A Resolution to Advocate for the Reformation of the Second-Year Transformational Experience Program (STEP)

McKinzie Harper (for herself, Emily Underation, Annie Greer, Joe Warnimont, Sarah Souders, and Mary Honaker) introduced the following resolution, which was referred to the Academic Affairs Committee and STEP Task Force.

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Whereas the Undergraduate Student Government represents all undergraduate students at The Ohio State University, and

Whereas the Second-Year Transformational Experience Program (STEP) was designed by the University in an effort to better the student experience and second-year student success, and

Whereas to accomplish this goal, STEP requires second-year students to live on campus and maintain requirements specified on its website\(^1\) to qualify for a fellowship of up to $2,000,\(^2\) and

Whereas the $2,000 fellowship is used to assist students in completing their STEP Signature Project, which is advised by their assigned STEP faculty cohort leader, and

Whereas STEP utilizes faculty as mentors throughout the cohort experience, who receive a $5,000 tribute for doing so,\(^3\) and

Whereas the STEP Task Force was chartered by the Undergraduate Student Government to review STEP, and ensure that second-year students are maximizing their opportunities and experiences, and

Whereas the STEP Task Force surveyed 115 freshman, 59 alumni, 128 sophomores, 59 faculty members,\(^4\) and

Whereas the STEP Task Force identified concerns with 3 of the 5 program requirements for participating students (attend required meetings, attend and submit reflection of three professional development co-curricular programs, and complete two-part financial literacy program),\(^5\) and

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\(^1\) [https://step.osu.edu/program-overview/step-participant-requirements/](https://step.osu.edu/program-overview/step-participant-requirements/)

\(^2\) [https://step.osu.edu/program-overview/step-fellowship/](https://step.osu.edu/program-overview/step-fellowship/)


\(^4\) Page 3 of the STEP Task Force Report

\(^5\) Page 9 of the STEP Task Force Report
Whereas 30% of the 115 freshman students surveyed were unaware of STEP, which is an alarming figure as current freshman will be required to live on campus for a second year and be given the opportunity to participate,\(^6\) and

Whereas many professors currently serving as mentors explicitly stated that STEP would benefit from making information on the program more readily available to students,\(^7\) and

Whereas students and alumni suggested improved organization as a must for future success, with some alumni noting they were unable to receive the fellowship due to financial aid conflicts or co-curricular requirement miscommunications,\(^8\) and

Whereas the STEP Task Force concluded that the open-ended format of meetings with STEP faculty members likely contributed to disparities among different students’ STEP experiences, and

Whereas a survey revealed that only 29% of students maintain relationships with their mentors and that 76% of STEP alumni reported feelings somewhat distant from their cohort,\(^9\) and

Whereas STEP cohort and mentor pairings are currently chosen with the intent of matching schedules and diverse interests, rather than similar areas of study or involvement on campus,\(^10\) and

Whereas a strong relationship with faculty members in similar career fields can accelerate student success through networking and career advising, and

Whereas professional development is a cornerstone of the program, and many involved in STEP feel that it could better demonstrate these skills and concepts through a more defined curriculum, and

Whereas half of alumni surveyed indicated that they were never exposed to any professional development or resume-building experiences through the three co-curricular programs required by STEP,\(^11\) and

Whereas STEP students reported dissatisfaction with the required financial literacy programming, noting it was burdensome and stress inducing;\(^12\)

Therefore Let It Be Resolved that the Undergraduate Student Government finds STEP to be an incredible opportunity for students, provided that major improvements are made to ensure student success, and

\(^6\) Page 7 of the STEP Task Force Report
\(^7\) Page 7 of the STEP Task Force Report
\(^8\) Page 8 of the STEP Task Force Report
\(^9\) Pages 6 and 8 of the STEP Task Force Report
\(^10\) https://step.osu.edu/faculty-engagement/
\(^11\) Page 9 of the STEP Task Force Report
\(^12\) Page 9 of the STEP Task Force Report
Let it Further Be Resolved that the Undergraduate Student Government believes that the goals, expectations and requirements of STEP must be made clear to coordinators, administrators, and participating students in order to improve transparency, and

Let it Further Be Resolved that the Undergraduate Student Government encourages STEP to create relevant educational and professional development opportunities for participants to use in the cohort setting and across co-curricular opportunities, and

Let it Further Be Resolved that the Undergraduate Student Government believes that STEP’s financial education requirement should be tailored to student participants of different backgrounds and interests, and

Let it Further Be Resolved that the Undergraduate Student Government encourages STEP to lower restrictions on the STEP stipend and the STEP Signature Project, and

Let It Further Be Resolved that the Undergraduate Student Government believes the stipend should facilitate growth without reservation, in order to maintain significance in value and flexibility in application, and

Let It Further Be Resolved that the Undergraduate Student Government encourages STEP to re-evaluate cohort and faculty pairing procedures and strategically determine cohorts based on similar interests, career paths, and college goals to forge communities that last beyond the duration of the program, and

Let It Further Be Resolved that the Undergraduate Student Government encourages STEP to improve accountability by introducing the use of a Student Evaluation of Instructor for faculty advisors, and

Let It Further Be Resolved that the Undergraduate Student Government recognizes Samer Abusway, Erin Donnelly, Chase Petrie, Adam Whitehead, Michael Branum, Shelby Powers, and Carly Hooker for their efforts in creating the STEP Task Force Report.

Floor Vote: PASSED WITH UNANIMOUS CONSENT

Abigail Grossman
Abby Grossman
President

Abby Waidelich
Vice President

Date Adopted: February 24, 2015
Date Terminated:_________________