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**Report I: A Student Empowerment Fund and its Potential Uses on Georgetown’s Campus**

*The Finance and Appropriations Committee of the Georgetown University Student Association Senate*

1. **Overview**

The Finance & Appropriations Standing Committee of the 14th Senate, elected by the Fall Session Senate, launched an initiative to establish a Student Endowment Fund, later officially named the Student Empowerment Fund, appropriated from the Student Activities Fee. After considering establishing a Student Empowerment Fund during the committee’s inaugural meeting, the committee has analyzed budgeting data, researched policy precedents, consulted administration, drafted legislation, and garnered student support for such a policy. The committee pursued the initiative unanimously to increase undergraduate student bargaining power, invest in the future of the undergraduate student body and maximize the efficiency of the Student Activities Fee Budget.

According to its chartered and constitutional duty, the Georgetown University Student Association aims to influence institutional policy on behalf of the undergraduate student body, effecting positive change for undergraduate students. Institutional policy changes often necessitate costs associated with policy formation, execution, and enforcement. During policy negotiations, Georgetown University administration often requires Student Association officials to finance some of the costs associated with policy changes. When the Student Association cannot meet those requirements, policy changes benefiting the undergraduate student body fail. After numerous failed attempts of the Student Association to change institutional policy, the committee sought to establish the Student Empowerment Fund to increase Student Association bargaining power and further fulfill the constitutional duty of the Student Association. Before pursuing the initiative, the committee analyzed a decade of Student Activity Fee Budgets, and determined establishing a Student Empowerment Fund would best serve the long-term needs of the undergraduate student body without sacrificing funding necessary for immediate needs. The committee continues to push its Student Empowerment Fund initiative through all viable venues. The following recommendations reflect over a semester's work on behalf of all committee members.

1. **Potential Projects Using The Student Empowerment Fund**

After fifteen years, this fund is projected to quickly surpass a balance of $1 million, under the ostensible management of the Georgetown Investment Office. It is our goal to use this fund to create a tangible improvement to student life on campus. Although the members of the Committee wish that the Student Association could undertake big campus renovations immediately, the limitations of our current endowment serve as an impetus for this long-term investment strategy. It is, after all, a task about empowering Hoyas — alumni, current students, and future students. Through this endeavor, the members of this Committee recognize that we are beginning a long-term plan to improve our university. The small issues on campus add up, and we wish we could fix it overnight. However, the most practical action to take is to establish a clear plan and goal to entrust future Hoyas — our fellow Hoyas — with the resources to solve the ongoing issues they will face.

The Healey Family Student Center, now a favorite study spot for many, was funded by a similarly structured endowment fund in the past decade. This concept could be applied to far more than new facilities. In fact, it would surely be popular among both students and faculty to improve existing facilities. Students frequently complain about residential and academic spaces, but immediate solutions are rarely there. With a strong resource like the Student Endowment Fund to aim directly at these concerns, the members of the Committee find themselves confident that Hoyas fifteen years from now will be able to collaborate with the members of Georgetown’s administration to make tangible improvements for our community and envision our task as working to set the groundwork in a clear and directive way.

One potential project that has been identified by members of the Finance and Appropriations Committee as necessary and helpful to the Georgetown community, and that could be funded by the future Student Empowerment Fund, is the improvement of student study spaces in Lauinger Library and the ultimate renovation of the Lauinger Library building. The state of Lauinger Library has become a recurring joke among Georgetown students, with students repeatedly voicing dissatisfaction with the library’s dated furnishings, lack of ergonomic spaces to effectively work in groups, and the signs of interior decay in the building. Lauinger presents a largely frigid and inhospitable atmosphere no longer conducive for student needs on our campus, and this fund could serve to finance these needed renovations. Further, Lauinger as an expensive building has the ability to potentially house more innovative spaces similar to the Idea Lab — with more similar spaces, the University could further promote productive and creative group and individual projects, enhancing the ability for students to channel and develop their talents in the pursuit of higher knowledge.

Another project could entail the expansion and enhancement of present Outdoor Education resources, such as the purchase of kayaks for student recreational use on the Potomac River. Presently, students enjoy kayaking on the Potomac River during the warmer months as a fun pastime with their friends, but financial access has served as a limitation for some. Installing a facility for access by Georgetown students would serve as an investment in student health and wellness as well as an enhancement of present student recreational facilities, overall improving student life in the process.

Additional projects the Committee has identified include, but are certainly not limited to the expansion of spaces for performing arts groups (such as the creation of larger spaces for dance groups), and the upgrading of instruments and equipment, the establishment of a community garden, replacing the vans employed by the Center for Social Justice with newer, more fuel-efficient, and environmentally-friendly alternatives, and potentially even a renovation of Yates Field House.

Of course, in creating this fund, the members of the Finance and Appropriations Committee recognize that following the completion of the University’s present capital improvement plan, new needs may arise and students may identify new, presently-unimaginable, problems that will require investments from this Fund. For this reason, we have outlined that future projects could be eligible to receive financial support from the balance of the Student Empowerment Fund, should follow these certain guidelines:

1. Proposed projects should be designed to serve as an investment in the Student Body, whether that be through the creation of freely-accessible spaces and experiences that all students have the right to use and partake in, the enhancement of resources available for student organizations and other access to benefits organizations, or other palpable improvements to student life and student wellness;
2. Proposed projects should have defined, reasonable, and achievable goals in investing in the Student Body;
3. Proposed projects should never excuse the University from its paramount obligation to provide healthy and safe living spaces for all Georgetown students.

With these goals and guidelines, the Members of this Committee fully anticipate that the creation of a Student Empowerment Fund will be a great success in the fight to improve student life on campus and further anticipate that the implementation of this Fund will provide students with a greater voice in shaping the future of the Hilltop, as Georgetown remains an institution dedicated to creating people in the service of others and remains an institution devoted to the *cura personalis.*