

**Daniel Community Scholars
Project Proposal**

**Group 2:
University of Alabama Cannabis
Policy Reform**

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Research

Abstract:

DCS Group 2 has been given the opportunity to research the multi-dimensional topic of marijuana sentencing on campus and throughout Tuscaloosa. Group 2 is researching lenient sentencing reform alternatives for criminal marijuana usage on campus delving into how this possible policy reform could benefit members on campus. Although students are to be treated in similar manners to everyday citizens, the research suggests that taking different measures in the repercussions of marijuana-related offenses will ultimately benefit both the university and students alike.

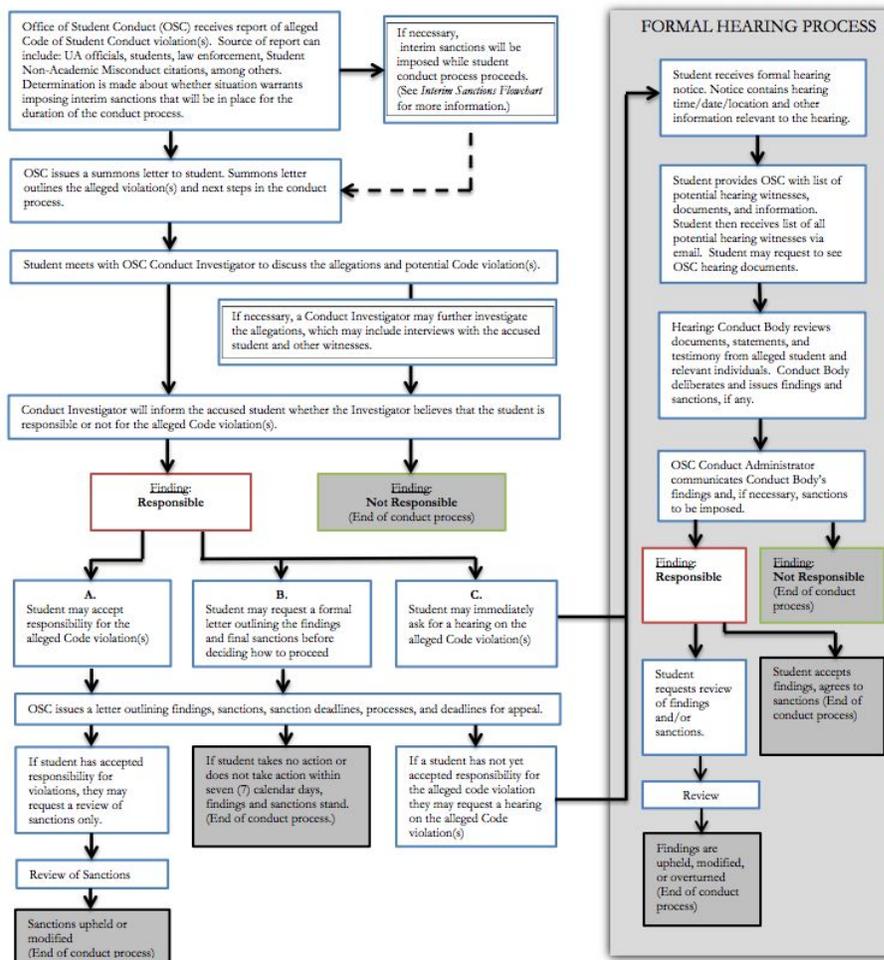
Tuscaloosa's Past:

Researching this topic drove me into the news cycle of 2013. The 2013 West Alabama Narcotics Task Force created a SWAT style drug bust in order to round up 61 low offense UA students for marijuana related crimes (Sheets, At Alabama). The method of finding these minor offenders was through their own classmates. The task force flipped students caught with small amounts of marijuana bribing them by not arresting them and coaxing the individuals into becoming police informants. These students would then wear wires for police in order to find their suppliers (Sheets, How Cops). This break of trust within the community prompted swift backlash in negative emotions toward law enforcement on campus. For this reason, Group 2 is pushing for a reformed policy for minor marijuana possession offenses on campus to instill trust back into the university community.

