UNIVERSITY OF IOWA STUDENT GOVERNMENT
6th Legislative Session
Student Senate
S.S.B #22

Sponsors: Senator Kepner, Senator Meyer
Referred to: Sustainability Committee, Academic Affairs Committee
Student Senate Action: Passed/Failed/Tabled

AN ACT

To allocate $1,300 to the Prairie Restoration Project.

Section 1. Title
This bill may be titled as “Prairie Restoration Project.”

Section 2. Background

Around 200 years ago, the state of Iowa was the crown jewel of the tallgrass prairie in the Midwest. This majestic landscape blanketed the rolling hills in vibrant plants that were not only aesthetically pleasing, but also incredibly beneficial to the environment. The unique evolution of these hearty prairie plants allowed the ecosystem to blossom into a diverse haven for native pollinators, birds, and other mammals. The prairie plants purified Iowa air and served as a natural buffer for waterways. However, due to the rapid development of the state, less than 0.1% of that native Iowa tallgrass prairie still remains.\(^1\) The loss of this natural landscape has had adverse effects on the Iowa ecosystem and natural environment as a whole.

Now, the University of Iowa has a unique opportunity to help rebuild this natural landscape. As a public institution, it is vital that the University of Iowa confront the profound loss of native tallgrass prairie in the state of Iowa and the Midwest as a whole. University of Iowa Student Government, the Office of Sustainability and Environment, and students from the Environmental Science department have had space designated to them by Hawkeye Athletics on
the Ashton Cross Country Field to begin a tallgrass prairie restoration project in order to foster the growth of native plants and serve the student body through hands-on educational experience.

Section 3. Timeline

Phase One/Year One: Fall 2019-Fall 2020

In the fall of 2019, students measured and delineated an acre of unused land at Ashton Cross Country Course. To initiate the one-year pilot program, dead thatch (living and dead plant matter) will be removed from the acre prairie restoration project area and sown with native plant seed. Two small temporary signs have been installed to educate the Iowa City community on the progress of the prairie. Students will observe, measure, and monitor seedling germination and plant growth throughout the 2020 growing season. An additional staff member, the Land Steward Intern, will be funded by the Office of Sustainability to monitor and maintain the land. A decision in regard to the continuation of the pilot program after the first year will be based on the following criteria: seed planting and germination, land steward intern involvement, signage design and installment, and student educational experiences.

Phase Two/Years 2-5: Fall 2020 - Fall 2025

If the pilot program has been deemed successful, phase two of the project will begin in the fall of 2020. In order to expand the acreage of the restoration, land preparation will begin with the chemical killing of existing thatch and weeds using chemicals that University currently owns. Additionally, graphic design students will design durable, 4-season multilingual signs with translations in Spanish, Chinese, Arabic, and Braille to be displayed alongside the prairie. The signs will be created through 3D printing in collaboration with undergraduate students in the College of Engineering. In the spring of 2020, two acres of seed will be planted on Ashton Cross Country course on the prepared land. For the next five years, or until the prairie matures, continued general maintenance including mowing, weeding, burning, etc. will occur. During this phase, educational programming in collaboration with the Biology Department, Earth and Environmental Science Department, and/or the School of the Wild will begin. Athletics Grounds and Maintenance Staff, the Land Steward, and the Land Steward Intern will be responsible for these tasks.

Phase Three/Years 5+: Fall 2025+

The activities and opportunities listed above will continue into the future. There will be continued educational programming and promotion of the prairie at Ashton Cross Country Course. The partnerships with Environmental Science Club and Environmental Science students will continue, providing University of Iowa students with unique volunteer and internship opportunities for years to come. General prairie maintenance will continue to be supervised by the Land Steward and Land Steward Intern. In addition to the continuation of the above projects,
Phase Three allows native landscaping and prairie restoration zones to expand to areas along the Iowa River closer to campus.

Section 4. Budget

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Budget Breakdown</th>
<th>Cost</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 Acre of Seed Mix</td>
<td>$1,500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Includes 50 Plant Species Indigenous/Endemic to Johnson County, IA Seed Sourced from Mormon Handcart Park Prairie Remnant</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Total Cost:</strong></td>
<td><strong>$1,500</strong></td>
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</tbody>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Funding Source</th>
<th>Contribution</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>University of Iowa Student Government (UISG)</td>
<td>$1,300</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Green Initiatives Fund (GIF)</td>
<td>$200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>$1,500</strong></td>
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Section 5. Benefit to Students

The restoration of Iowa’s natural prairie provides various environmental, social, economic, and educational benefits. The environmental benefits include providing habitat for endangered species and at-risk pollinator species along with improving water, air, and soil quality. Socially, the natural prairie will provide aesthetic value, a shared community space, and equitable educational opportunities through multilingual signage. Economically, the low long-term maintenance ensures the sustainable continuation of the project. The educational contributions include hands-on land stewardship experience, field work and internship experience, and volunteer and research opportunities for students in biology, environmental science, and other fields of study.

Section 6. Action

UISG will allocate $1,300 to the University of Iowa Prairie Restoration Project to benefit various aspects of the university and contribute to the advancement of its environmental, social, economic, and educational sustainability goals.
Section 7. Enactment Clause

Be it enacted by the University of Iowa Student Government upon the signature of the President.

_________________________________________, Speaker of the Senate
Elli Lenz

I hereby attest and certify that this bill originated from the 2019-2020 Student Senate Session.

_________________________________________, Secretary
Caren Li-Sun

APPROVED on ____________________________

_________________________________________, UISG President
Noel Mills