



WUSC  EUMC

# WUSC Student Refugee Program

## Guide to Planning a Winning Referendum

**PUBLISHED BY**  
WORLD UNIVERSITY SERVICE OF CANADA

© revised October 2018

## Guide to Planning a Winning Referendum

Student levies are an extremely effective way to continually raise funds to sponsor refugee students....and it looks like many of you have already figured this out! **All across the country, more than 60 Local Committees are currently funding the SRP on their campuses through student levies, and the number is going up every year!**

*\*Note that while this guide focuses on student levies, keep in mind that graduate students are often under different student unions and so can also have levies applied, AND staff and faculty are great groups to approach about having a levy!*

## Referendum 101

### What is a referendum?

A referendum is a written question that is directed to all students, asking them if they will agree with a compulsory levy to be added to their annual student fees. You can think of the levy operating like a student tax. Just as our government collects taxes, the student government usually collects and administers the SRP student levy.

The benefits of a student levy go beyond guaranteeing financial resources every year.

It is a model that demonstrates how students can support students. A levy is a tangible way in which each student can assist a refugee to continue their studies in safety and security.

Once a student levy is in place, it is common for local committees to go to referendum again to increase the levy if the needs of the program increase or if they want to sponsor more students.

### Are you ready to go to referendum?

Preparing for a referendum involves running a campaign. You will need to consider several factors to decide if a referendum is timely for your campus. Key questions to ask include:

- Do you have the support of the student government?
- Does your local committee have a dedicated group of volunteers willing to undertake campaign outreach and education?

- Does your local committee have a stable structure to ensure ongoing leadership year after year?
- Have you developed an accurate budget for the sponsorship that clearly shows annual expenses and revenues?

## People power

Having a core group of volunteers committed to build support and excitement for the SRP before the election is key. If you are restricted by time and volunteers, focus your energy where you will have the most impact for your time such as an article in the campus paper. Also, identify potential SRP supporters outside of your Local Committee and connect with them early on. Who is most likely to support these issues? Are there individuals who are members of other campus clubs or academic departments who could support you? Make sure that you show appreciation for your volunteers when the campaign is over — hopefully with a celebration party!

## How to Run a Winning Campaign in 10 Steps!

The key to winning a referendum campaign is communicating your message, building a support base and ensuring that they come out and vote on Election Day! Remember, you are not asking students to give to a charity, you are asking them to do their part to be global citizens and create a more equitable world.

From supporting dozens of successful referenda over the years, we have compiled our lessons learned into 10 steps (in chronological order!) to guide you to a positive referendum outcome.

### Step 1: Contact the Campus team!

Let us know you want to run a referendum! The Campus team is here to help you write your question, determine your budget, and support you to campaign. We can connect you to Local Committees that have run successful campaigns, provide statistics about how the SRP is funded across Canada or by region, AND send you a referendum package with t-shirts, posters, buttons, and other materials to help you campaign!

We will also ask you to answer a few questions by phone/email to help you organize your campaign, reflect on your goals, and set a realistic budget. *We need this information in order to send you a referendum package.*

## Step 2: Meet with the Student Union

Each student union will have its own rules about when the campaigning can begin/end, what tactics are allowed, where campaigning is allowed, from whom you receive endorsements and how much you can spend on the campaign. It is VERY important that all volunteers helping with the campaign understand the rules and abide by them. (It is not uncommon for candidates or campaigns to be thrown out if rules are broken).

## Step 3: Research your campus context

Find out the answers to some key questions:

- What types of referendum questions have passed or failed recently on your campus?
- What is the population of your campus? (full-time, part-time, etc.)
- What kind of levy makes the most sense in your campus context? Charging per year? Per semester? Per credit?
- Are there other fee increases upcoming in other areas (tuition, other levies, etc.)?
- What is the political climate/culture related to fee increases or newcomers?

Answering these questions will help you run an effective campaign that is targeted to your campus, and help you determine potential obstacles to your success so you can weigh the risk of running a referendum.

