

University of Washington, Seattle Services & Activities Fee Fiscal Year 2027 Budget Request

**Center for International Relations & Cultural Leadership Exchange
(CIRCLE)**

Unit Lead:

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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 FY27 request may only represent a maximum increase of 6% or \$38,000 over the unit's allocation for FY26 (whichever is higher in context of the unit's FY26 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 FY27, the SAF amount can be increased by a maximum of 4%. Requests beyond the maximum increase will be returned to units for corrections/updates.

Our unit's request in FY23 was **\$000.00** and our award was **\$000.00**.

Our unit's request in FY24 was **\$000.00** and our award was **\$000.00**.

Our unit's request in FY25 was **\$70,247.56** and our award was **\$35,000.00**.

Our unit's request in FY26 was **\$71,327.70** and our award was **\$47,000.00**.

Our request for FY27 is **\$118,267.00**, which represents a \$46,940 increase from FY26 request or a **\$71,267** increase from FY26 allocation.

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

\$35,744

1. Current eight student positions. For FY26, we requested \$71,327.70 from SAF to fund 8 student positions. We were awarded \$47,000. For FY27, we would like to request **\$70,194 for the same 8 student positions**, which represents a \$23,194 increase from our FY26 allocation.

FY27 SAF Requests – Current Wages & Benefits for the same 8 student positions					
Student Positions (Au/Wi/Sp)	# of positions	Minimum Rate 2027: \$21.30	Total Hrs (Au/Wi/Sp)	Base Salary	Benefits (16.2%)
Unite UW Program Leaders	3	Monthly stipend: \$800/m for 9 months		\$21,600	\$3,499
Student Advisory Board Chair (Grad)	0.5	\$23.00	150	\$3,450	\$559
Student Advisory Board Chair (Undergrad)	0.5	\$21.30	150	\$3,195	\$518
CIRCLE of Friends (CoF) Peer Advisors	3	\$21.30	1,080	\$23,004	\$3,727
CoF Program Assi (now Event Manager)	1	\$21.30	430	\$9,159	\$1,484
Total	8			\$60,408	\$9,786
				TOTAL	\$70,194

2. [Adding Student Success & Wellbeing Coach](#). The CIRCLE Coach is a graduate student position that offers 1:1 coaching appointments (9 hours a week) and teaches a General Study course (6 hours a week) for 10 weeks during autumn, winter, and spring quarters, to help international students navigate study at UW and life in the US. This position has existed since the beginning of CIRCLE and many students rely on these services. We previously built this position with Work Study, but as student financial aid decreases, we are turning to SAF for sustainable funding to maintain these critical services. See details below:

FY27 SAF Requests – Existing graduate student position (new request from SAF)					
Student Position (Au/Wi/Sp)	# of position	Hourly Rate	Total Hours	Base Salary	Benefits (16.2%)
Student Success & Wellbeing Coach	1	\$24.00	450	\$10,800	\$1,750
				TOTAL	\$12,550

New Student Position

\$4,009

3. [Graduate student summer intern](#). As the current administration expands the travel ban list, more international graduate students are opting to stay during the summer quarter due to fears of returning home and being rejected to return to the U.S. Meanwhile, many campus services and programs typically pause during summer. To bridge this gap, CIRCLE is committed to offering events throughout the summer to keep these students engaged and supported.

FY27 SAF Requests - New student position					
Student Position (Au/Wi/Sp)	# of position	Hourly Rate	Total Hours	Base Salary	Benefits (16.2%)
Graduate student summer intern	1	\$23.00	150	\$3,450	\$559
				TOTAL	\$4,009

Supplemental Funding for Operations

\$31,514

4. Shared service fees. At the start of FY26, the Division of Student Life made a decision to move CIRCLE to a shared service model under HUB for HR, finance and IT services. While this well-needed support has greatly increased operational efficiency for CIRCLE, it also costs us \$31,514 annually -- funding we don't have allocation for at all.

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.

1. **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.**

For FY27, we are requesting a total of **\$118,267**, including **\$86,753** for **10 student positions** across **six** essential programs/services, and **\$31,514 for the shared services** we receive from the HUB Finance/HR team. Here is a breakdown by programs/services:

1. **Unite UW:** 3 Program Leaders (\$25,099).

