# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Who We Are: About USSA</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Time is Now for Free Public Higher Education!</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What is Free Higher Education? Our Campaign Principles</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Analyzing Different Paths to Free Higher Education</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fall 2015 Campaign Trajectory (Semester Schools)</td>
<td>7–8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Where to Begin</td>
<td>9–10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sample Petition</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Who We Are: About USSA

The United States Student Association, the country’s oldest and largest national student-led organization, develops current and future leaders and amplifies the student voice at the local, state, and national levels by mobilizing grassroots power to win concrete victories on student issues.

USSA believes that education is a right and should be accessible for any student regardless of their socio-economic background and identity. We believe people who are affected directly by issues of access to higher education should be the ones identifying the solutions. USSA is dedicated to training, organizing, and developing a base of student leaders to engage in expanding access to higher education and advancing the broader movement for social justice.

Increased access to education should be a top public priority. High quality, freely available education opens up opportunities for individuals and communities to grow and thrive. Investing in education is a proactive response to the complex dilemmas that face this country.

Our power as students comes from being an organized force that holds our nation’s leaders accountable. By mobilizing and uniting a powerful grassroots base of students all over the country, we build power and win concrete victories. Educated, organized, and united, USSA leads the fight to make education a right, not a privilege.
FREE HIGHER EDUCATION

The Time is Now for Free Public Higher Education!

The American political landscape is in a moment where significant policy-makers are talking about free higher education. But what brought us to this moment? The answer is students. When student debt hit $1 Trillion in April 2012, students began to organize in new and different ways. Inspired by the work of the Montreal student movement in fighting back tuition hikes that year, autonomous student unions began popping up across the country. Students, and everyone, began talking about student debt. Students organized debt speakouts on their campuses, protested tuition hikes, and threatened a debt strike in coordination with the flourishing Occupy movement. National youth and student-led organizations organized actions at offices and meetings of Sallie Mae, Wells Fargo, and the Department of Education. Since 2012, it has become clear that this is about much more than student debt. This is about making quality higher education available to everyone as a right, not a privilege. We will eliminate student debt forever by making higher education free.

This past January, President Obama announced his proposal for free community college. With that, the opportunities for changes in higher education policy have grown dramatically, and now bigger and better proposals have begun to emerge alongside President Obama’s visionary plan. Senator Bernie Sanders has introduced a plan for funding free college through the “Robin Hood Tax,” which would annually generate $300 billion in revenue by minimally taxing Wall Street’s financial transactions. Hillary Clinton has also introduced her own “debt-free” college plan.

As students, it is our duty to lead in this fight. We must take full advantage of the recent attention being paid to free higher education and the deeply felt desire for change among the general public. This fall, USSA is launching a multi-year campaign to create broad public support for free higher education in the United States, with the goal of winning a free (or close to free) higher education system within the next five to ten years.

Getting to a free public education system that is just and holistic will require constant pressure and deep organizing. We seek to create change by:

- **Changing hearts and minds:** We need to build mass public support in order to win. This means conducting large-scale campus education and base-building efforts for 2015-2016 to build capacity and momentum.
- **Exercising power with mass disruptive action:** High-profile direct actions that create moments of crisis, polarizing the public in favor of our demands and generating outrage against bad policies like budget cuts & tuition hikes.
- **Elevating the issue of free higher education in the 2016 Election:**
  - Use direct actions to target Presidential, Senate, and gubernatorial candidates.
  - Evaluate various politicians’ plans for “free” or “debt-free” education using shared metrics, and thus shape what those terms mean.
  - Conduct free education-focused voter engagement operations in 2016.
FREE HIGHER EDUCATION

What is Free Public Higher Education?
Our Campaign Principles

Free Means Free

Many politicians have been talking about “free” college, or “debt-free” college, or “free community college”. When we say free, we mean FREE. We want four years of tuition-free, public higher education, while expanding existing financial aid for housing, food, textbooks, transportation, and other costs of attendance. For those who can’t currently access higher education, Free Public Higher Education means opportunity and a second chance.

Free College as a Force for Equity

Rising costs, reduction in services, and problems of social injustice and representation on college campuses are preventing students of color, working class students, LGBTQIA students, survivors of campus sexual assault, and students from many other marginalized groups from attaining an education. Campuses are becoming less diverse, which creates inequality inside and outside of campus. This fight is about dismantling structural barriers to access and restoring opportunities to marginalized communities.