## Step 4: Set your goal

You need to have a clear answer to the questions:

- Why are we holding this referendum?
- What will we do with the extra funds? (i.e. welcome an additional student; match inflation; support students for longer; etc.)
- Where does the levy sit in terms of your SRP budget priorities in relation to other funding sources? (i.e. working to secure waivers from the administration or private donations).
- What are your short term and long term goals?

Again, these answers will help you be clear and knowledgeable during your campaign period to communicate these goals to the student body and help you with the next step: budgeting.

### Step 5: DO THE MATH!

A key factor of success will be knowing the exact fee increase you will need to meet your goal. Here are some basic sample calculations as an example to help you determine how much of an increase you should be asking for. Plug in the accurate figures for your campus, factoring in any in-kind donations or waivers you might have (i.e. how much the levy currently covers)!

<i>Sample objective</i>	Double the amount of students welcomed per year
<i>Current levy revenue</i>	\$1 per student per year x 10,000 students = \$10,000/student/year* (In this scenario, the costs of tuition and residence are covered through in-kind donations and waivers).
<i>Proposed levy increase</i>	Increase from \$1 to <u>\$3.50 per student per year</u> = \$35,000 total, \$25,000 additional revenue (intended to cover all costs for 2nd student, and same costs as is now for 1st student).

*\*Be sure of whether you want students charged per year/term/credit and adjust accordingly*

If you have questions about the budget that was laid out in your last Intent to Sponsor form and your funding sources (i.e. levy vs. waivers), contact the Campus team.

### Step 6: Write the question

How you ask the referendum question is extremely important and the question you wish to appear on the ballot will also need to be approved by the student government. Ideally, your outreach ahead of time will have explained the rationale behind the referendum, so that the question can be clear and concise. See Appendix A for sample questions.

### Step 7: Strategize fund management

Especially if you are passing a referendum to start a levy for the SRP, it is important to figure out how and when the funds will be distributed (i.e. a lump cheque at the beginning

the semester, or will funds be managed on an ongoing basis by the administration or student union?). If you already have a levy, now is the time to consider if the structure you have now is effective - if not, explore what could work better. Overall, it is important to establish written agreements with each party involved in SRP funding.

## Step 8: Make connections on campus

Getting support from diverse partners on campus will help you spread the word and mobilize students to vote! Reach out to the student union, international office, current/former SRP students, candidates running for positions in the student government, other groups on campus who are also campaigning for levy funds, the administration, and staff or faculty.

## Step 9: Train your members

Make sure that your members are prepared to campaign for the increase and know their facts. Resources are on the WUSC website, resources section. Look at the section *Useful Resources* of this guide for more information.

The Leadership Meeting, Regional Meetings, and International Forums are great spaces for members to connect and learn! Also, never forget that the Campus team are here to support you, including your Regional Liaison Officer!

## Step 10: Engage your campus!

The time has come to campaign for your referendum on campus! It is important to remember that in many cases, there is a minimum number of people that must vote in order for the vote to be valid. This means that not only are you campaigning for a YES, you are trying to mobilize your campus to vote in the election itself.



## Tried and true tactics for winning an SRP referendum campaign

**Chalk is your friend!** Use empty board space in classrooms and sidewalks as a canvass for your message. Use consistent messaging and tell students where they can find more information.

**Do a referendum-themed classroom talk.** Ask professors/teachers to give you 2 minutes at the beginning of class to explain why you are asking to introduce or increase a student levy.

**Use campus media:** Do an interview for campus radio or write an article for the campus paper.

**Use social media:** Make a profile or a cover picture that announces your referendum. It should include dates, time, location and/or the link to the voting page. Use them on your Local Committee Facebook and Twitter pages and encourage your members to use them on their personal pages too. Using social media will increase your visibility. You can also create a Facebook event and invite all your network!

**Practice your “elevator pitch.”** If you had 30 seconds with someone (say, if you were in an elevator), how would you make a case for them to vote ‘yes’ in the referendum?

**Set up information booths** in strategic, high student traffic locations.

**Create a small pamphlet or card** explaining the issue clearly so people can take it with them when they vote.

**Creativity gets you noticed.** Buttons, stickers, t-shirts, and posters are all ways to get your message out there. See appendix C for examples.

