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| C:\Users\bjaco\AppData\Local\Microsoft\Windows\INetCache\Content.Word\SLS-Teaching-Toolkit-Logo_Stacked-Initials.jpg | **Winning Change on Campus:** A Teaching Case of Advocacy to Remove the Special Institutional Fee at Georgia Tech | | |
| **Discipline:** all | **Type:** Case Study | **Time Commitment:**  One class period | **Category:** UN SDGs, Case Studies, Sustainability in Atlanta |
| **OVERVIEW:**  How and why do people decide to take action when they perceive an injustice? Why do some campaigns to bring about positive social change succeed, while others fail? This case study draws on a successful campaign to end a burdensome graduate student fee at Georgia Tech (GT) to provide insights into these questions. The case study is intended to support instruction that empowers students to identify ways they can lead change on issues of concern to them--on campus, in their workplaces, and in society more broadly.  This tool was developed by Dr. Teresa Snow and Dr. Rebecca Watts Hull. Please contact Rebecca with any questions: rwattshull@gatech.edu. | | | |
| **INSTRUCTIONS:**  This teaching tool uses a case study to introduce students to elements of organizing for social change on college campuses. The teaching case details the successful campaign at Georgia Tech to reduce and eventually eliminate the Special Institutional Fee (SIF). The case study is provided as a separate document for ease of distribution to students, and it includes discussion questions. This document includes instructions for instructors, background information for your use facilitating discussion with students, and suggestions (and links) for further reading. | | | |
| **STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES:**  **After completing this teaching case assignment, students will be able to:**   * Describe several examples of actions that faculty, staff, and students can take to win a policy change at their institution. * Explain the importance of framing to campaigns for social change. * Identify at least one kind of role they are excited to take on to contribute to positive social change on campus, in their workplace, or in their community. | | | |

**Tool Instructions:**

1. Assign the [SIF Case Study](https://serve-learn-sustain.gatech.edu/sites/default/files/documents/Toolkit-Docs/SIF%20Teaching%20Case%20Study_Aug2023.pdf) as homework. It is likely to take about 20-30 minutes to read.
2. If your course uses a particular platform for reading responses (Perusall, Ed Discussion, Padlet, etc.), direct students to respond to at least two of the discussion questions on that platform before they come to class. If you do not typically use a discussion tool in this way, you might set up an assignment in Canvas and have students post a short response to at least two questions. This step will make it more likely that students come to class prepared for the group discussion.
3. Open the class discussion by inviting students to share their thoughts about your reason for assigning the case study. What is the connection between the course content and a case study about leading change on campus? Have them reflect on what they would choose to tackle, if they were working with others to change a policy or practice at Georgia Tech.
4. Depending upon class size and dynamics, lead small or a large group discussion using the following questions. In this version, background information is provided for you on the questions posed. You may find it helpful to refer to this [CTL resource](https://ctl.gatech.edu/best-practices/engaging-students/discussion) for suggestions about facilitating class discussions.
5. **Note:** In piloting this tool we identified several common misconceptions and areas of confusion for students. We recommend incorporating a brief discussion of these questions: What do we mean when we refer to university “administrators” (who is an administrator)? What is the [Board of Regents](https://www.usg.edu/regents/)? How is it distinguished from the [University System of Georgia](https://www.usg.edu/news/usgfacts)?

**Suggested discussion questions and instructor guide:**

1. How do you think the 2000 requirement that institutions create Mandatory Student Fee Advisory Committees (MSFACs), and the 2010 requirement that students be included, influenced Georgia Tech’s and other institutions’ campaigns to remove the SIF?

Instructor background: The MSFACs and the 2010 requirement that students be included were important because they provided a structure for students and faculty to discuss and debate the fees on a regular basis. Student seats on the MSFACs gave legitimacy to student voices on the issue. They also may have provided students with opportunities to learn about university decision-making structures.

1. What were the roles of graduate students, faculty, and administrators in articulating their demands and providing support for elimination of the SIF? Why do you think it is important to have a clear “ask” or demand, when working together for change?

