



Frequently Asked Questions:

Fiat Girls Program and the 63rd United Nations Commission on the Status of Women

Thank you for your interest in this valuable leadership and faith experience. Below you will find answers to some of the most frequent questions, but if you have additional questions or concerns, or you would like to set up a time to meet, please feel free to contact me. I am excited to prepare another group of eager minds to attend the UNCSW next March, and I hope you will join me!

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1. What does it cost?

*The tuition fee for the **Fiat Girls High School Program** is \$1,500 per student. It covers course materials, airfare, hotel room, and several gratuities and fees (NGO donations, skycap tips, subway tickets etc.). It does NOT include daily lunches, dinners, and spending money for New York. We do help to coordinate travel to and from the airport (taxi/uber), but that cost is split between the girls in person.*

*The tuition fee for the **Fiat Girls College Program** is \$1200 per student. It covers course materials, the hotel room, and several gratuities and fees (NGO donations, skycap tips, subway tickets, etc.). It does NOT include airfare, lunches, dinners, and spending money in New York. We do help to coordinate travel to and from the airport (taxi/uber), but that cost is split between the girls in person.*

For both programs, girls can expect to pay \$100-\$200 for food in NYC, depending on how frequently they stop for coffee or a snack. There is free hot breakfast at the hotel, and we grocery shop upon arrival so that each girl buys snacks and bag lunch supplies for the week. Spending/souvenir money is at your discretion.

2. Is there a deposit? When is it due?

*For the **Fiat Girls High School Program**, there is a non-refundable deposit of \$500 **due immediately upon acceptance into the program**, to hold your spot. It will be used immediately to secure the hotel rooms and purchase airline tickets.*

*For the **Fiat Girls College Program**, there is a non-refundable deposit of \$600 **due September 1st** to hold your spot. It will be used immediately to secure the hotel rooms and gather course materials.*

*The deposits for **both programs** are non-refundable, because not only do the funds need to be available to use ASAP, but the costs per girl are based on the number of girls going in each program. Thus, I must work with a firm number in the reservations phase and must require the deposit up front, with no refund, because the cost for each other Fiat Girl depends upon it. The deposit can be paid by cash, check or credit card.*

3. When is the remainder due?

*For the **Fiat Girls High School Program**, the remaining balance of \$1000 is due **in full on or before January 1st, 2019.***

*For the **Fiat Girls College Program**, the remaining balance of \$600 is due **in full on December 1st, 2018.***

4. Where will the girls be in New York?

Most fly into LaGuardia and take pre-arranged shuttle busses to the hotel. Some east coast girls take the train to Penn Station. Our hotel is Hampton Inn Grand Central, 231 E 43rd St., New York, NY. We spend a majority of our time located in the “Midtown East” area of Manhattan, where the hotel, our church (St. Agnes) and the UN are located. Conference sessions take place at the UN and at three separate venues within a 6 block radius of the UN. Sightseeing will take us to Grand Central, St. Patrick’s Cathedral, Rockefeller Plaza, Wall Street, Battery Park, and Ground Zero. The girls will also visit Times Square one evening after dinner.

5. How many girls are going? Are there chaperones/core leaders?

*The **Fiat Girls High School Program** is limited to 12 high school girls and 3 chaperones. The students travel between the four event venues, checking in with chaperones at each session. Cell phones are required for safety purposes. All high school chaperones have completed archdiocesan safety training and are experienced youth leaders. There is always one chaperone for the high school program in religious life to serve as our spiritual guide, helping to clarify church teaching and to offer support as girls work through some of their questions.*

*The **Fiat Girls College Program** is limited to 8 college-age girls and 2 core leaders. The students travel between the four events venues in groups of two or more, and are in consistent communication with core leaders throughout the day. Cell phones are required for safety purposes. There is always one core-leader for the college program that is in religious life to serve as a spiritual guide, helping to clarify church teaching and offer support as girls work through some of their questions.*

As of September 2018, girls expressing interest in this trip come from public and private schools and universities in Georgia, California, Maine, Indiana, Maryland, Louisiana, Illinois, Ohio, South Carolina, and Tennessee.

6. Is this trip an excused absence from school?

*For the **Fiat Girls High School Program**, please check with your school’s principal or vice-principal. In most cases, this trip is considered an excused absence by Catholic schools. Policies vary in public school, so it is important for parents to speak directly with an administrator for a determination. I am happy to provide documentation on the academic and leadership nature of the trip.*

*For the **Fiat Girls College Program**, excused absences are left to the discretion of individual professors. In past years, some students were able to adequately align the academic nature of the trip with the subject matter of their classes, and thus receive permission to miss class. It is the responsibility of the student to set up such meetings in advance with professors, but I am happy to provide documentation on the academic and leadership nature of the trip upon request, to present in such meetings. This conference occasionally coincides with an established spring break, but often requires missing academic time.*

Regardless of whether the absence is excused or unexcused, students attending the UNCSW must speak with appropriate school personnel to determine how to manage make-up work.