Unite UW is a 7-week cohort-based cultural exchange program that connects international and domestic students. It fosters a welcoming environment that builds deep cultural understanding and forms lasting global friendships. For the last 10 years, Unite UW has served 2,452 students from 37 U.S. states and 66 countries. The three Program Leaders are the key to the success of each 90-student cohort, responsible for event planning and community building.

2. **Student Advisory Board:** 1 chair (\$7,721).

As a key component of CIRCLE's Advocacy pillar, the Student Advisory Board (SAB) annually recruits international student representatives from 8-12 countries, elevating international student voices in student governments and informing CIRCLE's programs and initiatives. The SAB chair(s) establish processes, convene members, organize meetings, collect feedback, and advance projects.

3. **CIRCLE of Friends:** 3 Peer Advisors & 1 Event Manager (\$37,373).

CIRCLE of Friends (CoF) hosts two weekly events to engage and support international students, including large gatherings such as Diwali Celebration, which attracts around 300 attendees, and info sessions like navigating healthcare in the U.S. The three Peer Advisors oversee 6-7 CIRCLE Ambassador volunteers each, coordinating events and developing leadership skills. In addition, the Event

	Manager steps in to fill a professional staff vacancy, handling responsibilities such as logistics coordination, team building, training, and budget management for CoF.
4.	Success & Wellbeing Coaching: 0.6 coach (9 hours /week, \$7,530) Success & Wellbeing Coaching offers 45-minute sessions where the CIRCLE coach Maja helps international students navigate challenges like culture shock, homesickness, motivation, academic pressures, social barriers, identity exploration and more. Serving as an initial support contact, Maja assesses needs and directs students requiring urgent or comprehensive help to appropriate university or community resources. CIRCLE coach supported 68 international students across 390 appointments in 2023-2024 and 58 students over 304 appointments in 2024-2025, highlighting the critical demand for this service. To continue providing timely assistance, we urgently need sustainable funding to accommodate the growing needs of our international students. <i>"My regular sessions with Maja have been invaluable to my graduate school experience. She has helped me navigate challenges in multiple areas, from imposter syndrome to student-PI tensions. Maja's expertise, patience, and genuine investment in my success have made a meaningful difference in my time at UW." - Testimonial from a 3rd year international PhD student</i>
5.	Gen St 205: Skills for Academic and Personal Success: 0.4 instructor (6 hours/week, \$5,020) In Autumn 2024, CIRCLE launched a new quarterly course, Gen St 205: Skills for Academic and Personal Success. Originally designed to assist international students needing a 2-credit in-person class to fulfill their full-time visa requirements, this course has quickly become popular among international and other immigrant students by offering valuable support for transitioning to the U.W. and the U.S. Taught also by CIRCLE Student Success & Wellbeing Coach Maja, this course helps students explore personal values, set goals, anticipate barriers, and build tangible skills for both academic and professional success. The instructor for this course plans a weekly 90-minute course and provides ample 1:1 support during office hours and responses to student reflections. <i>"If I hadn't taken this course, I would still be someone who struggles to express myself, procrastinates, misses home and lacks confidence. I still have a lot to improve, but I have changed in so many ways, and this growth will continue. Thank you again." - Testimonial from a winter 2025 Gen St 205 student</i>
6.	Summer engagement for graduate students: 1 intern (\$4,009). As the travel ban list expands, more international graduate students fear going home during summer and opt to stay. With many campus services and programs pausing during the summer, CIRCLE would like to bridge the gap by offering events and services throughout the summer to keep these students engaged and supported. A summer graduate student intern position will be created to plan and implement engagement events and career development sessions.

2. **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.

We have put the \$47,000 award from SAF in FY26 to good use, funding wages and benefits for **five student positions**: the Student Advisory Board co-chair (\$8,074), three CIRCLE of Friends Peer Advisors (\$27,578), and the CIRCLE of Friends Program Assistant (now called Student Event Manager, \$11,348). We would like to highlight the CIRCLE of Friends program to showcase SAF impact on students.

In AY 2024-2025, CIRCLE of Friends hosted 74 events and information sessions, with over 2,100 student attendees (not including large cultural events). For the 2025-2026 academic year, CoF recruited 24 CIRCLE Ambassadors from 12 countries.