**Be prepared for a ‘No’ Campaign.** Not everyone is going to agree with you straight away. Be prepared to answer some difficult questions (see Appendix B: talking points) and to respond to their criticisms in an informed and polite way. You may not change their minds, but your response to their questions may influence those around you.

**Ask SRP students and alumni on your campus if they would like to participate.** Often they are the most passionate advocates for the program and they want to see the program increase its capacity. They may want to play a high profile role such as speaking at a public

information session, or a less public role such as providing some personal statements for a campus article. They also may decline the invitation, which should be respected.

**Be enthusiastic!** Sharing your passion and motivation for the SRP is probably the best way of engaging people in voting “Yes” to your referendum.

## Appendix A: Sample referendum questions

### Sample Question #1

“Do you support the World University Service of Canada (WUSC)’s Student Refugee Program with a student fee of \$1.50 per full-time student per semester and \$0.75 per part-time student per semester?”

### Sample Question #2

- “Whereas World University Services Canada (WUSC) is a non-profit, non-governmental organization that has provided the Student Refugee Program at University X since XXXX;
- Whereas the program allows refugees whose lives are in danger to continue their education in Canada;
- Whereas the current fee of 50-cents per semester for full-time students and 25-cents per semester for part-time students supports a refugee student for one year through the Student Refugee Program;
- Whereas the proposed fee increase would enable WUSC’s university committee to support each student for two years;
- Do you support a WUSC fee increase of 50-cents per full-time student and 25-cents per part-time student per semester?”

### Sample Questions #3

“Do you support increasing the WUSC fee from \$1 to \$2 per semester?”

### Sample Question #4

“Do you agree to support the Student Refugee Program of the World University Service of Canada with a \$0.09 per credit student fee for all Undergraduate Students?”

### Sample Question #5

“Do you support the introduction of a \$4 per year Graduate Student fee for the Student Refugee Program of the World University Service of Canada?”

## Appendix B: Talking Points

There will inevitably be students who have questions about WUSC, the SRP and where their money is going. It’s useful if all volunteers involved in the campaign take the time to learn the facts and be prepared to respond to common questions. Knowing the facts is a great way to promote the program and perhaps recruit some volunteers while you’re at it.

If they say...	You say...
<p>“I don’t think student fees should be donated to charities.”</p>	<p>Education is a right. As it is in the world right now, only 1% of refugees have access to postsecondary education. The money we raise will support a refugee student(s) to attend our school and become permanent residents in Canada. We have a responsibility as global citizens to support others.</p> <p>The very small fee that would go to WUSC will change someone’s life and provide them the opportunity to fulfill their potential.</p> <p>WUSC is a network of individuals and postsecondary institutions whose mission is to foster human development and global understanding through education and training. One of its programs, the Student Refugee Program, offers an opportunity for refugees to study in safety and security.</p>
<p>“Why is the student levy mandatory? Why can’t I choose to opt out?”</p>	<p>There is a lot of planning and forethought that is necessary for sponsoring a refugee. In order to bring a student to our campus every year, we need to have consistent and sustainable funding to support their financial needs. It costs about \$25,000/yr to sponsor a student to come here and we need every dollar of that to be confirmed before they arrive.</p>
<p>“I already donate to charities, why should I be forced to</p>	<p>It’s great that you donate to charity; obviously you understand the importance of it. I’d encourage you to reflect on the fact that for the price of a beer/latte you can make a huge difference in the life</p>

