

# STUDENTS LIVING **CARDINAL**, **GOLD** AND **GREEN**

Even in times of struggle and setbacks, there is a persistent little fire inside telling us not to give up. This flame ignites our perseverance to push through and achieve our goals.

This month the perseverance of the Iowa State University Student Government in representing the ever-changing student body is highlighted. Constantly adjusting and shifting, the student government members make perseverant efforts to make sure students' voices are heard and represented on campus.



Image Courtesy of Adobe Stock

## Meet your Student Government

The Iowa State University Student Government is made up of three branches, nine committees, a supreme court and senate. Student leadership works together, adapting to maintain a strong community on campus.

This month's installment of Students Living Cardinal Gold and Green highlights the perseverance of the Student Body President, Vice President and the executive branch directors of Governmental Affairs, Health and Wellness and Sustainability. Finding passion

in their roles, student leaders are motivated and excited to take action and reflect the perseverance and passion of the entire student body.



Photo Courtesy of Iowa State Student Government

The lofty responsibility of the Student Government is to be an overarching advocate and voice for the over 30,000 students enrolled at ISU. Collectively, this team shows perseverance in their diligent work to serve students.

At the head of the executive branch, is the president, Colby Brandt, a junior majoring in agriculture and rural policy studies and international agriculture, and vice president, Will Vlasek a junior majoring in agricultural systems technology. Voted in by students in the spring of 2025, Brandt and Vlasek put their campaign into action this past fall.

Brandt said as Student Body President his focus is "to ensure that student voices are represented at every level of decision-making." Working alongside him, Vice President Vlasek focuses on projects and

initiatives that address student needs aiming to improve the student life experience.

Together, this team works diligently and is fueled by perseverance to create a positive legacy on the Iowa State campus.



Photo Courtesy of Brandt and Vlasek

Representing ISU Student Government off-campus is Director of Governmental Affairs, Emily Meyer, a senior double-majoring in agricultural and rural policy studies and double-minoring in agricultural business and political science.

Meyer acts as a bipartisan advocate in state and federal law, making sure the student and ISU voice is represented in the larger political setting.

Within her responsibilities, Meyer helps create connections that boost the ISU mission and funding efforts, in addition to representing students in decisions that may influence the university. Meyer ensures the perseverance of the ISU student voice is being present and heard in state and federal government.



Photo Courtesy of Iowa State Student Government

Featured in every Live Green! Monthly Newsletter are the Student Government Co-Directors of Sustainability, Kit O'Driscoll, a senior majoring in environmental science, triple-minoring in biology, GIS and microbiology, and Lauren Vierregger, a junior majoring in agronomy and horticulture.

O'Driscoll and Vierregger are both passionate about creating a sustainable campus, environmentally, economically and socially. Driven by their passion, both co-directors are empowered to keep persevering towards their vision of the future and motivating their 20-member committee to pursue projects, resources and innovations on campus to promote sustainability.



Photos Courtesy of Iowa State Student Government

Responsible for overseeing efforts regarding students' mental and physical health, is Director of Health and Wellness, Brylee Gearheart, a freshman majoring in biology and criminal justice.

Heading a committee of four, Gearheart and her team make sure students are aware of mental and physical health resources available on campus in addition to improving and adding to the current resources.

These mental and physical health resources are often crucial for student wellbeing and assisting students in persevering through busy or stressful times, helping them build resiliency.

By making sure all students have equal access to the resources and tools available to them, as well as advocating for a stigma free attitude towards student well-being, Gearheart helps foster an environment of perseverance for students at Iowa State.



Photo Courtesy of Gearheart

### Challenges that Require Perseverance

Helping lead a campus-wide organization comes with its fair

share of challenges. Despite this, Brandt and his cabinet members are committed to their mission, and even when challenges arise, they persevere.

Sharing his specific experiences, Brandt offered, "Student government initiatives often face setbacks, delays or unexpected challenges," that require more energy than expected but "it is critical to continue pushing forward for students. Perseverance means staying committed to the mission even when progress feels slow."



Photo Courtesy of Iowa State Student Government

In these times of slower progress, these student government leaders look to their constituents for motivation. "While each group has its own priorities and procedures, staying focused on our shared objective of supporting student well-being always makes the process both meaningful and worthwhile," Gearheart noted.

