Our unit's request in FY25 was **\$3,358,261** and our award was **\$3,266,423**. Note that the FY25 request amount reflected a planned \$611,678 overall deficit.

Our request for FY26 is **\$3,445,436**, which represents a **5% increase (\$179,013)** from FY25's allocation.

Below the numbers reflect the difference in our FY25 planned budget and our FY26 request and planned budget (-\$524,503), which captures the significant changes made to bring the budget back into balance.

In this section, please break each increase into its own sections (e.g. wage & benefits changes, increases in current employee hours/FTE, funding new positions, etc.). Example sections have been provided (you may delete the example sections).

Wage & Benefits Increases – Classified & Professional Staff **\$195,032**

Both Classified and Professional staff salaries are projected to increase by 3% in FY26. The benefit load rates are projected to remain the same at 34.4% and 30.3% respectively.

Wage & Benefits Increases – Student & Temporary Staff **-\$127,519**

Even with the minimum wage increase projected at 4% in January 2026 we've been able to reduce our hourly employee wage spending. We have focused on hiring more Work Study students, who are paid 60% by the Work Study source (Federal or State), and only 40% by the department. We have also strategically optimized staffing levels based on more precise and reliable post-pandemic participation totals at both the Golf Range and Waterfront Activities center.

Revenue Increases	-\$610,037
--------------------------	-------------------

Recreation Membership prices increased in September 2024. The highest percent increase was to the faculty, staff, and alumni memberships at 10%. Membership offerings have also been expanded to allow members to sponsor an unlimited number of guests per visit, and to have an additional +1 membership assigned to their accounts. Students now have more opportunities to bring their friends and family to use the facility with them, and Recreation generates more revenue.

We have also raised some programming prices to keep up with mandatory wage increases, alongside an uptick in participation in public-facing offerings such as the Golf Range, Yoga Teacher Training and WAC Great Room rentals.

In addition to increasing some prices and access levels, the overall Rec Membership numbers continue to bounce back after both COVID and the IMA Pool and Locker Rooms closure reduced overall memberships significantly.

Operational Cost Increases	\$18,021
-----------------------------------	-----------------

Operational costs have only increased 1.6% from the FY25 planned budget to the FY26 planned budget.

Full Budget Overview & Justification

In this section, you will have the opportunity to explain your request in greater detail via the guiding question(s) below. You are encouraged to use graphs, charts, or other visual tools. Your goal for this section is to provide the SAF committee (and the public) with sufficient (and substantive) context and justification for the use of these funds.

- **How are expenditures distributed across the programs and/or services your unit offers? Please provide a general overview of how much spending is allocated to each category of expense, such as staffing, materials, etc., as is applicable.**

Overall, approximately 66% of Rec's expenses go toward salaries and wages (43% student/temp staff, 29% professional, 28% classified), 19% to benefits, and 15% to supplies and other operational expenses.

Each expenditure within the Recreation budget is supervised by either a program manager, or a member of the Executive Team who attends to that operation, wage, or revenue.

- **Please give a summary elaborating on how SAF Funding has been used to support students** *(Please refer to dollar amounts in this discussion when possible).*
 - a. In what ways has SAF funding been essential to supporting your unit's on-going services and role in the university? Please provide at least one specific example of a program/service.

To better understand UW Recreation's role in the larger university, we will highlight a collaboration with ASUW. UW Recreation participated in the 2024 UW Tri-Campus Wellness Week Report conducted by the ASUW Office of Student Health Relations. Key findings from the report include:

- UW Recreation was the most heavily utilized resource (38%); compared to Husky Health (31%), LiveWell (16%) and the Counseling Center (16%)
- 38% of UW students chose Recreation when asked "What do you think wellness programming, resources, and entities on-campus should prioritize?"