<p>donate to this?"</p>	<p>of a bright young student who needs hope. Moreover, we can see the tangible outcome of our donations through interactions with the refugee students on campus, which is not always possible when we donate to other campaigns or charities.</p>
<p>"Why should I pay for something that has no benefit to most students here?"</p>	<p>We do benefit! This program gives students and faculty a unique opportunity to learn firsthand about refugee and development issues. It gives people an opportunity to be exposed to and learn from other cultures and communities.</p>
<p>"Refugees have other opportunities, why should it have to come out of my student fees. Isn't it the government's responsibility?"</p>	<p>WUSC is unique to other development organizations and other government sponsorship programs in that it offers an opportunity for refugees to pursue their education at a Canadian university or college. There are about 23 million refugees worldwide and WUSC plays a key role in offering a quality resettlement opportunity to refugees. As a student, you play an important role in helping the SRP group on campus maintain a stable and sustainable program so that we can continue to support sponsored refugee students for many years to come.</p>
<p>"There are bigger problems in Africa, should we really be supporting educated people leaving their countries. What about the problem of 'brain-drain'?"</p>	<p>People living in refugee camps not only lack the same access to postsecondary education as other citizens of their country of refuge, but the protection of their basic human rights is also questionable. There are few options available to them with no access to the job market in the country of asylum and no way to return home. Receiving an education and accessing safety and security are often only possible if they leave the camp. That said, many SRP students return home, support family members in their home countries or countries of refuge, or work in Canada to improve the situation in their homeland.</p>
<p>"Couldn't this money go a lot further in Africa to meet the needs of</p>	<p>The SRP is an established program that works in solidarity with student refugees. There are other larger problems that the Student Refugee Program does not tackle, but this program aims to address education and development issues in its own, unique and highly successful way. If you would like to read more about</p>

communities there?	<p>the success rate of the Student Refugee Program, please consult our impact study.</p> <p>In addition, WUSC has several other programs that work with overseas partners to create solutions in communities overseas (<a href="http://www.wusc.ca">www.wusc.ca</a>). The Student Refugee Program is one very important part of WUSC's development plans.</p>
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## Appendix C: The Student Refugee Program and Refugee Facts

*Please consult the Forced Migration Public Engagement tip sheet ([wusc.ca/resources](http://wusc.ca/resources)) for more facts on the global refugee situation.*

### Who is a refugee?

A refugee is a person with a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of RACE, RELIGION, NATIONALITY, membership of a particular SOCIAL GROUP or POLITICAL OPINION, is outside the country of his nationality, and is unable or, owing to such fear, unwilling to seek their help.

### Who is the group that sponsors the student and looks after their needs?

The group is made up of students who are involved with WUSC. It's open to anyone who wants to help and the group is responsible for ensuring the student's needs are met, i.e. living situation, emotional needs, orientation to the school and Canadian culture, etc. The group acts as a support base for the student during a very difficult adjustment period. The group signs a contract with WUSC and the Government of Canada to undertake the private sponsorship of individual students.

### What's the legal status of the student when they arrive?

Students sponsored through the SRP become permanent residents of Canada when they arrive. This means they can work, access health care, etc. This also means that they pay

domestic tuition fees, not international fees! SRP Students also often apply to have family members join them and are allowed to apply for Canadian citizenship.

## What's the history of the program?

WUSC has a special arrangement with Immigration, Refugees, and Citizenship Canada because of its history. This program is the only one of its kind because it offers both scholarship and resettlement. WUSC has coordinated this program of private sponsorship since 1978.

## Useful resources

Resources mentioned below can be found on the WUSC Website, in the resources section:

- [SRP Guide for Local Committee](#): This comprehensive resource covers all the steps and info related to implementing the SRP on your campus.
- [Roles and Responsibilities Tripartite Agreement](#): This document outlines the responsibilities of Local Committees, SRP students and WUSC.
- [Promotional SRP Video on Youtube](#): Watch and share this video, *How the SRP Changed My Life*, that tells the story of a former SRP student and a former Local Committee member whose paths crossed through the SRP.
- [Photo exhibit](#): This interactive photo exhibit showcases the SRP and its history!
- [Local Committee brochure](#): Perfect for tabling or an info booth.
- [WUSC Visual Identity Guide](#): Use WUSC's Visual Identity Guide to create your own poster or promotional material for your referendum campaign!
- [Forced Migration Infosheet](#): Learn more about forced migration and refugee access to postsecondary education. This infosheet offers tips and strategies to mobilize your campus around this issue.
- [Campaign strategy template](#): A tool to help you plan and organize your referendum campaign.