Being responsible for representing so many students can hold a lot of pressure to succeed. Vierregger shared that during her first term

as co-director of sustainability, she worried if she would be able to fill the big shoes left by her predecessor. She noted, "I have struggled to find the confidence at times to complete certain tasks with the fear of failure."

Vierregger strived to put her best foot forward for students and sustainability, and through her fear, she found support in her co-director O'Driscoll and her committee team. She added, "Every day I keep working to ensure we are always productive and making this campus more sustainable little by little."

The collective motivators of student experience and connection push and inspire these leaders to continue to innovate, improve and add to campus and the resources and programs that aid students.



Photo Courtesy of Iowa State Sustainability Committee

### Maintaining Perseverance

When faced with challenges, this executive team developed their own tools and strategies to help them push through.

Meyer expressed that her greatest tool in persevering is the students that she represents and her commitment to being a voice for them. "Staying focused on the impact of our work and remembering the students we represent has helped me remain persistent, even when progress feels slow."

For many, including O'Driscoll, the ability to persevere is found in those closest to her. Friends and family provide support and inspiration to drive her forward and supply needed energy and motivation. O'Driscoll recounted the impact her grandfather had on her ability to persevere.

"My grandfather is my biggest inspiration because he makes sure that everyone is taken care of and feels loved. He is the person who I hope is proud of me and that means ensuring everyone has an equal opportunity to pursue what they would like." Looking up to her grandfather inspires O'Driscoll to keep persevering toward what she loves and providing opportunities for students to do the same.



Image Courtesy of Adobe Stock

With busy schedules, balancing clubs, classes, relationships and other commitments, persevering can feel like a steep uphill battle sometimes. Gearheart said in her experience, "As a freshman balancing a double major while serving in Student Government, I quickly realized the importance of intentional time management."

Gearheart added, "When I begin to feel overwhelmed, I pause, refocus and create a clear plan of action to prioritize what needs to be completed."



Image Courtesy of Adobe Stock

Perseverance is a skill to be built and practiced and even then, it can still be difficult. For Brandt, "Collaboration, delegation, and open communication have been key tools in sustaining momentum through difficult moments."

Passion fuels perseverance; it gives purpose to keep going, and these student leaders lean into their passion drawn from their constituents to enact positive change that improves and enhances student experience, wellbeing and success.

Through organization and setting up a clear path to success, these student leaders can make busy schedules and goals more manageable and keep their end goals in sight.

By staying connected to their motivation and sources of inspiration, as well as leaning on the support of their teammates, it becomes easier for these student leaders to persevere and be supported through challenge.

### **Student Body Perseverance**

In their interactions with their constituents, these student leaders note seeing perseverance in action every day. They are inspired to see students showing up and advocating for themselves and their peers.

Gearheart shared that in a role involving the physical and mental wellbeing of students she sees many students facing difficulties, “yet they are standing here advocating for a better future for others going through similar problems. The mental health stigma is being destroyed little by little every day and it is because these people persevere.”



Photo Courtesy of Iowa State University Health and Wellness

Vlasek observed that he sees perseverance in students expressing the changes they want to see as well as coming together to find solutions themselves. For example, this year there was an extra charge for recreation room reservations. In hearing club members struggle with additional costs, club leaders successfully advocated for extra funding.

“When faced with a difficult situation, student leaders stepped up to provide for their peers,” noted Vlasek, admiring how students persevered through the challenge as a group to find an appropriate solution.

In O’Driscoll’s role, she offered that she sees perseverance in students through their strong voices and she said she is, “so incredibly proud of our student body for sticking up for what they believe in. I think that a diversity in opinion is so important and helps us grow as a society.”



Photo Courtesy of Adobe Stock

Meyers echoed her pride saying, “It is truly an honor to represent such a hardworking community when engaging with state and federal legislators.”

Even in the face of challenge and setback, these student government leaders see perseverance every day in their interactions with students. The dedicated perseverance of students is an inspiration to student government that motivates our campus to keep doing good.

Collaboration and open conversation in ensuring multiple voices are being represented, offers everyone the opportunity to express their perspective. Demonstrating the strength of perseverance in creating positive change on campus and beyond.