Furthermore, we know that UW Recreation served 28,824 (58% of student body) unique UW Seattle students in our facilities and through our programs in the 2023 – 2024 academic year. Based on the data presented, you can see many students at UW rely on UW Recreation as a key wellbeing resource. One specific way SAF funding allows us to support students is by prioritizing the IMA Building operations, which are open over 100 hours per week during the academic year. Based on our UW Recreation Survey (2024) data, we know participants engage in UW Recreation at the IMA in the following ways: "general use" of the IMA (58.5%), Fitness & Wellness programming (34.3%), and the IMA Pool (23.7%). SAF Funding supports the staff wages needed to

run these operations and programs, as well as the operating expenses for goods and supplies needed for them. Furthermore, SAF Funding supports custodial and maintenance needs, which keeps the IMA Building safe and accessible for these offerings to function.

- b. How have your unit's services and programming changed over time, and how have you adapted the use of SAF funding?

Every year we adjust offerings within our services and programming to meet the evolving needs of students. For example, in the last year we added five new Rec Clubs, purchased stand up paddle boards to diversify offerings at the Waterfront Activities Center, and programmed new Intramurals such as a water battleship tournament in our newly renovated IMA Pool. These are new ways of using SAF Funding without increasing the amount requested. Most years, we offset the cost of wage increases by increasing prices. Additionally, we can offset any financial burden placed on student participants with our Student Recreation Fund, which served 273 unique students with \$13,433.80 in awards in fiscal year 2024. We also adapt by seeking other sources of funding. For example, in the last year we added an InBody body composition scanner to our Fitness & Wellness program and an Everlast Adjustable Climbing Wall to our Climbing program. This year we are upgrading the entry gates in the IMA Building. All were added with Student Technology Fee grants.

- c. Are there programs/services that SAF has funded in the past that your unit no longer provides?

There are small services within our larger programs that we have sunset to rededicate funding to higher impact or broader reach offerings. For example, we implemented acupuncture in the fiscal year 2024. After seeing low demand for the service, we adjusted for fiscal year 2025 to dedicate those staffing hours toward traditional massage therapy services, which have generated consistently high demand for three years. Another example is combining our Tai Chi and Kung Fu Martial Arts classes. Tai Chi consistently had low participation numbers which led to canceled classes, but could survive when combined with another martial art.

Open roller skating and archery have been offered as free Friday Night Activities (FNA) for decades, with log rolling added more recently. The intention of FNA is to offer students alternative healthy activities on Friday nights. Going forward, archery will be offered as a Sports Skill class at a low cost to students instead of being included in the FNA programming. We can reduce the costs of FNA while maintaining archery availability for students.

- d. Are you currently using your unit's allocation for new programs or

services that were not originally requested as an item in your SAF budget request?

We aim to be good financial stewards by only adding new offerings that were included in our budget request, replacing an old offering with the new one, or offering a service that operates at-cost (program costs are offset by equal revenue). For example, we staffed our InBody body composition scanner by redirecting student hours that were already budgeted. We added five new Rec Clubs in fiscal year 2025, but they will not receive funding until their second year of operation in fiscal year 2026, and they can instead request start-up funding from our dedicated Peterson Endowment. Another example is our plan to launch new student-only themed lessons at the Golf Range during Spring Quarter 2025. By keeping the cost low for students to sign up for these one-time casual lessons we are able to offset staff costs through revenue generation.

- **What is the nature of your reserves/fund balances? For what purposes do you hold reserves? How were they accrued?** (Reserves/Fund balances are termed and considered differently in every unit. If you are unsure of what these terms mean or would like clarification on anything, please reach out and ask.)

Recreation carries three reserve budgets: Operations; Fields & Facilities; and Expansion. Each fund has its own history and accrual process dating back two decades.

Expansion account was funding from the 2003 IMA project. The projected budget was \$32,000,000, and when construction was complete there was nearly \$1,000,000 unused for the core program. Instead of smaller-scale investments on-site, the decision was made by University leadership to place the remaining funds in the Expansion reserve account for Recreation to use for ongoing capital needs. Up until a few years ago, the University allowed interest to be drawn on reserve accounts, allowing Recreation to maintain the fund. A policy change has resulted in only a draw-down approach to the use of reserve funds, and this fund will decrease with each successive year of utilization for capital improvements.