The most affected by this issue are the students at the university most vulnerable to being caught with this offense. As students, we all sign our pledge of student conduct when applying to the university. Within this code, there is clear commitment to not partake in any illegal drug use which outlines that “students are required to comply with this policy, the ALCOHOL POLICY, and the ALCOHOL AND OTHER DRUG POLICY FOR STUDENTS. A student or student organization may be disciplined for, and is deemed in violation of the Code of Student Conduct for the unlawful use, possession, sale, or distribution of any narcotic, drug

THE UNIVERSITY OF ALABAMA’S STUDENT CONDUCT PROCESS FLOWCHART

This flowchart provides only a general overview of the student conduct process. For more details, please refer to the Code of Student Conduct, which governs the conduct process. Portions of this flowchart may not apply to situations involving sexual misconduct allegations.



- IMPORTANT REMINDERS:**
- Findings are based on **preponderance of the evidence**, meaning, "It is more likely than not" that a violation occurred.
 - Failure to meet OSC response deadlines and/or sanction deadlines will result in a **hold** being placed on the alleged/sanctioned student's account.
 - All official summons and notices will be emailed to the alleged/sanctioned student's **UA email account**.
 - **Deadlines** are calculated in accordance with Code of Student Conduct, *Article III.(1). Computing Time*.

paraphernalia, medicine, chemical compound, or other controlled substance that is illegal under federal, state, or local laws. The University will take disciplinary action against a student, a group of students, or student organization for unauthorized use, possession, sale, or distribution

of any controlled substance or illegal drug that occurs on University property or as part of any University activity,”. This pledge to the university is to be upheld. When the pledge is violated, the consequences seem to be subjective. If a student is sanctioned for this sort of infraction, the Student Conduct Office provides a flowchart that outlines the course the student will undergo.

According to the University of Alabama police, a student who violates “any provision of the University's DRUG-FREE CAMPUS AND WORKPLACE POLICY will be held accountable for their behavior and will be subject to appropriate disciplinary action, consistent with local, state, and federal law, and the provisions of the Code of Student Conduct. Such action may include mandatory counseling, a reprimand and warning, loss of privileges, disciplinary probation, community service, restitution, attendance at an alcohol and substance abuse classes, suspension, expulsion, and/or referral to the proper law enforcement authorities for prosecution.”

Student Conduct Office:

After speaking with Paula Perry, Associate Director of the Student Conduct Office, actions that the school takes against students caught for possible possession charges were only made slightly clearer. The school lacks transparency when it comes to student consequences and Perry described each offense as being case-by-case. She informed me that after a student’s first offense, they would receive a summons letter from the office. The student would be on probation for six months, attend a drug education workshop and a capstone cares workshop, be assigned twenty hours of community service, be subjected to random drug tests, and- if the student is under 21- they would have their parents notified. Perry also explained that the workshops were informative of the dangers of cannabis and to remind the student why they are at the school: for a

respectable education. She also told me that only a few cases were criminal cases with the Tuscaloosa Police Department- a result dependant on whether the school official gave the student a city citation. There seemed to be an emphasis on the “case-by-case” position from the office and why these steps of the process could not be on their website like the flowchart. The stress of making the wrong decisions was also a focal point of the discussion.

The Breakdown:

While I have not been able to produce a breakdown of the demographics within this offense, the UAPD 2018 Annual report stated that there has been an increase of drug law violations at UA since 2015, with the latest numbers showing 106 drug law violation arrests and

MARIJUANA & DRUG PARAPHERNALIA		
Possession of marijuana in first degree (other than personal use or previously convicted of possession in second degree)	<i>Class C Felony.</i> Prison: 1-10 years Fine: Not more than \$15,000	13A-12-213
Possession of marijuana in second degree (for personal use only)	<i>Class A Misdemeanor.</i> Jail: Not more than 1 year; Fine: Not more than \$6,000	13A-12-214
Use, possession, delivery, or sale of drug paraphernalia	<i>Class B Felony for sale to one under 18</i> by one over 18. Prison: 2-20 years; Fine: Not more than \$30,000 <i>Class C Felony for sale.</i> Prison: 1-10 years; Fine: Not more than \$15,000 <i>Class C Misdemeanor for possession.</i> Jail: Not more than 3 months; Fine: Not more than \$500	13A-12-260
* Imprisonment sentences for felonies: §13A-5-6 & for misdemeanors: §13A-5-7; fines for felonies: §13A-5-11 & for misdemeanors: §13A-5-12. Driver's license suspended for 6 months for any drug offense conviction (§13A-12-290). Note: A drug conviction under state or federal law may make a student ineligible for federal financial aid (loans, grants, work study). For more information, see https://studentaid.ed.gov/eligibility/criminal-convictions#drug-convictions (Fall 2014)		

113 disciplinary actions/judicial referrals for drug abuse violations on campus. The University of Alabama Drug-Free Campus and Workplace policy defines illegal drugs and has a chart set out with a punishment equal to each crime. The need for UA’s statistical breakdown on the arrests is necessary in order to identify if the University follows the same arrest patterns as the state.

