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

Student Media

The Daily
Smirk
Husky Media Group
Hua Voice

Unit Lead

Director John Tomasic

Contributors

Daily Editor-in-Chief Morgan Bortnick
Daily Managing Editor Anikka Stanley
Ad-Sales Managers Diane Chang and Prescott Jain
Accountant Tom Yoo

Special Thanks:
HUB Associate Director Finance-Business Trevor Hunt

7 January 2026

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 award in FY23 was **$382,176.**
Our unit's award in FY24 was **$412,752.**.
Our unit's request in FY25 was **$445,770** and our award was **$433,770.**.
Our unit's request in FY26 was **$468,770** and our award was **$435,330**.
Our request for FY27 is **$470,156,** which represents an **8% ($34,826)** increase from FY26**.**

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..... $13,626

We aim this year to provide modest and long-overdue increases in compensation to editorial staff across the board. All of the in-house people paid by our unit are students, except two, and that number drops to one this month. Newsroom editors and top reporters paid on stipends attend school fulltime and many of them also work part-time jobs. We know that some of our students can't afford to apply for these top positions because we simply can't pay enough to allow them to quit their part-time jobs. Pay is an equity issue, and we want to begin incrementally to make it

possible for all of our best students to slot into our top spots. We plan to support this plan partly through this proposed increase in our SAF award, partly through revenues gained from a new off-campus housing advertising partnership, and partly by trimming non-compensation operational costs.

New front-office operational assistance..... $16,200

Student Media this year will see its longtime beloved in-house accountant and front-office employee Tom Yoo retire. We plan to replace Tom by contracting beginning this winter quarter with the HUB financial services team and by hiring a new front-office graduate student employee at $27 hour for 15 hrs a week.. The move will leverage the experience of the larger skilled HUB finance staff, on one hand, and, on the other, employ another UW student in a new position that would see a responsible student thrive in creatively helping to define the role. We can apply much of Tom Yoo's current compensation to pay the HUB this year and beyond. This additional $16,200 increase from SAF would ensure we can pay fair wages to our new front-office employee for 40 weeks a year.

Student professional development..... $5,000

A large part of what we do at Student Media is to prepare students for future work and careers in the media and communication fields, which, in our fully-mediated digital era, stretch across all sectors of our economy and social and cultural lives. Our Student Media graduates enter the world beyond UW with great material to show—their stories, photos, videos, designs, interviews, podcasts, social media strategies, and so on. But there's so much to gain by beefing up the kind of learning and networking opportunities available to them through journalism and media organization conferences and career-prep training and workshops available to student newsrooms and ad-sales offices like ours. This $5000 is a modest but significant amount to get started this year paying a pathbreaking first-round of conference travel and visitor fees.

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.**

The Daily uses SAF funding overwhelmingly to compensate the student staffers who work at **The Daily**, our campus news outlet; **Husky Media Group**, our non-news campus content provider; and **Smirk**, our informational campus social media site.

A smaller portion of SAF funds pay for **operational necessities**, including fees for journalism and communication/media organization memberships, awards submissions, printing costs and office material.

Staff Compensation:

- Compensation is by far our unit's largest expense. **Total estimated Student Media expenses for FY26 come to $842,472**. Of that amount, **72% or $614,466 paid for compensation, and the majority of that amount, $348,287,** or **57%**, **went to Student Media student participants**—one group paid hourly, another in stipends, and the rest as freelancers paid varying rates depending on the category of contribution. Hourly pay and stipends incur in a benefit load.

    - **10 advertising staff paid hourly wages**
    - **22 editors paid stipends**
    - **175-200 freelancers paid per contribution**
      Freelancers include reporters, writers, designers, podcasters, photographers, videographers, social media managers.

    - Our SAF FY27 request would raise the percentage of our budget that goes to directly and indirectly compensating our students in cash and experience in the form of higher pay rates, a new front-office student position and career-prep including travel. **The total paid for direct student compensation we're proposing for FY27 would come to $350,367 or $70% of total in-house unit compensation—which would be a jump of 13% in the compensation our unit dedicates to students.**

Operational and Material Costs:

The Daily's **non-compensation costs** fall into three main categories: **office and newsroom supplies**—including tech gear—**outside computer and other**

services—including printing and newsletter and website maintenance—**travel for reporters and photographers**, particularly on the sports desk, and **institutional overhead**. These costs amounted last year to roughly **28% or $170,057** of our total expenses.