Education Is Not for Profit

We oppose all efforts to privatize university services. Privatization, through outsourcing services, industry-sponsored departments, and the student debt crisis, has increased costs while reducing the quality of services. We seek to eliminate profit-based models within the higher education economy, for the betterment of students and communities.

Restoring Democratic Governance to Our Campuses

Colleges are communities and should be governed by the members of those communities: students, faculty, and staff. Because students are the primary stakeholders at their universities, students should have the primary responsibility to preside over services concerning student life, including but not limited to student fees. Any free higher education plan should include shared governance.
Analyzing Different Paths to Free Higher Education

As we go into a Presidential Election year, candidates such as Bernie Sanders and Hillary Clinton have proposed various plans for free public higher education, debt-free college, and student loan forgiveness. Our campaign steering committee will monitor these proposals as they come out and measure them against our principles for Free Higher Education. Existing proposals include:

**Free Education For All:** Proposed by Senator and Presidential Candidate Bernie Sanders, the Free College for All Act would eliminate tuition at 4 year public universities and reform student loans. This piece of legislation works in conjunction with the Robin Hood Tax, which can fully fund free public higher education, create millions of jobs, and rebuild the middle class.

**New College Compact:** The New College Compact was proposed by Presidential Candidate Hillary Clinton, to create debt-free college by providing grants to states to halt state disinvestment in higher education. The New College Compact includes providing tuition free community college, cutting interest rates on student loans, and is fully paid for by limiting certain tax expenditures for high income taxpayers.

**Robin Hood Tax:** Estimated to raise roughly $300 billion yearly, this 0.5% tax would tax Wall Street transactions with the purpose of funding free tuition at every public college in the United States. The tax would also slash rates on existing student loans, fund healthcare for all, and fund the reversal of climate change. The tax has been implemented in over 40 countries worldwide and championed by groups such as National Nurses United (NNU) and additional climate change and healthcare groups.
Use this timeline to plan escalation on campus! If you attend a quarter school, adjust the dates to fit your academic calendar.
FREE HIGHER EDUCATION

Fall 2015 Campaign Trajectory (Semester Schools)

➔ **August 24 - September 8: Build Campaign Team**
  ◆ Build relationships and get everyone on the same page

➔ **August 24 to Campaign Kickoff Meeting: Mass Outreach**
  ◆ Petition-gathering through class raps, tabling, dormstorms
  ◆ Don’t forget to go to the school club fair!!!! There’s lots of people there waiting to be recruited.

➔ **The 5 days before your Campaign Kickoff Meeting: Prepare for Campaign Kickoff**
  ◆ Follow-up: Call AND email all contacts about first meeting.
  ◆ Prepare yourselves: This meeting needs to be fun and hype! You and your team needs to be prepared to make this meeting AWESOME!

➔ **5-10 days after School Club Fair: Campaign Kickoff Meeting!**
  ◆ This is where your outreach pays off, and you get a bunch of new recruits.

➔ **Campaign Kickoff Meeting to mid/late October: Second Round of Outreach!**
  ◆ This is where you recruit more people for the next event (Teach-in or Rally)
  ◆ Weekly meetings to build team unity and plan next event

➔ **Mid-October: Teach-in or Rally**
  ◆ Teach-in: Educational presentation on free higher education followed by discussion on free higher ed
  ◆ Rally: Hyped up public demonstration

➔ **RIGHT AFTER Teach-in or Rally: Absorb New Recruits!**
  ◆ Have a meeting to recruit people who came out to your event. Bring them up to speed on the campaign, organizing on campus, and invite them to join the fight!

➔ **Mid-October to 11/12: INTENSE outreach for 11/12 #MillionStudentMarch action**

➔ **November 12: #MillionStudentMarch national day of action!**
  ◆ If you successfully absorb new recruits & build support on your campus, this should be your biggest escalation of the semester!
FREE HIGHER EDUCATION

Where to Begin

Build a Team
If you’re already working with an organization that wants to run this campaign, that’s great! Make sure your members agree that they want to run this campaign, and consider affiliating your organization as a USSA chapter (visit www.usstudents.org/get-involved/start-a-ussa-chapter-on-your-campus). You can also search for existing campaigns in your area by visiting: www.action.usstudents.org/free-higher-education

If you’re starting from scratch, make a list of 10-15 people you know that would work with you on this. Schedule 1on1 conversations with each of them to brief them on the campaign. You can also build in some time to discuss why Free Higher Education matters to you personally, and learn what motivates them to be involved – this is an excellent way to start building a focused and dedicated team. Then ask if they’ll get involved. From this, you should have a team of 5-7 people who will form your core team to start the campaign.

