

Women's Club/Affiliates Merger Q & A

Why are we merging with another Friends Group of the university? Why the Affiliates? The Women's Club membership has declined in recent years, as has that of the Affiliates. The Affiliates membership is now quite small, and it becomes difficult to recruit leaders for small groups. The university suggested a merger because the two groups are quite similar—the purpose of the Women's Club most closely mirrors that of the Affiliates. We would lose more of our identity if we merge with, or are absorbed by, one of the other Friends Groups.

How will this merger change the Women's Club? Both the Women's Club and the Affiliates link campus and community and, like the Women's Club, the Affiliates have a large endowment for scholarships. The Affiliates enjoy social events and outings to the campus to attend performances, lectures, concerts, etc.--activities that would certainly appeal to many of the Women's Club members. There's no reason to expect that the merger would have a negative effect on our current interest groups. In addition, members of the Affiliates are interested in serving on the board and planning events and may be willing to lead new interest groups. This would be a positive step since the Women's Club has been challenged to find members willing to take on leadership roles.

How does this change benefit the UCSC Women's Club?

For a few years before the pandemic, it was apparent that our membership was declining, and few members were interested in leadership roles. Thus, during the pandemic, the Women's Club Executive Board felt the responsibility to plan to re-energize our organization. Rebranding clarifies that we are open to all and that we are a campus and community group. The rebranding does not change **our club activities, including general meetings and interest groups**.

Our club attracts members who have free time during the day, enjoy our lunchtime meetings and prefer not to travel at night. Most of our Interest Groups also meet during the day. The idea of trying to grow by appealing to a younger population still in the workforce did not seem realistic without changing meeting times to evening hours to the disadvantage of many loyal members.

When the proposal was made that we consider a merger with The Affiliates, the oldest UCSC Friends Group founded before the campus opened, it seemed a good fit. We are both campus and community groups and we each have an endowment to benefit UCSC students. We discovered Affiliate members who are active in both the Women's Club and the Affiliates and at least one former re-entry student. The Affiliates enjoy planning outings to activities on campus and our group could benefit from that leadership. The opportunity to make new friends and grow our membership is a good thing!

Merging with another Friends Group shows the University our good will and increases our vitality as a strong support group of UCSC that provides valuable assistance in financial support to students, public outreach, and other support for the University's mission. As a vital **University Friends** group, we continue to receive **administrative** support and more from the University.

Why do we have to change the name of the Women's Club? Regardless of the merger, University officials have wanted us to adopt a more inclusive name. After all, our club is open to everyone, not women only; and "club" has connotations which may feel exclusive. The Club's tagline "...where campus and community come together" was included in many of the suggestions made by members. Campus and Community Circle has been considered and is being put forth as most representative of the merged group.

What happens with the Club's finances if we merge? The merged organization will have at least one general operating account with which we can track memberships, and the funds from each group's current operating account will be combined into that single operating account for the merged organization. Each group supports scholarships, the Women's Club to benefit re-entry students and the Affiliates to support local students. Because the two groups' endowments are specific to two different populations of students, both the current use scholarship accounts and the endowments will remain separate. Each club has an existing account for gifts-in-kind that will also remain as they have been used for specific types of fundraising, such as auctions, in the past.

Where is STARS and its leadership in all this? What do they think? STARS supports the Women's Club Board's decision to merge with the Affiliates. STARS remains committed to facilitating the application process, selection, and distribution of the awards for the Re-entry Student Scholarship program. We look forward to a continued partnership in support of re-entry students.

What happens next in this process? Following Article V of our bylaws, we are currently in the review and comment month during which the proposed bylaws and name of the new organization have been made available to all members. Amendments to the by-laws require a two-thirds (2/3) affirmative vote of those present at a general meeting. Because we suspended the collection of dues during this COVID period of no in-person meetings, we are working on the definition of "general membership" to include life members and all who paid dues for 2019-2020 and/or 2020-21 for the distribution. We will vote on the proposed bylaws and name on Wednesday, May 18, 2022, at the virtual Spring Scholarship Event.

When would the new organization start? As the fiscal years of both clubs begin July 1, the smoothest transition would occur if we could begin a merged group at the beginning of the fiscal year on July 1, 2022.

What happens if merger doesn't pass? The Women's Club still needs leaders to plan our meetings and activities for us to continue. We must seriously pursue a name change to reflect the campus effort for inclusivity.