The Fields account came from land swaps in the 1990's and 2000's. In order to expand its footprint, ICA offered Rec both land (e.g., Husky Ballpark for Rec Field 1) and fund transfers. The resulting Fields account is used for small- and large-scale departmental capital needs.

The Operations account was created to receive payments to Recreation from ICA for facility uses that were beyond annual rental agreements and for years when operating income when Recreation experienced revenue surplus. This was not a common

occurrence but when it did take place the funds were placed into an account that also grew from interest income.

We maintain reserves for anticipated minor and major capital project expenses that are required to keep our facilities safe and accessible for users. For example, all the hardwood floor surfaces in the IMA Building require re-surfacing at planned intervals based on the life cycle of each floor (gyms, studios, racquetball and squash courts). By re-applying the finish on the floors, we avoid slippery and dangerous conditions that result in injuries. Another example of a major capital project expense is the re-surfacing of the outdoor turf fields. This type of surface also has a life cycle, and minor repairs can no longer fix rips in the stitching and replace infill to maintain a flat, even surface.

The project to replace the waterfront docks is currently on hold, but when it reboots, we will need to use a significant amount of the reserves to fund this project. In the meantime, the docks will require repairs to maintain useability which will also be an expenditure from the reserve budgets.

Historically, SAF has provided a consistent annual allocation for Capital needs. For many years it was \$100,000, then grew to \$200,000. For the last few years, the process for requesting and receiving capital funds has varied, resulting in an inconsistent allocation for capital expenses each year. This uncertainty, combined with the loss of interest revenue on the reserve accounts, makes strategic planning for capital expenses – and the assurance of safe and maintained spaces for activities - challenging.

Budget Breakdown

In this section, please include a breakdown of your requested revenues/expenses for FY26 and your unit's budget for FY25.

The template, instructions, and an example can be found here: [SAF FY26 Budget Breakdown.xlsx](#)

BUDGET BREAKDOWN

	<i>FY26 Request</i>	<i>FY25 Expected</i>	<i>FY25 Actuals Notes</i>
REVENUES			
SAF Funding	\$ 3,445,436.00	\$ 3,266,423.00	
State/University Funding	\$ -	\$ -	
Self-Generated Revenue	\$ 3,646,960.00	\$ 3,627,362.00	Significantly increased from FY25 request/plan
Grants/Subsidies			
Interest Revenue	\$ -	\$ -	
Other Revenue			
Total Revenue	\$ 7,092,396.00	\$ 6,893,785.00	
Change in Revenues	\$ 198,611.00	2.88%	
EXPENSES			
Salaries & Wages:			
Classified	\$ 1,300,332.00	\$ 1,158,754.00	
Professional	\$ 1,338,512.00	\$ 1,296,659.00	
Graduate Appointments			
Temporary	\$ 2,006,921.00	\$ 1,874,922.00	Original FY25 request/plan was \$2,120,753
Other Salaries & Wages	\$ -	\$ -	
Total Salaries & Wages	\$ 4,645,765.00	\$ 4,330,335.00	
Retirement & Benefits:			
Classified	\$ 447,314.00	\$ 398,611.00	
Professional	\$ 405,569.00	\$ 392,888.00	
Graduate Appointments			
Temporary	\$ 461,362.00	\$ 431,232.00	
Other Retirement & Benefit	\$ -	\$ -	
Total Retirement & Benefit	\$ 1,314,245.00	\$ 1,222,731.00	
Operations:			
Personal Service Contract			
Other Contract Services	\$ 600,105.00	\$ 635,331.00	U/w Insurance from FY24 charged in FY25
Grants & Subsidies			
Travel	\$ 48,826.00	\$ 46,446.00	
Supplies	\$ 483,455.00	\$ 466,181.00	
Other Operations	\$ -	\$ -	
Total Operations	\$ 1,132,386.00	\$ 1,147,958.00	
Total Expenses	\$ 7,092,396.00	\$ 6,701,024.00	
Change in Expenses	\$ 391,372.00	5.84%	
Revenue - Expenses	\$ -	\$ 192,761.00	

Information on Other Revenues:

If you have other sources of revenue, please give an overview of those anticipated revenues (including new sources) and how you expect them to change in the coming years. If relevant, include a breakdown of services & positions funded by SAF vs other revenues.

