

Dakota Edison

My name is Dakota Edison (he/him/his), and I am running for Financial Supports Commissioner with the Students Organizing Active Resistance slate. As a first-generation, low-income student, I have experienced how difficult it is for students to receive financial assistance and understand what resources are available to them, which has inspired me to advocate for equitable and accessible financial resources for all students.

I believe that all students deserve access to all the opportunities higher education provides regardless of financial status and resources. Oftentimes, students do not receive adequate support, and UCLA and the UC system misappropriate our tuition and grant funding, leaving students, especially the most marginalized, behind. Further, students do not receive adequate education about the financial resources available to them. As Financial Supports Commissioner, I would provide the student body with the resources, tools, and empowerment they need to advocate for themselves while pushing the UCs and UCLA to reform the inequalities of the broken resource systems that negatively impact students.

I will address two key issues - systemic injustice and individual lack of access - by:

- Working with administration to promote widely available financial literacy modules, workshops, and resources;
- Connecting with students and campus communities facing resource barriers to provide resources for their success at an inaccessible institution like UCLA;
- Advocating for reform in UC financial aid practices, for resources to better align with student needs, and for UCLA and USAC to be more responsive to the current crises the student body is facing.

Platforms (SLAY):

- **Servicing Student Needs**
 - Launch a student business hub to support student-run businesses and give students more financial resources and agency.
 - Improving Student Government Accounting's reimbursement process to reduce the timeline to receive funding.
 - Increase parking pass subsidies for students, staff, and faculty who are disabled, low-income, commuters, and experiencing homelessness.
- **Lobbying for Equitable Change**
 - Create a Student Aid Advocacy Board that assists students facing hardships through training in the financial aid process. Students in need will have assistance navigating higher education financial aid.
 - Increase transparency of Council initiatives with direct feedback to address changing student needs with quarterly reporting.

- **Accessible Resources for All**
 - Institutionalize financial literacy models into New Student Orientation to promote better money habits and education of college aid, specifically helping students of color and low-income students.
 - Increase exposure of the iClicker/Lab-coat Loaner program by encouraging professors to include it in their syllabi and department newsletters.
- **Your Fees Explained**
 - Streamline funding applications and create application guides of each fund for students to access USAC funding more easily, which will be included with the applications themselves.
 - Revamp the USAC Expenditure Viewer for transparency of student fee allocations and projects hosted by campus communities.

Qualifications:

- **USAC Academic Affairs Commission, Finance Director (2020—Present)**
I have connected with students and campus communities to provide them with USAC funding and adapted funds and guidelines in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. I have experience equitably distributing funding and resources and making sure funding best serves the student body.
- **UC Student Association, Education Finance Model Board Member (2020—Present)**
I conversed with the UC-wide Director of Financial Aid and stakeholders, and advocated for additional funding during COVID-19. I also focused on reforming UC-wide decision making to accommodate marginalized communities through initiatives to double the pell grant and increase overall funding.
- **Academic Senator, Committee on Planning and Budget (2021—Present)**
Within senate I advocate for better allocation of resources and recognition of underserved communities by faculty members involved in the decision making process. I have gained experience advocating for reform and pushing administration to act in the best interests of students.
- **UC Cost Reduction Movement, Organizer (2020—2021)**
The movement started in response to the COVID-19 pandemic and focused on lowering student fees and tuition. I worked closely with campus leaders and the UC Office of the President to recognize the challenges students were facing at UCLA and the UC-system at-large.
- **UCLA Business and Finance Solutions, Student Auditor (2021—Present)**
I have seen first hand how UCLA spends its allocations and utilizes student tuitions. I will use this knowledge to advocate for more transparency of UCLA's spending and identify areas of improvement to make funding more accessible and beneficial to students.