



**2019- 2020 Annual Report  
University of Illinois at Chicago  
Undergraduate Student Government**

## **Executive Summary**

The Undergraduate Student Government is releasing its first annual report, in recent history. This report outlines the purpose, goals and accomplishments of the organization for the 2019-2020 academic year. The Undergraduate Student Government is the institutional governing body the undergraduate population. We are supported by the Office of the Dean of Students and furthermore the Office of the Vice Chancellor for Student Affairs. This organization is funded by a student fee and therefore required to allocate funds based on the rules of the institution.

It is not advantageous to say that the 2019-2020 academic year has been a turning point for the institution and the country as a whole. This year, began with record enrollment and a new residence and academic center. These successes were coupled with the threats of a violent attack (that were found to not be credible) and the tragic death of a beloved student. These events put into the forefront the need to protect the safety of our students and develop policies that are designed to better communication and clarity.

Within the Undergraduate Student Government, executive and legislative members worked on behalf of and for the betterment of students. For clarity, the executive branch includes: President, Vice President, Chief of Staff, Director of Student Life, Director of Legislative Affairs, Director of Diversity and Inclusion and Director of Public Relations. The legislative branch includes: Secretary, Speaker of the House, Treasurer, Graphic Designer, Webmaster and all Representatives. General assembly meetings were held every Monday at 6 p.m. on campus. Meetings were open to public and advertised via social media and our website.

Some changes within the executive branch included the implementation of advertised office hours. Each member of the Executive Board (which includes the executive branch and the Secretary, Speaker of the House and Treasurer) hosted office hours for 1-2 hours per week. This was a time for them to offer themselves available to the student body. Additionally, contact information was made available to students at their request.

Many internal processes were reviewed and refurbished. That includes the revamping of funding structure and guideline for student organizations. The structure ensured the transparency of our organization and stabilized our evaluation standards. Additionally, the student government was more responsive to events happening on campus, by providing open letters to the campus and updates on meetings that were scheduled to address issues that were of concern to students.

Transparency for the organization greatly improved. We sent out a newsletter, advertised meetings, hosted office hours (as previously mentioned) and were more present on campus. We hosted our first State of the Students, an address by the executive board on the work that was previously done and the goals for the upcoming semester. The Undergraduate Student Government added public comment section to the agenda, allowing students to publicly address their concerns. Finally, we began livestreaming our meetings, making the work we do more accessible.

This year, the Undergraduate Student Government pushed for the betterment of students. We increased our following on social media by nearly 60%. We engaged over 40 external

organizations and offices. We hosted and partnered on over 20 events and we passed 18 resolutions. The work of the Undergraduate Student Government is valuable and must continue to be supported for the sake of our student body.

## Introduction

The purpose of the Undergraduate Student Government as found in our constitution is to, *“to preserve within our University an atmosphere of open exchange of ideas with discussion, inquiry, and self-expression while ensuring the following: the personal freedoms and general welfare of the students within our University; to promote principles of diversity; and to continue in our tradition of responsible self-governance”* We are charged to, *“commit ourselves to respect, encourage, and support one another, while striving to foster a strong academic and extracurricular community. To that end, we shall create spaces where the needs of students are met, the rights of students are respected, and the voices of students are heard.”*

Simply put we advocate, serve and provide governance. The 2019-2020 Executive Board and House of Representatives were dedicated to provided resources and strategically accomplishing goals that were in the interest of all students. Through transitions internally and externally, the Undergraduate Student Government maintained its commitment to collaboratively uplifting the voices of Undergraduate Students on campus.

## Goals

The 2019-2020 Executive Platform was entitled Cultivating Community with three defined sections: Wellness, Inclusivity and Collective Accountability.