Additional Questions

1.

- a. How would you adjust your operations if you did not receive your full request? Please elaborate on the potential impact on staffing and services.**

If Recreation should not receive our full request, we have only two options: raise prices for some niche programmatic offerings or eliminate aspects of the program. For example, the “IM Pass” for Intramurals is projected to increase to \$35 to account for staffing wage increases in fiscal year 2026. If we receive less SAF funding, we will either raise prices beyond \$35 or cut offerings for things like the historically popular “IM Champs” t-shirt, niche tournaments to serve distinct student needs, or rental of Alaska Airlines Arena and Husky Stadium for championship games. Likewise, for the climbing program, we would either cut programmatic offerings that teach students how to safely climb outdoors or raise prices. The UWild First Year Adventure trips offered in partnership with the Office of First Year Programs are the highest cost service within that program. To make it work with less SAF Funding, we would raise prices, or reduce the number of trips offered, either strategy would result in reaching fewer students with fewer programs.

- b. What if you received an amount less than your FY25 allocation?**

In addition to all the changes highlighted in question 1a of this section, we would need to consider reducing operating hours at Craggs Climbing Center, WAC Boat Rentals, and UWild Gear Garage. We would also need to consider across-the-board price increases to maintain staffing for programs and services given the continually escalating minimum wage in Seattle. Another option would be to eliminate one Lifeguard working Monday – Friday from 9:00 am – 1:00 pm and close half of the pool during this low utilization timeframe daily. This allows the pool to remain open but only half of the lanes are being monitored by a Lifeguard on duty, and the usage would be compacted into 7 lanes requiring multiple patrons to share each lane and circle swim during our slowest times, which impacts the user experience. We would continue to make difficult decisions on capital and maintenance deferral.

- c. What student services/programs are integral to your mission that you would not cut even if you received an amount less than your FY25 allocation?**

In our UW Recreation Survey (2024), participants were asked “Which of the following, if any, UW Recreation offerings have you participated in? (select all that apply).” In a sample set of 3,108 respondents for this question, folks selected IMA General Use

(58.5%), Fitness & Wellness (34.3%), IMA Pool (23.7%), Outdoor Fields (16.9%), Intramurals (16.2%) and Outdoor Courts (15.5%). These data mirror our participation data available from facility access swipes and program registrations. Based on these data points, we would prioritize the peak IMA Building and Pool operating hours, the core of Fitness & Wellness and Intramural programming, and maintaining access to outdoor fields and courts.

2. If financial resources were not a restriction, what is one program/service your unit would add/expand on to enhance students' experience at the University?

Informal recreation at UW includes things like using the IMA Building, Outdoor Fields and Outdoor Courts without instruction or organized programming. As highlighted in response 1c above, this sub-offering of UW Recreation accounts for our most heavily used service. In addition to our participation data, research in the field of recreation demonstrates that informal recreation is important to students. For example, 68% of students report that recreation facilities influence their decision of which school to attend and 74% state that recreation facilities influence their decision to continue attending their chosen institution (Forrester, 2014). Participants in informal recreation activities such as swimming, running and weightlifting report a greater sense of belonging through connecting to their physical campus environment, meeting new people, getting involved, and forming friendships (Eubank & Devita, 2023).

University of Washington survey data illustrates that our informal recreation fitness offerings are in desperate need of updates:

"If you were improving or expanding recreation facilities, which of the following would be important to you?" (UW Recreation, 2023)

- (611 respondents) **"Additional resistance training equipment"**
- (192 respondents) **"Additional multi-purpose rooms for functional training"**
- (142 respondents) **"Additional cardiovascular training equipment"**
- (60 respondents) **"Adding a boutique/specialized group fitness space"**

"Which of the following factors, if any, impede your use of campus recreation facilities, programs, and/or services?" (UW Recreation, 2023)

- (300 respondents) **"Facilities are too crowded"**
- (85 respondents) **"Facilities do not have the right equipment"**
- (52 respondents) **"Facilities are too outdated"**

"If you were improving or expanding recreation facilities, which of the following would be important to you?" (UW Recreation, 2023)

- (169 respondents) **"Additional open and/or park space"**
- (173 respondents) **"Outdoor fitness space"**
- (119 respondents) **"Ropes course"**
- (93 respondents) **"Additional fields"**

If we had the chance to dream big with financial resources, we would invest in upgrading our informal recreation offerings through new equipment purchases and facility upgrades and expansion.