In addition to the impact CoF has on the larger international student population, it supports professional development and leadership opportunities for four student employees and serves as a pathway for two dozen more to gain experience training as future CIRCLE leaders. Students who work with CIRCLE of Friends build skills in event management, communications, teamwork, and creative problem-solving.

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

Although we received only partial funding for FY26, we did not discontinue any programs or services. We managed to cover the three Unite UW Program Leader positions, which were not funded by SAF, by utilizing surplus funds from delayed hiring of professional staff. This also results in additional work load for our existing staff.

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

No.

- 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?

No.

- 3. 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.)

CIRCLE maintains limited reserves, the vast majority of which are held for restricted purposes. This includes gift and endowment funds as well as funds restricted for the Unite UW program. The remaining reserves are allocated to a reasonable and appropriate operating reserve balance not exceeding 3 to 6 months of operating expenses.

CIRCLE does not have any excess funding in its reserves available for reinvestment or ongoing operations.

Budget Breakdown

In this section, please include a breakdown of your requested revenues/expenses for FY27 your unit's budget for FY26, and your unit's actuals for FY25.

The template and instructions can be found here: [SAF FY27 Budget Breakdown.xlsx](#)

Please see the "FY27 – CIRCLE (SAF)" Budget breakdown attached to this PDF (scroll down) to preserve formatting.

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.

- **New Student Enrollment and Orientation Fee:** anticipating \$49,732 with 2% increase in FY27
- **Endowment interest payout:** anticipating \$12,240 from two endowments and gifts. This is used to cover partial CIRCLE Emergency Aid.
- **Sponsorships:** anticipating \$15,000 from sponsors for International Welcome programs.

Additional Questions

1. The following questions will help us understand your unit's priorities.

a. How would you adjust your operations if you did not receive your full FY27 request? Please elaborate on the potential impact on staffing and services.

If we do not receive the full funding request, our programs and services will be significantly impacted, negatively affecting students. This is particularly critical for the Success & Wellbeing coaching that offers a lifeline for struggling students, and the Gen St 205 course which is essential for many students in maintaining their visa status. The Unite UW program is crucial for both domestic and international students who feel isolated and are in dire need of community. With many international graduate students fearing returning home during the summer, it is very important to keep them engaged and supported. Additionally, since the decision to integrate us under HUB's shared HR/Finance services, we no longer have alternative support options to fall back to.

Should our funding challenges extend beyond FY27, we will seek alternative funding sources. Our commitment to sustaining all existing CIRCLE programs and services remains strong, as they are tailored to meet student needs and have proven successful through our data collection efforts. We aim to avoid eliminating any programs or services if possible.

b. What if you received 4% less than your FY26 allocation? Please elaborate on the potential impact on staffing and services.

If our FY26 allocation is reduced by 4% from FY26 allocation, or \$45,120, we would only be able to retain the Student Advisory Board Chair, CIRCLE of Friends PAs, and Student Event Manager, which would significantly limit our staffing capacity and services like Student Success & Wellbeing Coaching or the Gen St 205 course, both of which are critical for students' wellbeing and transition at UW.

c. What student services/programs are integral to your mission that you would not cut even if you received an amount less than your FY26 allocation? Why?

Each existing CIRCLE program/service is developed in response to student needs and has consistently demonstrated success through our data collection. Consequently, we prefer not to eliminate any programs or services.

2. If you are projecting a net deficit for your overall FY27 budget, 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.) and how this might impact your operations.
(Optional – Answer “N/A” if not relevant to your unit)

Since FY23, CIRCLE has faced a net deficit due to launching new programs and expanding services for graduate students. Over the past three years, we've made several adjustments: terminating a temporary staff position, enhancing advancement efforts, seeking funding from SAF and the New Student Enrollment and Orientation Fee, and delaying the hiring of crucial professional staff. These measures have allowed us to manage, albeit at the expense of overburdening our current staff.

Starting in FY26, our financial challenges intensified with the loss of the \$50,000 annual Hong Kong Family Endowment, which was a five-year gift. Additionally, the move to a shared service model under Student Life now incurs an annual charge of \$31,514 from the HUB HR/Finance team. The recent budget cuts further reduced our annual core budgets by \$35,616, deepening our financial strain. Finally, we are anticipating another round of core fund budget cuts soon.