I have also broadened the research to include the greater Tuscaloosa area because of the lack of numbers on the UA level. According to 2016 demographics from the Tuscaloosa Police

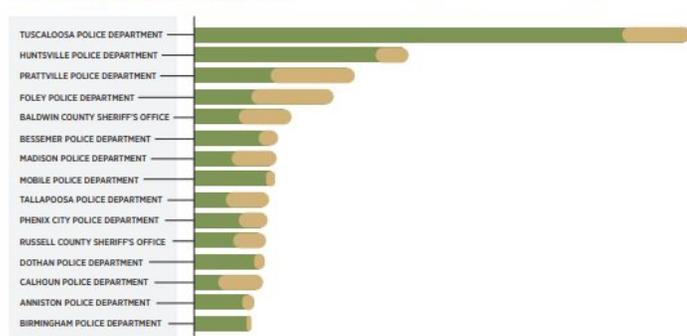
Department, Southern Poverty Law Center, and Alabama Appleseed, Tuscaloosa has a disproportionately high number of black arrests. In fact, in 2016 Tuscaloosa county arrested the most black people for marijuana possession than any other county in Alabama.

FIGURE 3
TOP 15 AGENCIES BY NUMBER OF ARRESTEES, RANKED BY RACIAL DISPARITY (2016)

AGENCY	NUMBER OF BLACK ARRESTEES	NUMBER OF WHITE ARRESTEES	TOTAL	BLACK-TO-WHITE RACIAL DISPARITY
Huntsville Police Department	121	22	143	11.2 to 1
Dothan Police Department	40	7	47	10.5 to 1
Baldwin County Sheriff's Office	30	35	65	7.9 to 1
Mobile Police Office	48	6	54	7.2 to 1
Madison Police Department	25	30	55	4.4 to 1
Tuscaloosa Police Department	256	75	331	4.1 to 1
Prattville Police Department	51	56	108	4 to 1
Birmingham Police Department	35	3	38	3.9 to 1
Anniston Police Department	32	8	40	3.6 to 1
Foley Police Department	38	55	95	3.3 to 1
Calhoun County Sheriff's Office	16	30	47	1.9 to 1
Tallapoosa County Sheriff's Office	21	29	50	1.9 to 1
Phenix City Police Department	30	19	49	1.8 to 1
Russell County Sheriff's Office	26	22	49	1.4 to 1
Bessemer Police Department	43	13	56	1.1 to 1

Reported by the Southern Poverty Law Center and Alabama Appleseed (7), marijuana charges disproportionately affect people of color,

FIGURE 4
TOP 15 AGENCIES BY NUMBER OF ARRESTEES (2016)



especially black people, within Alabama's criminal justice system; the retention of statistics in those charged with university sanctioned violations is crucial. It is the

only way to detect whether the university follows the same outline as the state when it comes to university-based sanctions. The Southern Poverty Law Center and Alabama Appleseed (6) reports that a study by the center yielded results suggesting that black people in the state are four

STATEWIDE MARIJUANA POSSESSION ARREST RATE PER 10,000



times more likely to be arrested for marijuana possession (misdemeanors and felonies) in 2016

and five times as likely to be arrested for felony possession. This in turn could affect a multitude of students with wealth disparities, law assistance, and staying in school.

The Consequences and Demographics:

This sort of reference negatively affects minorities rolling into all aspects of their lives. Any individual convicted of a marijuana offense faces a one year minimum ineligibility period for receiving FAFSA. Because African Americans are the individuals predominantly arrested, charged, and convicted for these offenses, the consequences of this crime stem farther than simply a record. This information directly affects students at UA and is sufficient reason for a reformed policy on marijuana sentencings and referrals on campus. While this information is statewide, the demographics for the school and state are alarmingly close- giving a possible indication that the school parallels the state when it comes to this charge. According to the United States Census Bureau (2018), Alabama is 69% white, 27 % Black, 4% Latino, and around