Running our newsroom as a distinct fully operational Student Media space delivers invaluable benefits to the student experience we offer. The updated gear and the dedicated space to explore and experiment together with evolving journalism and media-making techniques advances career skills and fosters community, including friendships that last lifetimes. The newsroom is both a professional space and a rare kind of in-person social space. Our students work together in-person to process in real-time and for publication campus, city, state, national and global realities unfolding every day while mastering new communication technologies and genres. Student Media is a hands-on and face-to-face group experience. The hard and soft skills we watch each other learn in the newsroom prepares Student Media community members for professional and civic life.

Core Student Media operations funded by SAF fuel The Daily's ability to provide high-quality fair campus news coverage and that work, paid for in a vital large portion by SAF benefits the full university community.

2. **Please give a summary elaborating on how SAF Funding has been used to support students**

    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.

SAF funding supports The Daily's ongoing public-facing services including the production and publication cycle, and internal student benefits, including community building. **Quarterly staff census feedback in addition to weekly editorial meetings highlight the appreciation of community and connection** that The Daily provides as a student organization. SAF funding allows us to compensate our editorial leaders across the subject and skill sections in our newsroom, resulting in trusted and close relationships within the organization.

SAF funding also covers the costs for our **Daily Development Classes**, our quarter-long courses which teach admitted applicants the writing, photography, or video skills necessary to be a Daily staff member. The Daily is one of the only college newspapers that offer a class aimed to teach students with varied journalism experiences the writing and interviewing skills, journalistic ethics, and professional

expectations needed to be successful as a member on staff. **SAF support is vital to making this program possible for our prospective student staff members.**

SAF support is the main root in the financial system that feeds Student Media at UW. From our core SAF support, we mainly add funding for technology through UW Student Technology Fees and advertising revenue raised by our business-side student staff.. It's a model that works very well compared to models struggling to support student journalism in many other universities around the country.

The benefits of this UW model redound. Student news outlets remain integral to the larger journalism pipeline. Student news outlets, even more than university journalism programs, feed the profession by filling jobs with skilled young reporters ready from the jump to produce high-end journalism work across platforms. UW's Daily places students into many local and state news internships, and those Daily interns become staffers at outlets here and across the region and the country. That's a vital service for the students and for a profession that's competing in a vastly expanded media ecosystem that includes a diminishing percentage of trained reporters.

Journalism funding has been forced to evolve in the digital era and that includes university journalism. We are having to get increasingly creative. Ad dollars used to pay a much larger percentage of university student media budgets across the country. **Some equivalent universities, like Arizona State and the University of Texas Austin, hire professional ad-sales and publication staff** to increase sales and events revenue. We're branching into that kind of work, as we've written about elsewhere in this proposal—hosting housing fairs and building out new classified sections—but we still hire students—mostly Foster School students—to do that work, and **we continue mainly to be focused on student publication targeted at student readers, not alums or parents, for example. We are proudly a Student Life division, student-experiential learning and community-building enterprise.**

For that reason we think the funding model for student journalism at UW should be a model for schools around the country. Our business-side students creatively find new ways to bring in advertising money, which comes with very few strings, which is great, but the main source of funding, our funding foundation, is student-fee money, mainly SAF funds and, at a much lower scale, STF funds. **That means it's the students attending UW who pay the lion's share of the cost of maintaining their student news outlet—not the administration, not state or federal tax dollars.** Lawmakers in Olympia and in DC less interested in funding education and free expression come and go. Same with similarly minded university administrators. The newscycle on a regular schedule now throws up stories featuring university student publications targeted for editorial control and defunding—see recent news from

Indiana and Alabama. The Student Press Law Center reported in late December that it received more than 280 reports of student media censorship in 2025—from high schools and colleges across the country—up 25 percent over 2024. Student publications are an easy target of the nation's fraught politics at a time when university budgets are suffering historic funding squeezes.

UW student reporters, however, **with your continued backing**, will go forward happily serving their fellow students on campus for another 125 years.

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

As the campus community has grown and the cost of living in Seattle has continued to increase, our unit's services and priorities have also shifted. What began as a smaller editorial and freelance staff team focused primarily on producing print content **has expanded into a multifaceted operation that supports a range of modern student voices and publishing needs**. Where we used to print a newspaper five days a week, we now publish digitally every day on our website and social media, in addition to posting at least three newsletters a week, a slew of social media, and a weekly news-roundup podcast.

We built a new DailyUW.com website this year and shifted resources to hone our newsletter and social media strategies. The engagement desk has grown to include photo and video staffers and input from editors and reporters across the newsroom.

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

The Daily this year is scaling back on printing, not by printing fewer editions, so far, but by ordering smaller print-runs—runs typically not exceeding 4,000 copies of any one paper or magazine. Football Game Daily runs, for example, used to exceed 10,000 copies. **The new approach also ties print decisions more directly to advertising sales.** We printed no Game Daily edition for the spring Husky-versus-Husky exhibition football game.