We will continue our advancement efforts and plan to reduce some programming expenses. However, robust support from SAF is essential to ensure CIRCLE's stability and sustainability. This support will enable us to continue delivering exceptional services and programs to international students, benefiting the entire UW community.

3. What is one program/service your unit would like to work towards building to enhance students' out-of-class experience at the University? How much would it cost?

If funding permits, we propose introducing career coaching specifically tailored for international graduate and undergraduate students. Job searching and career exploration present unique challenges for these students, particularly in a job market that can be very challenging to navigate for non-U.S. workers. This initiative would involve collaboration with departments and colleges that lack dedicated career services resources, unlike schools such as Foster or Engineering. With the support of AI-enabled tools, we could develop a robust program at an estimated annual cost of \$30,000.

4. 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?

For the last two years, we have always used SAF allocated funding only on student positions that support programs and services to students. We plan to continue prioritizing student positions in the future.

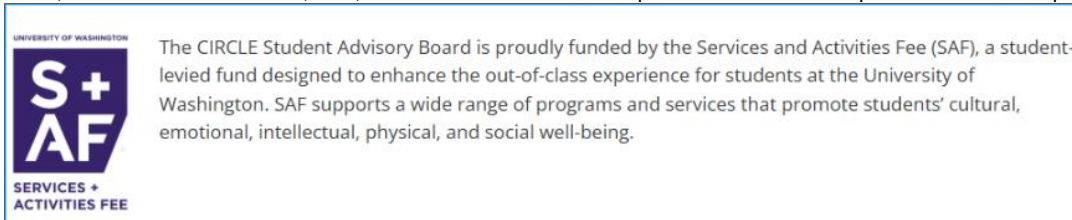
5. What active roles do students and their views play in your unit's decision making?

CIRCLE actively include students and their perspectives in our decision making, from three major areas:

1. **Student Advisory Board.** SAB members meet weekly to discuss CIRCLE programs and offerings and to share feedback informed by their lived experiences. Their insights are regularly communicated to CIRCLE leadership and play an active role in shaping programs and services that respond to evolving student needs.
2. **Student Staff (undergraduate & graduate).** Graduate student staff actively gather live input from participants during each event and formally document strengths, areas for improvement, and potential next steps. These insights ensure that future programming is informed by student voices and evolving needs.
3. **CIRCLE Ambassadors (CAs).** Each quarter, we recruit over 20 CAs who not only plan events of their choosing but also provide valuable feedback on our programs and services. This approach led to the inception of our Diwali Celebration and facilitated on-site Washington ID issuance by the Department of Licensing. In Autumn 2025 alone, our CAs introduced successful new events such as a Murder Mystery Party, Karaoke Night, and Global Game Night.
4. **Additionally, student surveys.** We collect student feedback via surveys for most of our programs. For instance, we ask new students to fill out surveys at the Regional Connection Group closing night to let us know what has helped them transition to UW and what we can do better for next year. This feedback is crucial as it shapes our programs and services, ensuring they meet student needs effectively.

6. How are you utilizing the SAF logo? In what ways do you spread awareness of your affiliation with SAF? Attach an example if applicable.

On both CIRCLE [SAB](#) & [CoF](#) webpages, we have added SAF logo and a verbiage "CIRCLE of Friends and CIRCLE Student Advisory Board programs are funded by the Student Services and Activities Fee". Additionally, we added the logo and wording onto the job description of the four positions funded by SAF. These jobs were posted on [CIRCLE Opportunities](#) page & UW Handshake, and were broadly shared among all CIRCLE social media, newsletter, RCG group chats, as well as campus partners like FYP, Student Life units, ISS, etc. Here is an example on SAB chair position description:



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

As we project the next 1-3 fiscal years, we anticipate several challenges:

1. **Urgent need to fill the Event Manager professional position:** Each year, the Event Manager plans more than 100 events for CIRCLE, collaborates with many campus partners, and manages a large number of student staff and volunteers. For International Welcome programs (IWP) alone, this position plans 14 major events over 10 days, coordinates with 24 on-campus partners and 11 vendors/sponsors, and manages 46 student volunteers. The inability to fill this crucial position, primarily due to financial constraints, poses significant challenges. This threatens the onboarding experience of 2,500 new international students each year, along with impacting numerous current students.
2. **A continued financial deficit:** As mentioned earlier, CIRCLE has faced ongoing financial deficit since FY23, due to expanded programs and services. Though we have successfully implemented quite a few strategies to cut expenses and expand revenues, we find ourselves in a deepened deficit situation in FY26 due to the loss of a major gift for operation, new cost for shared HR/Finance services, and the recent budget cut. As we anticipate another round of budget cuts, we are facing a great financial challenge threatening our student programs and services.
3. **Drastically increased student cases:** As CIRCLE's reputation grows among international students and across campus, we are handling more student cases that require professional staff's attention due to FERPA regulations. These cases are time-consuming, involving coordination across multiple units and placing a significant burden on our professional staff who also manage regular programs and events. Since last year, we have also seen a tripled number of students requesting financial support or emergency aid. Each case requires us to meet with the student, so we can provide comprehensive support to help the student strategize and get by.
4. **Under-supported Needs for Communications:** Since terminating a temporary professional communications position in FY24, we have depended on student employees for our biweekly newsletter, website updates, and social media management, necessitating substantial oversight from existing professional staff.

By increasing support for student positions, funding our additional HR/Finance operational services, or investing in professional staff for event planning, student care, or communications, SAF can significantly enhance our financial stability and sustainability. This support will empower us to continue delivering top-quality services and programs to our international students and the broader UW community. Thank you for considering our needs.

FY 27 - CIRCLE (SAF)

Budget Breakdown

Operating Revenues	FY27 Request	FY26 Budgeted	FY25 Actuals	Notes
SAF Funds	\$ 118,267	\$ 47,000	\$ 42,929	anticipating 10% core fund reduction
Core Funds	\$ 568,413	\$ 639,120	\$ 670,142	
Grants				
Other Student Fees	\$ 49,732	\$ 46,426	\$ 47,026	sponsorship from International Welcome Programs
Auxiliary Revenues	\$ 15,000	\$ 15,870	\$ 13,721	
Total Revenue	\$ 751,412	\$ 748,416	\$ 773,818	
Change From Previous FY (%)	0.40%	-3.28%		

Operating Expenses	FY27 Request	FY26 Budgeted	FY25 Actuals	Notes
Salaries & Wages				All expenses for FY27 Budget do not include Unite UW expenses which come from a restricted resource only for the intent of fulfilling that program's expenses. FY26 Budget and FY25 Actuals do include these costs for transparency.
<i>Permanent</i>	\$ 428,352	\$ 342,620	\$ 285,494	
<i>Student/Temporary</i>	\$ 93,945	\$ 133,361	\$ 121,664	
Retirement & Benefits				Food expenses typically covered by gift funding.
<i>Permanent</i>	\$ 139,214	\$ 111,009	\$ 86,505	
<i>Student/Temporary</i>	\$ 15,214	\$ 30,673	\$ 27,983	
Supplies and Materials	\$ 49,710	\$ 75,000	\$ 72,537	
Professional & Purchased Services	\$ 72,131	\$ 131,748	\$ 129,445	
Travel	\$ 1,530	\$ 12,500	\$ 2,337	
Utilities	\$ 1,349	\$ 900	\$ 856	
External Funding Allocation				
Capital Projects/Expenses				
Other Operating Expenses			\$ 725	
Total Expenses	\$ 801,445.00	\$ 837,811.00	\$ 727,546.00	
Change From Previous FY (%)	-4.34%	15.16%		

Fund Balance	FY27 Request	FY26 Budgeted	FY25 Actuals	Notes
Unallocated	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	CIRCLE maintains limited reserves; the vast majority of which are held for restricted purposes. This includes gift and endowment funds as well as funds restricted for the Unite UW program. The remaining reserves are allocated to a reasonable and appropriate operating reserve balance not exceeding 3 to 6 months of operating expenses. CIRCLE does not have any excess funding in its reserves available for reinvestment or ongoing operations.
Allocated	\$ 157,773	\$ 192,935	\$ 267,008	
Restricted	\$ 728,690	\$ 743,561	\$ 758,883	
Total Fund Balance	\$ 886,463.00	\$ 936,496.00	\$ 1,025,891.00	
Change From Previous FY (%)	-5.34%	-8.71%		

Total Change From Previous FY	\$ (10,671.00)	\$ (225,062.00)	\$ (41,392.00)	
Total Change From Previous FY	98.74%	79.01%		