The University of Alabama
Students by Race/Ethnicity*: Fall 2018

Race/Ethnicity	Students by IPEDS Reporting Category		Students by Collection Category							
	Total (Unique Count)	%	Hispanic or Latino	American Indian or Alaska Native	Asian	Black or African American	Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander	White	Race/Ethnicity unknown	Non-Resident Alien
Hispanic or Latino	1,831	4.77	1,831	91	47	116	25	1,475	0	0
American Indian or Alaska Native	139	0.36	0	139	0	0	0	0	0	0
Asian	466	1.21	0	0	466	0	0	0	0	0
Black or African American	4,038	10.52	0	0	0	4,038	0	0	0	0
Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander	42	0.11	0	0	0	0	42	0	0	0
White	29,170	75.98	0	0	0	0	0	29,170	0	0
Two or more races	1,242	3.24	0	478	416	434	142	1,112	0	0
Race/Ethnicity unknown	240	0.63	0	0	0	0	0	0	240	0
Non-Resident Alien	1,224	3.19	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1,224
Total	38,392	100.00	1,831	708	929	4,588	209	31,757	240	1,224

1% Asian with some of those percentages being mixed with other races. The University of Alabama is

around 76 10% Black, 5% Latino, and 1% Asian. This was all posted information on the office of institutional research and assessment website (Student By Race, 2018).

The Research:

A study completed at the Capstone examined attitudes towards marijuana legalization in Alabama and resulting attitudes towards police officers. This study displayed a mistrust of police officers related directly back to the student's race (Fisher 24). The findings showed that African Americans had the most negative outlook on police officers rather than white students, meanwhile not all minorities have negative outlook on officers as other studies have suggested (Fisher 25).

This study directly attaches the University of Alabama to the national conversation of the legalization of marijuana. Around 65% of students support legalization in Alabama. This belief affects personal feelings towards police officers on campus, hindering the need for trust between the two. With more standardized policy for marijuana-related offenses, a restoration of trust and positive feelings towards officers can be accomplished.

A separate study outlines the effects of university sanctions for cannabis-related infractions. Campus sanctions after an alleged offense has taken place are a pivotal moment in the justice process. This phase can be crucial in identifying possible warning signs of cannabis-dependent related problems that deeply affect academic growth including procrastination, lower energy, less productivity, memory loss, missing work or school (Buckner 2).

This study was done at an undisclosed large state university in the southern United invited students sanctioned for an offense related to possessing, not distributing, marijuana to join their group experiment. The goal was to find if university sanctions truly deters students

from using the drug again and exploring a way to identify warning signs of addiction and overuse in the students.

While over one third of college students use marijuana, most students with cannabis use related issues are unwilling to seek treatment, the problem still stands that these symptoms affect students' academic lives and conduct (Buckner 1). This conduct in turn affects the school's resources and ability to assist in the student's success. The researchers of this experiment proposed an intake appointment set in identifying signs of marijuana abuse instead of an incident based sanctions. With this new method of treating cannabis sanctions there were noticeably decreased usage of the substance by those before intake appointments. Individuals that had incident appointments used cannabis a mean of 29 times in 15 days while those with intake appointments approaching used it about 7 times over 4 days (Buckner 6). Following intake appointments, the majority decreased their usage of cannabis altogether with some even claiming abstinence.

This study shows that teaching students how to handle stress and increasing awareness on adaptive skills to increase positivity has a more reflective effect in lowering cannabis usage across campuses. While this is the first study of its kind so far, the data supports that taking a more assistive approach during the student's discipline process yields greater gains than simply sanctioning the individual for a disciplinary action.

Conclusion:

At the University of Alabama, there is a past of mistrust when it comes to minor marijuana offenses and the resulting sanctions. In 2013, a sting that resulted in the arrests of 61 UA students was executed with the help of student drug informants caught for similar offenses

but bribed to turn on their fellow students in exchange for not being prosecuted for their crimes. The alienation of those students for minor offenses has created a deep-set issue that can be repaired in different ways.

Our goal is to work with the university towards safer solutions for minor marijuana offenses to benefit the school and student. Reform of the governing University policy to provide a clear and appropriate disciplinary structure could dissuade students from partaking in the activity while also promoting different methods to combat onset feelings of depression or stress.