Instructor background: Successful campaigns for change clearly articulate the desired change and support the need for it with evidence. Without a clear “ask” or demand it is difficult for a group with a grievance to make progress changing the situation. To gain supporters and persuade potential allies to help, a clear argument backed by evidence is important, particularly on college campuses.

1. University administrators are continuously presented with concerns and demands about a wide range of problems. Identify two tactics (the term many organizers use for strategic actions) that students and faculty used to elevate the importance of eliminating the SIF for campus administrators. Which tactics do you think may have had the biggest impact?

Instructor background: Winning change on campus often requires finding ways to elevate the importance of the changes you seek, because university administrators are continuously presented with concerns and demands about a wide range of problems. Advocates can elevate the issue through disruptive tactics (e.g., demonstrations, highly visible public performances, displays that disrupt normal activity), through media, and by cultivating allies. A “target,” defined as the person who has the power to give the campaigners what they want, is more likely to respond favorably when it becomes more attractive to comply than to continue ignoring the group.

1. Advocates often use different messaging or “frames” when they are communicating to different groups. How did students and faculty frame their message for GT administrators? How did they frame the issue for the Board of Regents? What kinds of messaging do you think were most persuasive to GT administrators, and why? Why might students and faculty use different arguments when communicating with the BOR than with students and faculty at Georgia Tech?

Instructor background: Winning change is more likely when you can frame your arguments in a way that aligns with what your audience cares about. This principle tends to make intuitive sense to students. Organizers often employ a variety of messages tailored to different audiences, choosing “frames” that are most likely to resonate strongly with the group or individual in question. For example, students and faculty advocating sustainability commitments on campus often frame their messaging for administrators in terms of cost savings associated with energy, water, and waste reduction. In contrast, their messaging designed to bring more advocates on board may highlight moral responsibility and climate justice principles.

1. Both faculty and student groups worked on this campaign, but each group maintained an independent voice. Describe the benefits of including both students and faculty in this movement for social change at Georgia Tech. How do you think the outcome might have been different if the campaign had included students alone? Why do you think faculty and students chose not to team up in a formal way?

Instructor background: Social movement scholars refer to “strategic capacity” as the ability of a group to plan an effective strategy and to regularly reassess the landscape and adapt their plans appropriately in response to target or opponent responses and other relevant factors, such as new allies or a media opportunity. That capacity is greater when group members have diverse experiences, skills, and networks related to the issue at hand. Faculty and staff members tend to have greater knowledge of institutional process and decision-making than students, so student campaigns may be more successful when they bring in wisdom from faculty and staff, whether formally or behind the scenes. Regarding students and faculty groups maintaining separate voices, demonstrating strong support of faculty and strong support of students may be more easily accomplished by maintaining distinct teams. In addition, students may be more willing to engage in disruptive tactics, such as demonstrations at the state capitol or on campus, than faculty and staff.

**Additional Readings**:

[Graduate SGA White Paper](https://serve-learn-sustain.gatech.edu/sites/default/files/documents/Toolkit-Docs/Graduate%20SGA%20White%20Paper.pdf).

[Resolution to Reduce Graduate Student Fees](https://serve-learn-sustain.gatech.edu/sites/default/files/documents/Toolkit-Docs/Resolution%20to%20Reduce%20Graduate%20Student%20Fees.pdf).

<https://www.washingtonpost.com/local/education/graduate-students-mounting-degrees-of-protest-over-hidden-fees/2019/08/02/a7f19f3c-b3c8-11e9-8949-5f36ff92706e_story.html>

<https://hechingerreport.org/already-stretched-grad-students-rebel-against-rising-and-often-surreptitious-fees/>

**Social Movement Theory (background for instructors)**

[Ryan and Gamson: Is Framing Enough?](https://serve-learn-sustain.gatech.edu/sites/default/files/documents/Toolkit-Docs/Ryan%20and%20Gamson%20-%20Is%20Framing%20Enough.pdf)

See also: Meyer, D. S. (2009). 39 How Social Movements Matter. *The social movements reader: Cases and concepts*, (12), 28

…and other chapters, available as an Ebook through the GT library.

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