### Wellness:

- Support the organizing of students to expand current counseling center capacity while simultaneously working on creative and alternative solutions-
- Explore ways to make STD and STI testing more accessible to all students
- Establish menstrual hygiene products as free and easily accessible products on campus

### Inclusivity:

- Work to further mitigate the cost of books and classroom materials
- Call for administration to work with faculty and staff to require the use of students preferred pronouns
- Advocate and support the expansion of resources for undocumented students
- Better the cultural and religious accommodations in the cafeterias
- Press university administration and individual colleges to take meaningful steps to recruit and retain Black students

### Collective Accountability:

- Raise awareness of the resources provided by the Title IX office, while holding university accountable for the insufficient culture of seriousness around sexual assault
- Fight for a student written, edited and produced newspaper
- Produce a budget rebuttal that reflects student priorities
- Initiate a campaign to change the name of the Richard Daley Library to the name of a consequential and historical figure of the community we are occupying

Accompanying the platform were three values: Amplify, Create and Navigate. These words were meant to be the driving force for programming and initiatives sponsored by the Executive Cabinet. They were associated with phrases: Amplify student voices, Create tangible change and Navigate the bureaucracy.

## **Accomplishments**

Throughout the school year many new initiatives were brought forward that achieved goals presented on the platform and brought recognition to the organization. The number one priority for the Undergraduate Student Government was to advocate on behalf of students. Below are highlights of this academic school year:

### **Funding Structure**

In Resolution 2019-F1-900, we introduced a New Student Government Funding Allocation Model. This new model proposed a funding structure similar to a grant-giving organization. Undergraduate Student Government representatives were charged with acting as “program officers” by identifying student programs and organizations that would advance the mission of the student government and have direct impact on the undergraduate population. In the spring, we introduced Resolution 2020-S3-900, which presented guidelines to student organization on how they could access money for programs. The guidelines clearly outlined the intent of the two grants (Service and Professional Development) along with an online application. This was a major accomplishment for the Undergraduate as it provided structure on how funds were allocated to student organizations. This leveled the playing field in terms of requirements, restrictions, purpose and total funds allocated.

### **Response Sign-On Letters**

This academic year we made it a priority to ensure that the Undergraduate Student Government was a recognized entity on campus. One approach that included advancing the mission of the organization, was to produce statements on events happening on campus. The university administration sends mass mails when major events happen. However, the first attention grabbing event of the semester had noticeably gross room for improvement.

We responded to the threats of an attack on campus and called attention to the need for better communication from administration. (We also followed up with meetings with the Police Department and Public Affairs). After that we drafted a letter of solidarity for Black students who were protesting conditions at Illinois State University. We signed onto a letter written by the Fearless Undocumented Alliance, as they protested the presence of the Homeland Security at the UIC Career Fair. And finally, we sent a letter to department heads asking them to consider switching to Open Source Course Materials.

## **State of the Students**

The Undergraduate Student Government hosted its first State of the Students. This was a program organized with the intention of bringing transparency from the student government. All students were invited to attend to hear from USG executive board members, as they reflected on their accomplishments so far in the semester and outlined their plans for the upcoming semester. Although it was not largely attended it was live streamed and nonetheless successful.

## **Virtual Townhall**

In the wake of the Coronavirus Global Pandemic, the Undergraduate Student Government General Assembly Members and Executive Board discussed how we could be most helpful. With many questions looming about the final portion of the Spring Semester, Summer classes, reimbursements, access to resources and so on, we decided to gather questions and organize a virtual town hall. Students were able to submit questions regarding anything related to the Coronavirus response in a form attached to our website. In conjunction with the Chancellor's office, students tuned in to a virtual town hall hosted on zoom. The town hall was recorded and later posted on the COVID-19 tab of the UIC website.

## **Independent Student Newspaper**

Resolution 2019-F8-801, entitled the Independent Student Newspaper designated an independent committee of the Vice President for the establishment of a group of interested student and the allocation of funds. The group of students began meeting independently to organize content, methodology and values. The group is named Bonfire, and produced campus community oriented stories with emphasis on social justice and equity framework. They post content solely on social media (Instagram and Twitter) and have a following of over 1,000.

