

UISG First Gen Planning Committee Response to S.S.B. #31 Veto
February 19, 2019

University of Iowa Student Government:

The purpose of this statement is to respond to the concerns addressed in President Mustafa's Veto¹ of Senate Bill #31 (S.S.B #31²) but, most importantly, to **clarify any misinformation to the UISG Senate in their vote to reaffirm support for the First Generation Summit (FGS)**. In principle, we ask that the First Generation Summit Committee (FGSC), comprised of both UISG and non-UISG members, be recognized for our commitment to the first-generation community at Iowa. We stand in solidarity with every member of this committee and denounce any form of harassment and antagonism towards any one member. The progress this committee has established thus far is a result of a combined effort by a number of students, not just one person.

Additionally, we would like to highlight this Administration's negligence in compliance with the "Iowa Open Meetings Open Records Act, as prescribed by Iowa Code, Chapter 22. **All UISG records shall be accessible to all students.**"³ As of now, UISG has failed to publish its financial records, current and past, in a way that is accessible to all students and clearly marked on the UISG website. Additionally, in the name of truth and transparency (as well as in adherence to Iowa Code, Chapter 22), **we expect this statement to be made available through all UISG media platforms** in the same way the veto statement was. **This includes, but is not limited to, UISG's official website, Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram accounts.**

The following statement reiterates the FGSC's support of S.S.B. #31 in its original form. We would like to emphasize the power of the Student Senate as a **separate but equal** branch of UISG, address concerns surrounding the **transparency** and **morals** of the committee as a whole, and provide additional context surrounding the decisions made when carefully budgeting out the line items for costs, such as marketing, catering, and photography, in the interest of holding an **affordable, attainable, and impactful** First Generation Summit.

SEPARATE BUT EQUAL

In its foundation, the University of Iowa Student Government Constitution states the roles, responsibilities, and powers of each Branch. The Preamble exemplifies "the formation of **distinct** undergraduate governmental structures [the Executive Branch, the Legislative Branch, and the Student Judicial Branch, which enable] **independent work**,"⁴ meaning that UISG is comprised of three **separate but equal branches**. While the President of UISG reserves the right to veto a piece of legislation, they **do not solely represent** University of Iowa Undergraduate students. Like the United States Federal Government, **each branch serves an integral role in the checks and balances of governance**. In this case, the UISG Legislative Branch serves as a check on the Executive Branch's overreach of power and reserves the right to override any veto that ignores student needs and promotes an Administration's personal agenda.

¹ <https://uisg.uiowa.edu/assets/5ac9b30fcb/S.S.B.-31-Veto-.pdf>

² <https://uisg.uiowa.edu/assets/a97cf6d830/S.S.B.-31.pdf>

³ <https://uisg.uiowa.edu/assets/Uploads/9556621e07/UISG-Constitution.pdf>

⁴ Ibid

To clarify, per the UISG Constitution⁵, Senators have the responsibility to:

- Article II, Section B (1.) “The Student Senate shall **hear and represent students.**”
- Article II, Section B (2.) “The Student Senate shall **express the opinion of undergraduate students.**”
- Article II, Section B (3.) “The Student Senate shall **advocate for student interests in University, State, and Federal Policy.**”

Additionally, The UISG Constitution grants the Legislative Branch a power that is not shared with any member of the Executive branch: the power to present, vote, and approve legislation:

- Article II, Section B (4.) “The Student Senate **present legislation to improve student life.**”
- Article II, Section B (6.) “The Student Senate shall help **allocate Student Activity Fees.**”

As Senators, we have **equal** power to represent undergraduate students and address their needs through the power of legislation. In fact, the Constitution grants Senate the power to:

- Article II, Section C (1.) “The Student Senate shall have the **power to allocate designated Student Activity Fees.**”
- Article II, Section C (2.) “The Student Senate shall have the **power to draft and introduce legislation.**”
- Article II, Section C (3.) “The Student Senate shall have the **power to ratify all contracts and agreements negotiated by the President.**”
- Article II, Section C (7.) “The Student Senate shall have the power to **override an executive veto by a two-thirds affirmative vote of seated senators during the Senate Session immediately following the veto.**”

Lastly, the UISG Constitution establishes an expectation that the Executive Branch **must** execute all initiatives passed by the Legislative Branch:

- Article III, Section B (1) “The Executive Branch shall be responsible for **the execution of all legislation passed by the Student Senate**”.