Community Partnership

1. Previous Partner Work and Future Expectations:

- a. The relationship between the DCS team and Will Tucker at the Southern Poverty Law Center was established when we reached out via email to ask about his work with cannabis policy in Alabama and if his organization would be willing to be the community partner for the DCS project.
 - i. Will Tucker in specific was a good contact because he is a Blackburn Fellow and thus knows the value of the program.
- b. The Southern Poverty Law Center has helped us define the scope of the project and what we can do to assist them by helping determine avenues of reform with high rates of success and what approaches best fit our situation.
 - i. The expectations we have for the community partner include providing expert knowledge and guidance to the group on issues of cannabis law and reform.
 1. Additionally, the community partner is expected to act as a bridge between the DCS team and valuable community contacts for whom we otherwise would not have an introduction.
 - ii. The staff time expected has been discussed to be communication over the phone by appointment or punctual communication via email.
- c. We will work with the partner to evaluate project success when the finalized draft of the policy will be given to the Office of Student Conduct and the Student Government Association for review and proposition as amendments to the Alcohol and Other Drug Policy on campus.
 - i. The project will then be closed off by the implementation of this cannabis policy reform.

Implementation Plan

Objective:

Policy Reform: Cite-and-Release Policy as well as a Transparency Element with the purpose of creating a standardized, fair, and uniform policy. Create a blanket, uniform policy about possession of marijuana, not trafficking, proceedings

Action Plan

1. Gauging Public Opinion: (Completed by the end of January)

- Send out a voluntary Qualtrics Survey to student body
 - The survey will focus on their understanding of the disciplinary process for students cited for low-level drug possession and their attitudes towards current disciplinary procedures and will be drafted in tandem with suggestions for SPLC.
 - It will consist of both multiple-choice and short-answer questions and aim to take around 15 minutes to complete.
 - The survey will not record names unless students voluntarily opt-in to be contacted for the focus group (see below.)
 - Contact student groups to get survey placed on their weekly newsletter and have the survey open for a week.
 - The goal number of responses will be at 50.
 - Included in the survey for the student, if they are interested in talking about the issue and solutions, they can provide their email to participate in their own focus group.
- Send anonymous Qualtrics Survey to UAPD
 - Contact UAPD to get permission to send their office the survey
 - Chief John Hooks
 - Public Information Office in UAPD
 - Reach out to UAPD and TPD to research the economics on how much of their time was spent on lower level offenses that could have been allocated to higher level crimes.
- Send survey to Office of Student Conduct to gauge their attitudes towards the effectiveness of the process

2. Gathering Proposed Solutions (Completed by early March)

- Contact who provided their email to attend a focus group
 - § During the focus group, snacks will be provided for 25 persons.

- Host a round-table meeting at the Ferguson Student Center
 - The meeting will include members of the student body, representatives from UAPD, representatives from the Office of Student Conduct, and other interested parties previously contacted.
 - § The meeting will feature snacks in exchange for solutions.
 - ◇ Volunteer opportunities include three recorders, three student representatives, and two discussion facilitators,
 - All findings will be presented including current attitudes and proposed solutions to highlight areas of overlap to compromise upon.
 - These will be compiled in a multimedia presentation through a PowerPoint and accompanying handouts given to each participant.
 - The handouts and PowerPoint will feature graphical representations of the quantitative data as well as key elements of the qualitative data.
 - The meeting will begin by presenting the findings and then open for discussion.
 - Discussion will be facilitated by the discussion facilitators who will have documents featuring discussion topics.
 - The topics will be drawn from the key concerns of each group and the respective solutions.
 - After each solution is initially discussed, straw polls will be conducted of the individuals present to see how they feel about the solution (positive or negative). Those with a majority of positive responses will be noted and revisited after all solutions are discussed.
 - Key positive elements will then be brought up and molded into a centralized solution.
 - The objective will be to leave with a drafted solution ready to offered to the responsible party for amending the Student Code of Conduct and other relevant procedures the policy would amend.
- Following the roundtable, the media specialists will publish information about the proposed policy to garner public support.
- The finalized draft of the policy will be given to the Office of Student Conduct and the Student Government Association for review and proposition as amendments to the Alcohol and Other Drug Policy on campus.

Risk Mitigation:

- Include clauses in the survey to account for potential personal benefits and consequences for participation

- Ensure all communications relating to the issue do not compromise the University's anti-drug stance. The focus will not be on advocating for marijuana usage, but solely on ensuring a better process for sanctioning offenders that is fair.
- Ensure all on-campus events such as focus groups and roundtables are held within the University's policies including Event Smart registration if necessary.
- During education of volunteer roles, we will include a specific segment of food safety regulations and procedures for the Snack Specialists to adhere to.