## **Open Source Course Materials**

In February 2020, we sent a letter to Department Heads across the campus to encourage them to adopt Open Source Course Materials. An initiative out of the Office of the Vice Provost for Undergraduate Affairs and Academic Programs, in conjunction with the UIC Library sponsored a program entitled Open Textbook Sprint. This is a program that allowed professors to apply for funding that compensated their time in creating and transferring their curriculum to online. Having online resources allows students to be successful in the class without additional cost.

We prioritized meeting with department leadership and professors who had high enrollment and high textbook cost. After a few conversations, we realized a disconnect between professor's understanding of the accessibility of their class and their students. After sending the letter to over 60 professors, we began meeting to discuss their barriers

and understanding of open source course materials. We also began to organize student letters, concerns and testimonials but were conflicted with COVID-19 transitions.

### **Public Comment Section**

In an effort to increase accessibility and transparency of the Undergraduate Student Government, we adopted a resolution that put a Public Comment Section on the agenda. This allowed for a formal process for Undergraduate Students to approach their governing body, voice concerns/ask questions and have a platform to raise awareness about certain issues.

### **Professional Palooza**

In an effort to both collaborate with and fund external organizations, the Undergraduate Student Government partnered with Alpha Kappa Psi to execute Professional Palooza. Professional Palooza is an annual Alpha Kappa Psi event that took place on Saturday, February 29<sup>th</sup> from 9:00-4:00pm and featured keynote speakers from well-know companies across the country. USG provided external organization with funding for catering and transportation to promote Alpha Kappa Psi's mission to prepare future business leaders. The Vice President also attended the event to help with catering set-up and to share USG's mission and objectives with the attending students.

### **Graduate Student Council's Women of UIC**

The Undergraduate Student Government continued their mission to engage external organizations by cohosting "Women of UIC" with the Graduate Student Council. The event was on Monday, March 9<sup>th</sup> from 4:00-5:00pm at the Thompson Room (SCW). The purpose of the event was to provide a platform for UIC students to share their experiences as women, highlight the accomplishments of prominent women at UIC and advertise organizations, such as the PERIOD Movement, that have worked to improve the lives of women.

### **Flames @ the Ready: A Virtual Self-Defense Seminar for UIC Students**

During the Spring Semester, the Vice President met with the Associate Director of the Commuter Student Resource Center to discuss the needs of commuter students. The Associate Director shared that commuter students had expressed interest in a self-defense seminar that was more accessible regarding time and location. In partnership with the Commuter Student Resource Center, a few departments, such as Fraternity and Sorority Life and the Center for Student Involvement, and the Undergraduate Student Government, developed Flames @ the Ready, which is a virtual self-defense seminar for UIC students led by Wing Tsun Illinois.

## ***Legislative Affairs Committee***

### **Higher Education Candidate Forum**

In collaboration with the Student Advocacy Coalition, the Legislative Affairs committee hosted a higher education candidate forum. This forum invited candidates in the 9<sup>th</sup> District for the Illinois House of Representatives to answer questions of concern to students at the University of Illinois at Chicago. The UIC Student Trustee, Illinois Board of Higher Education- Student Advisory Council Chair and the Midwest Engagement Manager for the Young Invincible spoke about the importance of investing Higher Education.

### **Annual Lobby Day**

In partnership with the University of Illinois Office of Governmental Relations, the Undergraduate Student Government organized a group of students to lobby legislators on behalf of the university. Students attended a luncheon where the University of Illinois System President Tim Killeen and Deputy Governor Jesse Ruiz spoke. They then attended a higher education rally in the rotunda of the state capitol. Finally, they had individual meetings with state legislators about the need for investment in Higher Education and expanding resources for students. The Undergraduate Student Government paid for transportation of all 36 students traveling from Chicago (the highest student turnout in University of Illinois at Chicago history).

### **Day at the Capitol**

The Legislative Affairs committee traveled to Springfield to for a lobby training in preparation for the annual lobby day. Committee members heard from the Director of State Relations, Advocacy Coordinators and Director of Graduate Programs for the University of Illinois System. While in the capitol students invited legislators to the annual lobby day rally and reception.