It is important to note that while the UISG President reserves the right to negotiate contracts on behalf of the organization, it is incorrect to assume that they are the *only* power authorized to establish or initiate contracts or allocations. In fact, nowhere in the Constitution or Bylaws is there a provision addressing *sole* responsibility. Moreover, it must be acknowledged that *no student* can officially sign a contract with a third party; this, in fact, becomes a legal liability for the University of Iowa. It is why the UISG Advisor, Student Organization Business Office, and UI General Counsel (*at times*) engage with third parties directly⁶. For example, if UISG agrees to fund Bijou \$50,000 each year over a three year contract, UISG can pass a Legislative Bill to allocate funds, but an official contract would need to be signed by the UISG Advisor. Again, the Senate shall have the power to draft and introduce legislation as well as the power to allocate the Student Activity Fee.

TRUTH & TRANSPARENCY

In this section, we address **UISG’s role as a student government, its financial standing**, as well as exemplify how this year’s Summit is **affordable and attainable**.

⁵ibid

⁶ <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1X8Q3Ze9eXQ2QyosATj9ojYuK0ClbJVom/view?usp=sharing>

LEADERSHIP AND GOVERNANCE

Before we discuss UISG’s finances, it is important to clarify and delineate the unique role and responsibility we have on this campus. UISG, unlike any other student organization at Iowa, is a **governing body which derives its powers directly from the Iowa Board of Regents and the Iowa Code 266.26B**⁷. We cannot simplify our role on campus as simply an organization when we have been tasked to serve and govern the at-large undergraduate student body. This is not to say that we shall be exempt from our community’s shared values or fail to be good stewards of student funds but rather to acknowledge our responsibility in identifying and addressing gaps where students are underserved. This means *not* failing to invest in and support students in need. To say that every student organization on campus is held under the same standards as UISG is not only false but entirely misleading. As stated by President Mustafa, “Voting for one’s own benefit and against that of the greater student body is what I consider corruption.” To insinuate “corruption” at the simple act of addressing inequities across campus, particularly those among historically marginalized communities, is an affront to these students.

UISG’S COMMITMENT TO FIRST GEN STUDENTS

Prior to the introduction of S.S.B #31 to the Senate on February 12th, 2019, the UISG Executive Branch was required to present a Strategic Allocation Plan for Fiscal Year 2019 in which Executives allocated a total of \$25,000 at the beginning of their term determining their plans to strategically spend down UISG’s budget.

	A	B	C	D	E
1		Line	Status	Allocation	Expenses
23		Prevention Education Booklets		\$2,700	\$2,700.00
24		TIPS Training		\$30,000.00	
25					
26		Collegiate Recovery Program		\$5,000	
27		ISAB Mentoring Program		\$1,500.00	
28		Global Expedition Conference		\$3,000.00	
29		EmpowerMENT Summit		\$2,620	\$2,620.00
30		Pittsburgh Tragedy Vigil		\$260	\$260.00
31					
32	Justice & Equity	First Generation Summit		\$25,000.00	
33		Lecture Committee Diane Guerro		\$22,000.00	\$22,000.00
34		Afro House 50th Anniversary Celebration		\$2,000	\$1,581.37
35		SWIPE for cultural centers		\$2,800.00	
36		Human Rights Week Speaker Event		\$5,000	
37		Multicultural Formal		\$15,000	
38		POWWOW		\$10,000.00	

Additionally, this year’s UISG 2018-2019 Combined Platform declares “Increase support for first-generation students,” in which the organization at-large commits to:

“[Collaborating] with TRIO Student Support Services and the Iowa EDGE Program to create peer mentorship programs, support groups, **marketing** for academic and financial support resources, and **outreach events geared toward the first-generation experience.**”⁹

⁷ Ibid

⁸ <https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/173MEzRR1pjGAqLrcNpS5WKWKEMfeMLK7Rg2-hh-1h9Q/edit#gid=2022636904>

⁹ <https://uisg.uiowa.edu/assets/Uploads/6a0b437e09/UISG-Platform-18-20.pdf>

BUDGET

The First Generation Summit has been in planning since the Summer of 2018 and has had a \$25,000 budgeted allocation since September of 2018. The funding for this event has been planned for and repeatedly approved by the UISG senators and executives who review the Strategic Allocation Plan. The \$23,200 that passed via S.S.B. #31 is **under** the allocated monetary amount for the Summit. The budget for the FGS is economically sustainable and affordable. According to President Mustafa's statement, "It is UISG's responsibility to be economically sustainable, which means finding the lowest-cost option that does not forgo quality." Economic sustainability depends on having a revenue stream that pays for your expenses over time, not, as President Mustafa stated, on simply finding the lowest-cost option for expenses. **UISG has more than \$300,000** in its Contingency account, which is not only reliably available each year for spending, but also must be spent in the next 60 days, down to between \$120,000 and \$60,000. Additionally, the planning for this year's Summit took the resources and advice from last year's planning committee to improve both the foundation and planning of the Summit. In just one year, the cost of the Summit has decreased by half and our expected participating numbers have increased by 100. **To NOT allocate this money to initiatives that serve the student body is to waste the contribution every student makes to UISG's budget through the student activity fee.**

Contrary to President Mustafa's assertion that "Any money allocated to the First-Generation Summit would constitute as discretionary funding," the budget for the FGS is **not allocated as discretionary funds; it is allocated on a line-item basis** and funds can only be spent according to the line-items allocations. Being accountable for our budget on a line-item basis is a priority. The contention that our committee would use any extra room within our budgeted line items for unauthorized spending is a baseless and offensive accusation. Budgets passed through Senate are passed with the intention that each line item will be spent as specifically allocated, and Senators are responsible for seeing this through. The claim that any member of the FGSC would overlook this responsibility is certainly false.