7. What happens in case of emergency?

Students (and parents of high schoolers) will be provided with the cell phones of all chaperones/core leaders on the trip, as well as the hotel and St. Agnes Church. Each student is encouraged to keep her cell phone with her at all times, for everyone's peace of mind. During our January preparatory skype session, we discuss the appropriate use of cell phones in the context of a business trip. It is important for the girls to remain as professional and focused as possible, so non-emergency calls, posts, tweets, snaps and instagrams are strongly discouraged, both outgoing and ingoing.

In the unlikely event of an emergency in New York, all chaperones/core leaders will have all high school parent numbers programmed into their cell phones. The girls will have all chaperone/core leader numbers programmed as well, and the Hampton Inn Grand Central will serve as our emergency meeting place should we need to assemble quickly during the day.

Lastly, a medical release waiver and copy of the student's insurance card will be required, allowing me to authorize treatment in case of emergency.

8. What are the details of the prep session?

There will be one mandatory 2 hour virtual preparation session in January. Details regarding the date and time of this online conference will be released after acceptances have been confirmed.

9. Is there any other preparation involved?

Yes! Once accepted into the program, girls (and sometimes high school parents) will be expected to read and respond to various emails. We also maintain an active social media presence specifically dedicated to this program, and each student is strongly encouraged to establish personal social media accounts to "follow" and "friend" our group ("Universal Fiat") for important posts and messages. Both the content of the platforms and proper use of them are important aspects of their formation that we discuss at length in an ongoing way, so establishing personal accounts is very important. Girls without accounts will miss critical discussion of issues and integration with the Fiat Girls group.

10. What do the girls actually DO in New York?

It is an education in critical thinking, a mini-retreat, a professional conference and a mission trip all in one. Each day begins with Mass and rosary at St. Agnes. Then there is a planning meeting/breakfast/coffee until 10 am, and after that, girls attend conferences (also called "Side Events" and "Parallel Events") the rest of the day—observing, taking notes, and comparing their knowledge of the dignity of the human person, solidarity, and the common good (Catholic Social Teaching) with what they're seeing and hearing from women around the world. At approximately 4 pm, the college and high school tracks split to debrief, where much of the real learning and digesting takes place. In facilitated groups, girls discuss what they saw and heard throughout the day, explore the ramifications of the initiatives they've encountered, and identify and develop their personal responses to the issues.

11. Is there a dress code?

*Yes, there is a dress code, and a conduct code, as well. They will be discussed at length during the online January prep class. This is a professional conference, attended by women and girls from across the world, so we want to present ourselves as confidently and professionally as possible. Jeans are fine for travelling, sightseeing and evenings. No yoga pants or leggings are permitted outside of the hotel. The dress for each conference day is **business casual**. For our purposes, this means:*

- ✓ **dress pants**--appropriately fit through seat and hips, please, nothing so tight that it reveals anything when you sit. The idea is to look dressed to accomplish business.
- ✓ **dresses and skirts**--must look professional and you must be able to walk in them. Pencil skirts look fine, but they're a little hard for walking. If you have one or try one on, stride purposefully across the room to make sure you can walk. Dresses and skirt lengths should be past your fingertips when arms are flat against your sides.
- ✓ **blouses, sweaters, scarves**, etc. (attention to appropriate necklines)
- ✓ **comfortable walking shoes/boots**. Expect slush and rain.
- ✓ **winter coat, mittens, hat etc.**

Dress each day like you want to be taken seriously and intend to convey competence.

In the past, girls have gone with maybe 2 pairs of dress pants and two skirts, and mix and match the tops.

12. I really want to go. What's next?

The application can be found on the website on the "Dates and Details" tab. Please download and complete, and email it to me at universalfiat@gmail.com by September 15th (highschool) at the latest. (College track should have applications in ASAP over the summer of 2018)

*Students will be selected on the basis of nomination, maturity, an understanding of the purpose, and a willingness to commit to the program requirements. I also attempt to create diversity within the group between public-private-home schooled students, Catholic and non-Catholic students, as well as those who are dedicated to the Faith and those who are questioning. The class and trip are currently limited to 12 students for the **Fiat Girl High School Program**, and 8 students for the **Fiat Girls College Program**. Selection begins immediately following application submission. Decisions are made on a first-come first-serve basis, so the earlier the application the more likely there will still be a spot available.*

Once acceptance is complete:

*For the **Fiat Girls High School Program**, parents are emailed a Consent Form and Liability Waiver which must be signed and submitted immediately, along with a non-refundable \$500 security deposit (check, cash or credit card--card requires 3% fee), to hold a spot for the student. With a spot secured, you will receive occasional email communications from me until early January, when the remaining \$1000 balance is due on or before January 15th.*

*For the **Fiat Girls College Program**, students are emailed a Personal Release Form and Liability Waiver which must be signed and submitted, along with a non-refundable \$600 security deposit (check, cash or credit card--card requires 3% fee), by the **September 1st, 2018** deadline to secure a spot. With a spot secured, you will receive occasional email communications from me until late November, when the remaining \$600 balance is due on or before December 1, 2018.*

From that point until our departure in March, I will be in touch by phone, email, and most importantly, What's App and social media. We will conduct a heavy social media campaign from Jan-Mar, so students are asked to have accounts (especially Facebook, Instagram, and whatsapp) set up by January at the latest.