### **Census Rally**

The Director of the Legislative Affairs committee was a member of the Census Rally planning committee. Along with the Founder of the CHANCE program, Director of the Office for Student Leadership and Civic Engagement and other community leaders, a census rally was planned for the beginning of April. The invitation included high level elected officials, local alderman and state representatives and all students. Local government offices and nonprofits were also invited to table and give out information about valuable resources. Unfortunately, due to COVID-19 the event was cancelled.



## ***Student Life Committee***

### **Beat the Winter Blues**

In response to concerns of anxiety, depression and other mental health conditions the Student Life committee hosted a tabling event in Winter 2019. At this event, the committee director and members handed out treats and encouraged students to write down their strategy to combating the “Winter Blues”. The event was successful and engaged many students.

### **Microwave in Library**

Building on the work of the previous director, the Undergraduate Student Government met with library staff to discuss their determination of the microwave pilot program. It was determined that the pilot program was largely successful and expected to be continued. The Undergraduate Student Government purchased an additional microwave, electrical equipment and adequate cleaning supplies for the 2019-2020 school year.

### **Safety and Wellness Event**

In lieu of concerns of the safety, physical and mental wellness of student the Student Life committee hosted a fair-like event at the beginning of the fall semester to provide resources to students. Many offices across campus partnered with the Undergraduate Student Government including; Commuter Resource Center, Gender and Sexuality Center, UIC Police Department, CHANCE and the African American Academic Network. Prizes were awarded to students who attended.

## ***Diversity and Inclusion Committee***

### **Shake It Up Series!**

With a total of 4 different workshops and 2 subset events, the Shake It Up Series was a direct partnership with the Women’s Leadership and Resource Center. This series created interactive and safe spaces for students to speak about gender-based violence in the most inclusive way possible: women of color, disabilities and LGBTQ. This included spaces to critique societal stands on Title IX’s culture in higher education specifically for marginalized students. In the end, a town hall was introduced “Hear Our Stories: Students’ Experiences Navigating Title IX Office” to not only give students a space to speak about their experiences with the Title IX office but holding the university accountable for the lack action being done to protect our UIC student body.

### **Black Womxn Summit**

The Black Womxn Summit was an inspiration from the UIUC Black and Latina Womxn Summit (BLWS) to amplify the voices of Black and Latina women on campus. As this

summit is similar to BLWS, the Black Womxn Summit focuses only on black womxn of all identities at the University of Illinois at Chicago. It is a way to get black womxn the space they deserve on the campus but will emphasize the need for empowering black womxn within higher education and in any platform of life. This summit includes panels of different black women in different careers, of students and black-owned vendors and UIC organizations.

### **Unity Dinner**

The Unity Dinner event is an event meant to form a stronger connection with Arab organizations on UIC's campus and build an effect network with them. It is also meant to spread more awareness about USG and the work we do so that other organizations learn more about it and join us for our future events. The Unity Dinner is not only an event to bring Arab organizations and USG closer together but to create a coalition with the foundation of amplifying the voices of Arab and Arab-American students/organizations. This event was postponed due to COVID-19 concerns.

### **Debunking Stigmas; Women's Health**

This event focused on the breaking down of barriers on UIC's campus created by the stigmatization of women's bodies. The event was planned to have 3-4 topics, each of which a speaker will discuss a few common stigmas, and how they are false and how we, as a community, can work to disprove these ideas. The topics were Sexual Health, Transgender Women's Health, Menstrual Health, and Diseases Specific/Most Apparent in Women. The speakers are well versed in the topic and able to answer questions regarding their topic. This event was postponed due to COVID-19 concerns.

### **R.O.T.C Fights Sexual Misconduct**

According to the Army Times, "One in five women serving in an unhealthy command climate will be assaulted, and 24 percent of women serving in the Army report toxicity in their chains of command. For men, it's 6 percent". This event served as an educational workshop for future Second Lieutenants who will be in charge of 36 or more soldiers. The goal of this event was for cadets to be able to point out the signs of sexual misconduct and know what to do from there. Dr. Ada Cheng from the Women's Leadership and Resource Center was to lead the workshop.