*** More on Student Media print products**

We know print seems old school and, in the everywhere-all-the-time digital publishing world, it also seems unwieldy and expensive. It's just facts that printing costs keep climbing and print products increasingly have become niche products.

But our students love producing and reading our print products. Staff members keep copies for life. They circle their bylines. They send copies home to their relatives.

And they feel proud to add their own paper editions to the invaluable 125-years-running Daily print archive that's stored in the newsroom. Our editors, writers, photographers and designers learn a great deal having to imagine how the print products they're creating will look and feel in readers' hands. Designers learn how to match image "bleeds" and margins to paper thicknesses and paper surfaces and to different types of bindings.

Add to that student experience aspect, it's also just facts that selling print ads also remains a core student experience and valued campus service we provide. University administrators, Student Life units, academic departments, as well as city and local businesses and service providers, find it attractive to advertise in our print publications. The football Game Dailies, for example—which we distribute by hand at home games—are available to tens of thousands of fans, locals and out-of-towners, who can leaf through them during games. Special print editions of The Daily and The Daily magazine Pacific Wave—on topics that include returning to campus after summer break, choosing a major, making use of campus health and wellness services, finding housing, navigating their sex lives—linger on campus cafe tables and at greeting desks and newsstands for weeks.

So we persist in printing because we believe in its specific value to Student Media and to the UW campus—but we are taking a closer look again this year at how to do print most effectively and efficiently. **We believe that print products aren't going away completely and that for now a carefully optimized all-media approach to publishing content and advertisement is the best way forward for our students and for Student Media in the fully mediated era and the fully mediated professional world that every one of our students across all disciplines of study will enter after graduation.**

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?

In the newsroom this year The Daily expanded its positions, relaunching the science desk and re-establishing a full video desk. We also relaunched **the "Orange Room" sessions, stalled from the era before the pandemic. The sessions see UW student bands and local Seattle bands perform live in the newsroom**, each of the performances produced, broadcast and published as story packages by the Daily staff led by the arts desk.

In the ad-sales room this year we dedicated one full position to **launching a much-expanded classifieds project**. That project centers on our partnership with corporation CollegePads to promote housing and services options for UW students,

faculty and staff—the DawgHouses website vertical will showcase housing; Husky Marketplace will provide small goods purchase and swap opportunities; and Husky Helpers will host service ads and requests—tutoring, dog-walking, childcare, and so on.

3. **What is the nature of your reserves/fund balances? For what purposes do you hold reserves? How were they accrued?**

Student Media reserves have risen and fallen in recent years. Now they're low. Retired Director Diana Kramer and current Director John Tomasic worked together to cement and then start up our unit's off-campus housing promotion partnership with CollegePads, which meant we were spending more in non-student salary this year to secure more funding for the future. Diana fully retired in mid October. Simultaneously, as mentioned elsewhere in the proposal, Big Ten conference games have made sports travel much more expensive the last three years. This year is still running, of course, but for now, we have no reserves. We look forward to working with the HUB finance team and advancement to change that fact.

Budget Breakdown

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

Find image to the Student Media budget breakdown sheet pasted below. And here's a link to the sheet: **FY27 Budget Breakdown Student Media.xlsx**

Direct Link:
https://uwnetid.sharepoint.com/:x:/r/sites/og_engagement_shared_services/staff/_layouts/15/doc2.aspx?sourcedoc=%7BA5A5A705-0AE5-4153-ABB7-0AE652081638%7D&file=FY27%20Budget%20Breakdown%20TEMPLATE.xlsx&action=default&mobileredirect=true

Budget Breakdown

Operating Revenues	FY27 Request	FY26 Budgeted	FY25 Actuals	Notes
SAF Funds	$ 470,092	$ 452,012	$ 435,330	
Core Funds				
Grants				
Other Student Fees	$ 40,448	$ 40,448	$ 26,708	
Auxiliary Revenues	$ 270,000	$ 260,142	$ 173,857	Includes ad-sales revenue and new classifieds/events-money from housing giant CollegePads.
Total Revenue	**$ 780,540**	**$ 752,602**	**$ 635,895**	
Change From Previous FY (%)	**3.71%**	**18.35%**		