3. How does your unit ensure that student fees do not subsidize non-student, academic, research, and other costs that are the primary responsibility of the University and its colleges?

We ensure that student fees do not subsidize non-student uses in several ways. For example, there is no direct SAF operations funding support for the Golf Range and Waterfront boat rentals. At these facilities the general public pay the highest fees, the faculty/staff pay a fee approximating 75% of the general public fee and the students are accorded a fee that approximates 50% of the general public fee.

There are rare cases of academic classes using space in our facilities, and when that happens, they are charged rental fees to cover any costs.

4. How are you utilizing the SAF logo? In what ways do you spread awareness of your affiliation with SAF?

This is a current focus for our Marketing team, and they are adding the logo to Rec's website, all programmatic printed materials, and all digital displays.

5. If you are projecting a net deficit for FY26, please provide additional context for this net deficit (e.g. reallocation of carryover funds from previous fiscal years, extraordinary expenses necessary to meet operational needs, etc.).
(Optional – Answer "N/A" if not relevant to your unit)

N/A

6. When projecting out 1-3 fiscal years, what challenges, if any, do you foresee for your unit? How could SAF be helpful in navigating these challenges?
(Optional – Answer "N/A" if not relevant to your unit)

We have an aging infrastructure. We have over \$1.7M in deferred capital maintenance across the many buildings and outdoor facilities we manage for student use. To offset the continually rising wages in Seattle for both our 400+ student employees and our permanent staff, we must rely on our facilities to generate revenue from non-student memberships and facility rentals. However, doing so with facilities that have outdated

amenities and are behind on maintenance is increasingly unsustainable. That challenge is compounded by the fact that we are not meeting the students' identified goals of improving facilities, which we know is crucial for student wellbeing based on the literature highlighted in this document (Forrester, 2014; Eubank & DeVita 2023), as well as student responses for UW Recreation Surveys (2023, 2024) and the UW Tri-Campus Wellness Week Report conducted by the ASUW Office of Student Health Relations (Cleveland, 2024).

Washington State minimum wage and overtime eligibility threshold continues to grow each year, impacting Recreation's budget forecast and projected costs. Recreation is an employer of a wide range of employee categories – including one of the UW's biggest employers of students – and rising cost of living in Seattle means that Recreation's ability to recruit and retain employees will be impacted. As we mentioned above, staffing costs comprise the greatest portion of our budget and it is staff who clean, repair, offer programs and services, and ensure safety.

Looking ahead, if we do not have the capacity to thoughtfully plan ahead for both capital improvements and growing costs of staffing, the student experience – our highest priority - will suffer.

Our partnership with SAF has been incredibly important to Recreation over many years, through the 2003 IMA project, the recent Locker Room and Pool renovation project, and the upcoming ASUW Shell House project among a multitude of other programs and services. Our experience is that long-term partnerships result in major beneficial outcomes for students. Our hope is that Recreation and SAF could take a multi-year view on strategy, reducing the fluctuations year-to-year and reactive decision making in favor of thoughtful and deliberate planning.

References

Cleveland, A. (2024). (rep.). *2024 UW Tri-Campus Wellness Week Report*.

Forrester, S. (2014). *The Benefits of Campus Recreation*. Corvallis, OR: NIRSA.

Jacob M. Eubank & James M. DeVita (2023): Building Sense of Belonging through Informal Recreation Participation, *SCHOLE: A Journal of Leisure Studies and Recreation Education*, DOI: 10.1080/1937156X.2023.2166434

UW Recreation (2023). (rep.). *2023 Survey Data Report*.

UW Recreation (2024). (rep.). *2024 Survey Data Report*.