Photo Courtesy of Iowa State University Student Government

### **Persevering Toward a Sustainable Future**

Dedication and perseverance given by student government leaders and the student body motivates the ability to sustain and empower the campus community in all aspects of sustainability — environmental, economic and social.

Vierregger described sustainability as a “team effort”. It requires the collective

perseverance of a population. She further offered, “By coming together, across colleges, across majors and across Ames as a community, the big issues seem just a little smaller. That is what our committee works towards, and we hope that we can inspire other students to work towards it as well.”



Photo Courtesy of Live Green

Creating lasting, sustainable change requires perseverance. In regard to his teammates Vlasek said, “Kit and Lauren, Student Government’s Co-Directors of Sustainability, are great examples of what perseverance can accomplish... their warmth, passion and vision attracted so many students that we had to waive bylaws to expand the committee’s size.”

Brandt echoed, “Their work reflects how consistent effort over time creates a lasting impact. That legacy is what student government is about — building initiatives that continue benefiting students long after a term ends.”



Photo Courtesy of Brian Achenbach/ISU Daily

When representing so many voices, Gearheart said there is always the possibility of strain, but when students show up and persevere together, “over time, that steady effort builds stronger relationships across campus and in the community, and it creates a sense of trust, belonging, and shared responsibility for creating a more sustainable future.”

She added, “Perseverance ensures that environmental responsibility and social equity remain ongoing priorities rather than temporary initiatives.”

By fostering a strong campus community together, these student leaders encourage collaboration between students to create a collective voice. Through collective perseverance, individual voices have a lasting impact. By staying committed to their cause and working collaboratively, these student leaders create a lasting impact on campus.

Small collective actions have a greater long-term impact and create a ripple effect that grows and motivates generations. It is through sustained and

persevering work from students and leaders that the future of ISU can be more sustainable.

### Legacy of Perseverance

There are always challenges that students must persevere through — hard exams, challenging assignments, disagreements and personal struggles. To be able to grow and achieve goals, and having the skills and tools to push through is vital.

Brandt offered encouragement, “My message to the student body is simple: never give up.” He continued, “When you are committed to a purpose and surrounded by a strong team, quitting is not an option. Stay true to yourself and remain focused on the impact you want to make.”

O’Driscoll added, “It is the people who continue to spark hope in others on campus that make me feel like anything can truly be done when people are passionate enough.” Vlasek agreed and noted, in times when students feel overwhelmed, they must remember to reach out and find assistance through peers, mentors and student leaders.



Image Courtesy of Adobe Stock

Leaders reminded of the significance of perseverance and in achieving together.

“I encourage you to keep creating projects, keep sharing ideas and continue working together, because sustainability is not something that can be achieved alone,” Vierregger said.

“There are challenges and setbacks, but continuing to advocate, having open conversations and staying organized makes a difference,” Gearheart included.

Together, these student leaders show how perseverance and collaboration can transform advocacy into actionable change. Through their different roles in student government, they remain committed to the student body in the face of challenge, to proudly represent students and the topics they are passionate about.

These leaders have big visions for campus and have dedicated their time and perseverance to making a difference for students. Fueled by passion and purpose, these students show up every day to serve students, be a voice, and inspire their peers to keep pursuing their dreams.

Brandt, Vlasek, Meyer, O’Driscoll, Vierregger and Gearheart hold pride in their campus community, and each exemplify perseverance in their work to reflect the passion and energy shown by their constituents at ISU.

Perseverance is only strengthened with collaboration. When students are able to keep pushing forward, it creates an environment that inspires their peers.

These student leaders work diligently to ensure outlets exist for students to be heard, and resources are accessible to uplift their success. They show up every day with the intention of leaving a lasting positive legacy of perseverance on campus.



Photo Courtesy of Iowa State University

We can all draw inspiration from these leaders, as well as all the countless student leaders not featured in this month’s article, and the perseverance they show. In a shared effort of perseverance, we can uplift each other through struggles and act as inspiration to keep going. Big visions take time and patience... and perseverance.

To learn more about the many student government initiatives, visit the Iowa State University [Student Government Website](#) and [contact page](#) to connect with student leadership. For the most recent updates on the student government initiatives and projects follow the Iowa State University Student Government [Instagram page](#) (isustugov).