Register Your Campaign Online
Visit www.action.usstudents.org/free-higher-education and create a petition to officially register your campaign. This step is very important – don’t skip it! Our online platform makes it possible for us to build a coordinated network and organize large national days of action. You can also use it to build an email list for your campaign and organize events!

When you create a petition, you will be able to customize the language for your specific campaign. For example, if you want to target local officials, you can create a petition addressed to them. If you are not sure who you would like to target yet, you can keep the standard petition language and adjust it later.

Have Your First Planning Meeting
The first meeting is a way to bring folks you’ve talked to together to talk about the campaign and go over the toolkit as a group. The main goals of this meeting are to get on the same page and plan next steps for your group. You can also spend some time continuing to develop narratives about why student aid and higher education access matter on your campus.

Start Circulating Your Petition
Circulating your petition is going to be your #1 way to build a list of students to engage throughout your campaign in recruitment, education, and mobilization. So you should start circulating it ASAP. The How-To on Outreach on the next page will tell you about the best ways. There is a sample petition at the end of this toolkit. You can use that to get started or print out your own customized petition, Just make sure you are collecting the same information!

USSTUDENTS.ORG
FREE HIGHER EDUCATION

Use Your Petition to Recruit Volunteers to the Meeting
Use the phone numbers and emails on your petition to recruit people to a Kick-Off meeting and then again for your first action.

Campaign Kickoff Meeting
There are plenty of ways to facilitate your first meeting. The important things are that people walk away feeling EXCITED about joining the campaign, CONNECTED to each other, and have CLEAR NEXT STEPS for staying involved. Make sure you schedule time to review the campaign, answer questions, and let people introduce themselves to each other – this is an excellent opportunity for people to talk about why they care about the issue and get a sense of what they are bringing to the table (skills, knowledge, how much they want to be involved, etc). You can also use this meeting to build a vision for your organization by talking about how this campaign can change the lives of people on your campus and in your community, as well as visioning how you can build on this work after we win (exciting, right?). Last but not least, use this as an opportunity to orient and train new volunteers and get them committed to outreach shifts. Pro tip: having free food at the meeting will help bring people out!

How-to’s and Next Steps
On www.usstudents.org/resources/organizing/ you will find a list of how-to’s and resources to help you organize. These will help you and your team learn best practices for recruitment and outreach, building relationships, organizing rallies, building effective coalitions, and more!

Good organizers are committed to learning and growing. The resources online will help you get started right away, and once you have a campaign going, you can start planning a training for the spring! USSA’s Grassroots Organizing Weekend (GROW) training is perfect for building a strong, skilled team. For more information, visit www.usstudents.org/host-a-training/. If you plan on hosting a training in the spring, aim to put in a training request before the end of the fall semester. The more skilled and knowledgeable we are as organizers, the stronger our movement is!

Good Luck Out There!
We're so excited that you’re interested in joining the Free Higher Education Campaign! Organizing can be hard work, but it can be incredibly rewarding as well. Good luck with your campaign and please keep in touch!

- Follow us on Facebook (search “United States Student Association”), Twitter @USStudents, and our website at www.usstudents.org
- For organizing tools and resources, visit www.usstudents.org/resources/organizing/
- To schedule a training, visit www.usstudents.org/host-a-training/
- If you have more questions or need support, email vpi@usstudents.org or training@usstudents.org
Our system of debt-based higher education is completely unsustainable, and everyone knows it. Investing in education is a proactive response to the complex dilemmas facing this country. Free Higher Education is about restoring opportunities to marginalized communities. It is about empowering the next generation of leaders to build a just and stable future.

We demand four years of tuition-free, public higher education, while expanding existing financial aid for housing, food, textbooks, transportation, and other costs of attendance. We are challenging all public officials at the statewide and federal levels, as well as candidates running for office in 2016, to support Free Higher Education.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Phone Number</th>
<th>Email</th>
<th>Grad Year</th>
<th>Zip Code</th>
<th>Want to get involved?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>