University of Arizona Emergency Medical Services ("UAEMS") is a 24/7/365 emergency response agency that is entirely managed, staffed, and supported by University of Arizona students. Since 2012, UAEMS has responded to 9-1-1 emergencies from students, faculty, staff, and visitors on-campus. Over this time, this program has grown from operating three nights per week on bicycles to being the preeminent emergency response service for the University of Arizona main campus. UAEMS responds to an average of ~1,000 9-1-1 requests per year through the City of Tucson’s dispatch system. Beyond that, UAEMS supports numerous university departments through our medical standby services (approximately ~200 events per year), including establishing an incident command structure for Commencement, Tucson Festival of Books, and Spring Fling and providing customized medical standby for Centennial Hall, Campus Health Services, Athletics, and numerous student clubs. On-campus or in the surrounding vicinity, students, faculty, staff, and visitors can trust in UAEMS to respond in approximately half the time, or on average three minutes earlier, than a traditional Tucson emergency service and provide equivalent care by our continuously-trained, Arizona Department of Health Services certified EMTs. The University of Arizona Emergency Medical Services gives our students, faculty, and staff the chance to learn, grow, and succeed together through experiential learning, on-campus education and job opportunities, scholarships, healthcare career counseling, mentoring programs, and most importantly through high-quality emergency medical care. As COVID-19 has overburdened Pima County’s healthcare system, the need for an emergency medical service that understands the unique aspects of student and faculty care has only heightened.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, University of Arizona Emergency Medical Services has assisted the University of Arizona administration with pursuing a safer re-entry for our students, faculty, and staff. We have continued to respond to 9-1-1 requests without interruption since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, implementing real-time and evolving mitigation strategies to provide lifesaving care for those on campus while maintaining the health and safety of our student employees. UAEMS personnel have worked closely with the COVID-19 Re-entry ICS team to provide transportation for COVID-19 positive students to isolation housing during the initial Fall surge, to provide antigen testing in coordination with the Test All Test Smart team for all returning students living on-campus, to provide peer-to-peer education on COVID-19 prevention measures for our students, and soon to administer COVID-19 vaccinations to our community. UAEMS has approached the COVID-19 pandemic with equity in mind - for our students and for the community. Our unique position as medical practitioners representing a diverse set of students at the University of Arizona has allowed us to ensure that the student voice and concerns remain heard and their safety prioritized during the COVID-19 re-entry process. Through the re-entry process, UAEMS has prioritized representing the initiatives originally supported by the annual SSF student survey in 2019, importantly campus safety & security, health & wellness, and the continuation of on-campus job opportunities.

UAEMS functions to meet the needs of the University of Arizona by providing a UA-specific emergency response service that understands the unique aspects of the university structure. In the 2019 Student Services Fee Survey, top-ranking initiatives included on-campus job opportunities (85%), career-based experiential learning/leadership opportunities (80%), health and wellness programs (76%), and campus safety enhancements (76%). Students that apply to UAEMS are offered the unique opportunity to experience the field of healthcare before they enter the workforce. Our members leave our program with an exceptional understanding of direct and consequential patient care that benefits them far into their healthcare careers and graduate studies. Just this year, our EMTs have entered medical school, physician assistant school, and nursing school, and have also started careers in hospitals, fire departments, the U.S. Armed Forces, and more, to further benefit our communities and to create a network of alumni that provides mentorship and counseling to our current students - giving them the connections and guidance necessary for success. UAEMS maintains strict standards for our experiential learning opportunities through direct engagement with the UA Department of Emergency Medicine, running courses such as EMD 493A/B and supporting
EMD 197 to ensure that our students are maximizing their education. While all of our EMTs have the option of volunteering, they can further pursue paid positions as a ‘Shift Supervisor’, as 18 of our members currently have, or leadership opportunities in our Training, Personnel, Logistics, Continuous Quality Improvement, or Public Information departments. These on-campus job opportunities support both undergraduate and graduate students, allowing them to continue their academics while working with a service that specifically understands the complex schedules of a university student. In partnership with UAPD, UA Sarver Heart Center, Campus Health Services, and more, UAEMS provides health and wellness education to all students and faculty on the UA campus with events such as blood drives, continuous chest compression resuscitation and AED use, bleeding control, and alcohol awareness initiatives. Through our work with Banner University Medical Center, UAEMS also supplies American Heart Association certified CPR instructors and equipment to provide the cheapest and most affordable option in Tucson for our students, faculty, and staff to receive training in CPR and AED use, increasing accessibility to this lifesaving program. But most importantly, the requests of the students for increased safety on and around campus are met with the care provided by UAEMS. Between 2019 and 2020, UAEMS answered the call for help 1,007 times in residence halls, classrooms, parking garages, roadways, and more.

As UAEMS marks its ninth year of service, its continued success is a product of a rigorous quality improvement program and the guidance of many university departments. Our agency strives for continuous statistical analysis, being one of the few collegiate EMS programs that places such an emphasis on research and quality improvement. UAEMS uses this analysis to ensure that it is providing care that is most suitable to the needs of our specific community. This response data also allows us to advise our campus colleagues on issues related to substance abuse, assaults, suicides, and other safety risks for the UA community. While the success of our program is continuously assessed through year-by-year statistical analysis, weekly meetings with Banner-University Medical Center and Campus Health Service advisors, and accountability to stakeholders across the university, it is the feedback from peers and patients that allows us to see that our service is valued. Below, a short excerpt of feedback from a Tucson Fire Department Captain truly represents the commitment of UAEMS to the wellbeing of the UA community:

“[UAEMS’] early arrival, early recognition of cardiac arrest, early intervention, and professionalism gave the patient the best possible chance [they] could have had.”

Fully integrated into the University of Arizona, UAEMS ensures its longevity through constant guidance and oversight from departments such as the Campus Health Services, Risk Management & Safety, UAPD, and ASUA, as well as the Tucson Fire Department and Banner-University Medical Center. UAEMS continuously meets with and updates these stakeholders on our growth and operations, allowing for frequent evaluation of our efficacy and reliability to the community. This accountability to longstanding stakeholders ensures that UAEMS maintains a consistent direction of growth beyond the limitations of a student-run program. Beyond this, UAEMS ensures that our EMTs are provided with exceptional preventative care, through partnerships with UA Occupational Health, and mental healthcare, through partnerships with CAPS. While UAEMS has not secured a permanent source of institutional funds to support our operations, we continue to actively look into other permanent sources of funding to support the UAEMS, such as the Health and Recreation Fee. We understand that in order to secure permanent support on the Health and Recreation Fee, a significant adjustment would need to be made to the Health and Recreation Fee’s ability to support additional projects such as UAEMS, but this is not currently expected to occur in any coming fiscal year. During a period when COVID-19 has altered these plans significantly and derailed long standing work towards this goal, the support provided by the Student Services Fee remains resolutely essential to ensuring the continuation of UAEMS medical operations, student support, and campus safety initiatives.

This proposal seeks to meet an increasing community demand and growing responsibility, as the University of Arizona Emergency Medical Services continues to support more departments, more students, more emergencies, and a more dangerous medical environment.