Transportation:

- If meeting with an interest group, transportation will be planned for within the group of communication officers through the usage of personal vehicles.
- All events will be housed on a central campus location as the majority of the involved parties work on campus, therefore not requiring additional transportation.

Volunteer Roles:

- ◆ Survey Reviewers (12)
 - Review survey responses and makes note of important comments
 - Prepare a report highlighting trends in the surveys
- ◆ Communication Officers (16)
 - Attend meetings with interest groups (i.e. SPLC, UAPD, etc.)
 - Discuss the group's proposed solution.
 - Makes note of important comments held throughout.
- ◆ Discussion Facilitators (4)
 - Facilitate discussion during roundtables and focus groups
 - Ask a series of prepared questions
 - Ensure all voices are being heard during the discussion and that decorum is preserved.
- ◆ Recorders (5)
 - Keep a record of discussion during focus groups and the roundtable.
 - Take notes in real-time to ensure a complete report of the discussions is maintained.
- ◆ Snack Specialists (4)
 - Distribute food provided during focus groups and roundtables
 - Ensure all food safety regulations are adhered to.
- ◆ Policy Advocates (3)
 - Participate in the roundtable discussion to provide the student insight to proposing solutions.
 - Represent the student body with respect and dignity.

- Provide educated commentary based on the information gathered throughout the course of the project.
- ◆ Media Specialists (2)
 - Take photographs of key meetings and events with the consent of the persons participating in the event.
 - Publish information in regards to the policy issues discussed- namely, the findings of the survey to highlight the needs for reform in areas identified by the survey.

Proposed Materials Required:

⌘ Pens

⌘ Notepads

⌘ Snacks

- Chick-fil-A party platters
- Drinks
- Cups
- Plates
- Silverware
- Napkins

⌘ Survey software (Qualtrics)- a year subscription for Qualtrics costs around \$1500 per year. It could save us a lot of money to try to use the Blackburn Qualtrics software instead.

⌘ Room rental through the Ferguson Student Center- it is free to book a room at the ferg.

⌘ Nametags ('Hello, My Name Is' stickers)

Key:

⌘ Budget Relevant Information

◇ Volunteer Role Opportunity

Budget Proposal

	Quantity	Revenue per Unit	Total	Running Total	Notes / Details
Revenue:					
Daniel Foundation Grant	1	\$ 5,000.00	\$ 5,000.00	\$ 5,000.00	
TOTAL REVENUE				\$ 5,000.00	

	Quantity	Expense per Unit	Total	Running Total	Notes / Details
Expenses:					
<i>Example: Supplies</i>	30	\$ 2.00	\$ 60.00	\$ 60.00	Example - Coloring Books for Classroom Activity
<i>Example: Volunteer Management</i>	50	\$ 3.00	\$ 150.00	\$ 210.00	Example - Snacks for Volunteer Training (50)
<i>Example: Ticket Costs</i>	30	\$ 5.00	\$ 150.00	\$ 360.00	Example - Zoo Field Trip for Pre-K Students (30)
<i>Example: Transportation</i>	4	\$ 60.00	\$ 240.00	\$ 600.00	Example - Shuttle Rental (4 hours) for Field Trip
Chips and drinks					
<i>Chips and drinks</i>	1	\$ 300.00	\$ 300.00	\$ 300.00	Snacks
<i>Snacks</i>	1	\$ 100.00	\$ 100.00	\$ 400.00	Drinks
<i>Chick-fil-A party platter</i>	2	\$ 75.00	\$ 150.00	\$ 550.00	Meal with snacks
<i>Supplies to serve snacks</i>	1	\$ 100.00	\$ 100.00	\$ 650.00	Napkins, cups, plates, silverware
<i>Name Tags</i>	1	\$ 20.00	\$ 20.00	\$ 670.00	Stick on name tags for our meetings
<i>Office supplies</i>	1	\$ 100.00	\$ 100.00	\$ 770.00	Pens, paper, notepads, sharpies
<i>Nice Meal for Outside guests</i>	1	\$ 700.00	\$ 700.00	\$ 1,470.00	Meal for sitdown lunch to discuss our findings
<i>Printing</i>	1	\$ 30.00	\$ 30.00	\$ 1,500.00	General printing and flyer needs
TOTAL EXPENSES				\$ 1,500.00	
DIFFERENCE				\$ 3,500.00	Balanced or Budget Surplus

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