Last but not least, a number of specific line items were called into question by President Mustafa's statement. We recognize her concerns and would like to provide additional context for each item:

Catering

Based on the success of the inaugural summit, **the efficiency of a served lunch is critical to the delivery of the one-day summit's programming.** As a tight schedule of programming must be fit into a single day, attendees are quickly seated at lunch tables before presentations begin, then served lunch while the speaker presents. A buffet-line with 250 attendees could take more than half an hour to complete--wasting valuable time in the middle of a packed schedule. In addition, a variety of University of Iowa professional events consistently opt for a catered meal instead of a buffet-style meal. The FGS is a professional event with valuable opportunities for networking and professional development, and a catered meal would align with a professional standard for the students, faculty, staff, administration, and guest speakers in attendance. Full lunch service was selected to better facilitate programming and maintain the quality of the event, not to be exorbitant in cost.

Photography

The UISG Legislative Branch is **by no means required** to *solely* utilize the Communications Team for any or all of its communications. Historically, the Communications Team, as it exists now, was established by the Simpson/Sanchez Administration to aid UISG in the "marketing,

design, social media relations, or other matters of communication.”¹⁰ While the planning committee commends UISG’s hired photographer, Tanner Mauk, for his contribution to the organization and to campus, the planning committee specifically sought to commission talent from students outside the organization. Again, the use of an external photographer within UISG is not unprecedented. Two years ago, the Zuckerman/Freeman Administration commissioned a student artist to photograph the *Humans of the UI*¹¹ campaign which featured students across the political spectrum and highlighted freedom of speech topics on campus. Last year, the Senate allocated \$2,000 to an external photographer to complete the First Generation photo campaign in lead up to the Summit. And even this year, UISG has hired external student photographers and videographers from Student Life Marketing & Design for the *Fall in Love with Research* campaign headed by Senator Guowei Qi.

The FGSC still plans to collaborate with the UISG Communications Team on photography, videography, and marketing for the Summit. There are currently two ways the FGSC is planning on utilizing photography: through the promotional campaign leading up to the day of the event in April, as well as throughout the day of the FGS.

One way community members can be involved with the FGS is through the promotional campaign leading up to the Summit. The FGSC believes that a great way to promote the campaign is to work with a student photographer that matched the style the FGSC was looking for this year’s celebratory theme. This year, we made an effort for the FGSC to be made up of UISG senators, UISG executives, and other student leaders outside of UISG. We extended an invitation to an external student photographer to maintain the theme of campus-wide collaboration when planning and executing the Summit. Senator Sanchez had introductory meetings with the student photographer to discuss a variety of logistics, such as timeline, commitments, funding, and scheduling. Through these initial discussions, Senator Sanchez finalized a basic quote for the photographer to include in the budget and present to the Senate. This was done so our committee could move forward with an updated budget in structuring our future marketing plans. The next step was to reach out to the Director of Finance who handles UISG finances and arrange the next steps in formalizing a potential allocation. **No legally binding contract was ever created or signed.**

The word “contract” has been overused and misused, and we would like to clear up any confusion. It was never our intention to promise anything but instead to do our due diligence of being prepared, establishing quotes ahead of time (just as we did with our keynote speakers), and developing a specific, forward-thinking budget for the FGS. Because we plan to showcase the campaign in the weeks leading up to the event in April, our photographer has moved forward independently from the delayed progress of the Senate. Although the FGS has been preparing and working all year, it is important to recognize that our timeline has already been pushed back due to weather-related cancellations. This has unfortunately affected the FGSC’s opportunity to present legislation earlier in the semester. However, we found it was imperative to push forward with the promotional campaign in order to stay on track in the planning of the FGS, as well as respect the time of our student photographer, who had already cleared out his schedule and was preparing for appointments in the weeks following the FGS Legislation’s intended voting date. It

¹⁰ <https://uisg.uiowa.edu/assets/Uploads/777632cc69/UISG-Bylaws-2018.pdf>

¹¹ <https://www.facebook.com/media/set/?set=a.1451795468168221&type=1&l=3be95a2d89>

was our intent to present earlier to stay on schedule with recommended invitations and announcements.