Operating Expenses	FY27 Request	FY26 Budgeted	FY25 Actuals	Notes
Salaries & Wages				
Permanent	$ 104,716	$ 201,727	$ 197,772	
Student/Temporary	$ 310,187	$ 293,420	$ 238,553	
Retirement & Benefits				
Permanent	$ 33,823	$ 64,452	$ 63,188	
Student/Temporary	$ 49,180	$ 54,867	$ 54,867	
Supplies and Materials	$ 26,500	$ 26,192	$ 13,007	
Professional & Purchased Services	$ 235,426	$ 187,870	$ 138,844	Increase due to Shared Services, savings received from loss of in-house Accountant position.
Travel	$ 10,000	$ 10,882	$ 4,469	
Utilities	$ 162	$ 1,200	$ 1,526	
External Funding Allocations			$ -	
Capital Projects/Expenditures			$ -	
Other Operating Expenses	$ 5,960	$ 1,862	$ 1,862	
Total Expenses	**$ 775,954.00**	**$ 842,472.00**	**$ 714,088.00**	
Change From Previous FY (%)	**-7.90%**	**17.98%**		

Fund Balance	FY27 Request	FY26 Budgeted	FY25 Actuals	Notes
Unallocated				
Allocated	$ -	$ -	$ 85,675	
Restricted	$ 28,752	$ 27,383	$ 28,406	
Total Fund Balance	**$ 28,752.00**	**$ 27,383.00**	**$ 114,081.00**	Student Media has no meaningful reserves at this time which limits our ability to be agile and respond to new opportunities, student needs, mitigate fluctuations in revenue, and maintain our existing equipment.
Change From Previous FY (%)	**5.00%**	**-76.00%**		

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 versus other revenues.

We expect our partnership with national off-campus housing company CollegePads to bring in at least an additional **$45,000** this year. CollegePads has agreed to pay us $40,000 for our work in the partnership, and our ad-sales team is working to make its own off-campus housing ad-sales.

Cash levels contained in our gift fund, the Daily Fund for Excellence, vary year to year. Student Media in partnership with its Student Life Advancement partners is determined to begin boosting the Daily Fund this year by establishing a more regular fundraising-campaigns schedule and more precisely identifying and more persuasively contacting likely donors. We are also seeking to establish a Daily endowment that would pay for specific projects or needs—particular beats, for example, or reporter travel.

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.**

We would likely consolidate desk editors in the newsroom to trim stipend costs and eliminate ad-sales positions, and we'd rethink the proposed new front-office position outlined above.

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

In case of budget tightening, again, we'd consolidate newsroom desks to eliminate stipend editor positions. We'd similarly trim the ad-sales team by a student or two. We'd do less printing and travel to fewer of the Big Ten conference athletics events.

    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?**

Publishing high-quality reporting work that snapshots and analyzes our unfolding campus realities is the core of what we do. Maintaining the newsroom community formed through the work done by the students is our highest priority—the skills the students learn, the relationships they build, and the positive reverberations that community sends for years forward into the larger media ecosystem.

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.**

N/A

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?**

This year we have made a concentrated effort to update, bulk up and focus our video team. We hired Jaydon Becles to head the project as our new Video desk editor. He then won a Mary Gates Leadership Scholarship to support him in the work and hired a fresh team of students to train to work with reporters across newsroom beats. Video is gobbling up territory in the media landscape at a rapid pace. It's a priority to skill up our students in shooting video and fashioning it for different genres of storytelling and for different communication platforms.

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?**

We don't do any academic work at Student Media. Our student work goes entirely toward hands-on experiential media exploration and publication. Student Media Director John Tomasic teaches one journalism course each year, paid for by the Communication Department.

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

Our students are involved in all of the unit's decision making. They lead the newsroom and its editorial decisions by design—to shield The Daily from undue university administration or faculty pressure or interference and to shield the university from liability. Students make all the hiring and any firing decisions. Director Tomasic serves as newsroom adviser, making suggestions on reporting topics, source selection, story approaches; he leads lessons-learned reviews of stories post-publication; he refers us to developments in local news; and acts as a job-seeking and networking resource. But editors and reporters are in communication with any topics Student Media places before its UW lawyer and Student Press Law Center counselors. Unit students helped draft this proposal. They also serve on the Student Media Board, which provides semi-annual advice on operations. Editors review our unit finances and are central in planning and executing our fundraising efforts.

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.**

Student Media includes the SAF logo on all its publications. We have recently boosted its size and prominence on our website. The logo now appears in the righthand column on the homepage and readers can click it to surf to the SAF UW webpage. We're finding ways this quarter to include the logo in our newsletters and at our social media accounts. We include samples of how the logo appears in the

images below. We are happy to discuss ideas on how else we might announce our affiliation with SAF.







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?**

Student Media has mentioned in the past that it would help if UW could reduce the load benefit on student pay. SAF and ASUW/GPSS may well be working to lobby UW to push for change on that front.

Student Media is looking for creative solutions to meet the travel costs of covering Big Ten athletic events. Travel for less with the team? Travel for less with the band? Convince Alaska Airlines to donate air-miles to The Daily? There must be a solution. All ideas welcome!