### ***Public Relations Committee***

#### **Social Media-**

The Undergraduate Student Government has a presence on the social media app- Instagram. Throughout the year we have worked to streamline branding and evolve the post for informational purposes. The social media accounts are now suited for external viewing and have information on how to engage with our organization. Our linktree

account makes links to programs and resources accessible for students. Additionally, following increased by nearly 60 percent over the course of a year.

## **Live Streaming**

To increase the accessibility and transparency of the Undergraduate Student Government, we began live streaming our meetings. Live streams can be viewed and found on the UIC Undergraduate Student Government YouTube page. There you will find videos of meetings and any other events the Undergraduate Student Government hosted and live-streamed.

## **Website**

The Undergraduate Student Government launched an updated website in the fall of 2019. On the website, we list our meetings and location, announcements pertaining to legislative updates, open letters from the executive cabinet and application guidelines. Our funding guidelines were also embedded in the website to allow for their accessibility amongst student organizations. Students are also able to find links to our social media, live streams and message us with any concerns. Additionally, all meeting agendas and notes are able to be downloaded.

## **COVID-19 Response**

Although many end-of-the-year initiatives and events were cancelled, the Undergraduate Student Government shifted its focus to combat the obstacles of COVID-19. We participated in a campaign to uplift healthcare worker (#UIHealthHeroes). Additionally, we hosted a Virtual Townhall in partnership with the Chancellor's Office. We also introduced a massive resolution (Resolution 2020-S10-903) that donated over \$5,000 to the UIC Wellness Center and Pop-Up Pantry. Additionally, purchasing 500 can openers and over 2,000 stress balls. Finally, we transferred \$37,000 to the Dean of Student U & I Care Fund, which provides emergency assistances to students experiencing personal hardships.

## **Executive Branch**

President- Taylor Holmes

Vice President- Jocelyn Bravo

Chief of Staff- Dahlya El-Adawe

Student Life- Marian Udoetuk

Diversity and Inclusion- Jocelyn Aranda-Ortiz

Public Relations- Nada Marei

Legislative Affairs- Ariej Mohammed

## **Legislative Branch**

Speaker of the House- Daisy Stancheva

Treasurer- Anshu Nidamanuri

Secretary- Daniela Guerrero

Graphic Designer- Aitanna Nadala

Webmaster- Anna- Maria Astor

Representatives-

Bayan Hammad

Deepha Dhillon

Michelle Zhou

Misty Villagomez

Nifemi Akande

Sarika de Bruyn

**Advisor- Dean Annette Wright**

## **Partners**

Thank you to our 2019-2020 Sponsors for assisting in programs, speaking at meetings and supporting the work of the Undergraduate Student Government!

Office of the Dean of Students  
Center for Student Leadership and Civic Engagement  
Center for Student Involvement  
Student Activities Board  
UIC Campus Housing  
Student Advocacy Coalition  
Richard J. Daley Library  
Bonfire  
Fearless Undocumented Alliance  
Office of the Chancellor  
Office of the Vice Chancellor for Student Affairs  
Office of the Provost  
African American Cultural Center  
Women's Leadership and Resource Center  
Gender and Sexuality Center  
Commuter Resource Center  
The Counseling Center  
The Wellness Center  
Latin American Recruitment and Educational Services  
African American Academic Network  
UIC Police Department  
Students for Justice in Palestine  
Palestine Children's Relief Fund  
Students Organize for Syria  
Native American Support Program  
Jane Addams Hull House  
Office of Public and Government Affairs  
CHANCE  
Alpha Kappa Psi, Fraternity  
Office of the UIC Student Trustee  
Institute of Policy and Civic Engagement  
University of Illinois System Office of Governmental Relations  
Department of Political Science  
Graduate Student Council  
Period Movement  
Department of Public Affairs  
Asian American Resource Center  
Chi Sigma Omega, Sorority  
Fraternity and Sorority Life  
Latino Cultural Center  
Young Invincibles