We still plan to work with the UISG's photographer and videographer on the day of the event. Members of the FGSC have already had initial conversations with the Communications Team regarding event photography and videography. In our discussions, we've emphasized how pictures and videos from the event itself can be used as marketing materials for the future of the Summit, as well as devised creative ways to showcase the speakers and attendees. We look forward to working with the Communications Team to continue to share promotional materials and document the success of the Summit.

Name Tags

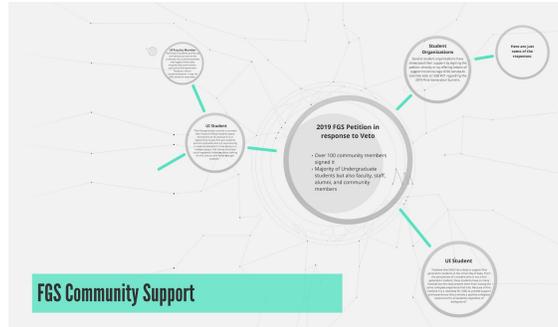
On February 13th, 2019, one day after initial legislation was passed, the FGSC rediscovered name tags from last year that can be reused for this year's FGS. The actual quantity has yet to be confirmed, but we want to thank the individual(s) who found them in the UISG office. Again, our budgeted line item for name tags was meant to act as a **maximum value**. When actually purchasing name tags, we will account for the lanyards found in the UISG Office and spend a much smaller amount (ideally, \$0). This will be clearly reflected in our spending report.

In the veto statement, it was suggested that these name tags were available prior to the legislation presentation, but this is not the case. Additionally, the veto statement recommended that the FGS use sticker name tags for the event as a cheaper alternative. However, the pressure-sensitive adhesives that line the back of sticker name tags often get caught in recycling equipment. These name tags cannot be recycled, meaning the waste generated from purchasing these single-use name tags would go straight to the landfill. Re-using the lanyards that were found in the office, potentially purchasing additional lanyards based on registration, and printing recyclable paper name cards is the decision most closely aligned with the commitment to sustainability stated in UISG's bylaws.

STUDENT PETITION & RESPONSES

After the veto, hundreds of individuals across campus signed on to a petition for Senate to affirm support for the Summit. Signatures were collected not just from undergraduate students, but also student organizations, alumni, faculty, and staff. The "[Petition to encourage UISG Senate to support the 2019 'I'm the First' First-Generation Summit](#)"¹² can be found here and we have attached *only some* of the responses received. Again, we reiterate our duty as UISG to **represent**, **support**, and **celebrate all** students on our campus, particularly those who identify as first-generation and have taken the time to provide us with their concerns and stories.

¹² <https://goo.gl/forms/xLNFCib2fzXfzyI2>



CONCLUSION

The FGS is a one-day event where Hawkeyes all across campus can come together to engage, learn about, and celebrate the first generation experience. The Summit, since its creation, has not only offered a space of comfort for first generation students, but has also resulted in real culture and institutional change. Our work has the power to impact statewide statistics. In fact, nearly 30% of the population in the state of Iowa has completed a Bachelor’s degree¹³ and at the University of Iowa alone, about 1 in 4 students identifies as a first-generation student.

The FGS is also a **one-of-a kind event in the entire state of Iowa**. Higher education institutions have and will continue to look to the University of Iowa for innovative approaches in addressing student needs, particularly at a time when these marginalized communities are the first to be impacted by budget cuts to higher education.

To reiterate, the FGSC will continue to actively seek donations and sponsors for the event. Per the UISG Director of Finance, it is important to note that without a non-profit designation of 501(C)(3), also known as a charitable organization, it *is* more difficult to secure funds via grants, sponsorships, and similar sources of alternative funding. We look forward to continuing to receive support from campus partners as we work to institutionalize the initiative with the help of the Office of the Vice President for Student Life and Office of the President.

The FGSC remains hopeful UISG Senate will realize not just the potential this Summit has in positively impacting the lives of students, but also recognize the year-long effort this committee has made in carefully organizing this event. We encourage all UISG members to volunteer their time at the Summit and witness this impact for themselves. To ensure better planning for future events, the committee will create and distribute a post-Summit feedback survey to participants, presenters, guests, and the planning committee. We also commit to establishing a post-Summit debrief meeting to assess the success of the Summit.

We strongly urge all members of UISG, particularly Senators with the power to vote in support of S.S.B #31, to uphold our commitment to justice and equity and vote to overturn this veto. Your vote has the power to defend one of the largest and most intersectional marginalized communities on campus. **With your vote, you have the power to show approximately a quarter of the student body that they are worth investing in and that they, too, belong on this campus.**

In Solidarity,
The First Generation Summit Planning Committee

¹³ <https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/ia>