



2020-2021 Annual Report
University of Illinois at Chicago
Undergraduate Student Government



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2020-2021 Mission

We came into 2020 with the goal of representing students, and a focus on improving campus safety. We faced all sorts of challenges, from the COVID-19 pandemic and transition to online learning to police violence against Black people to new Title IX policies and sexual violence at UIC to a contentious Presidential election to the rise in anti-Asian hate to the rising cost of college to issues of student mental health and isolation. Throughout every step of the way the USG stood with students, developing, and lobbying for student-centric policies, uplifting demands from student activists, and holding university administrators accountable. At every turn we faced resistance; every time we challenged power we were challenged right back - yet we continued to push forward. The following document details some of our stories, and both the struggles we faced and triumphs we won. I hope you read this in its entirety and reflect on the successes that WE – the students, community members and activists – have won together to make our campus a better place for everyone.



Highlights

Credit/No Credit Policy

Learning online has posed to be one of the greatest difficulties in the time of COVID-19, being a new environment for nearly all students. USG has recognized this and sought to help UIC students by advocating for a Credit/No Credit (CR/CN) policy. Since May 2020, we had been calling for Provost Poser to extend the temporary CR/NC grading policy for the remainder of the 2020-2021 year. We asked for several amenities:

1. Extend the CR/NC deadline until the final day of instruction, and expand the list of courses this can be applied to including prerequisite and elective courses (all courses)
2. Extend the withdrawal deadline until the final day of instructions
3. Eliminate barriers to re-enroll in the university after an incomplete grade/leave of absence

USG petitioned for this, wrote resolutions, and lobbied Faculty Senators and the Provost. Ultimately, all of these calls were rejected. We followed this by a proposal for [Universal Pass](#), a plan to introduce CR/NC opt-in alongside a plan to guarantee no student is given a failing grade for their performance during the pandemic. While this resolution also failed in the Senate, they decided to endorse a [version of our initial proposal](#) calling for an extension of the CR/NC opt-in deadline and an expansion to include elective courses. The final version of this proposal was revised by Provost Poser, and ended up applying CR to grades of 'D' and NC to grades of 'F.'

USG held a campus-wide town hall to discuss student issues and allow students to directly ask questions of administration - CR/NC being one of the main topics of conversation. While this proposal does help several students, there are potentially detrimental effects and a large student population who are left unsupported. We continue to push academic affairs to develop student-centric policies.

College Affordability

College is expensive to attend. For the 2020-2021 school year, the Undergraduate Student Government worked towards making college more affordable for UIC students. This was accomplished in two ways. First, under President Kumar, we received a commitment from Chancellor Amiridis and Vice Chancellor Tolliver to increase the minimum wage by \$1 per hour for undergraduate workers until it reaches a wage of \$15 per hour. Our second accomplishment was by addressing textbook affordability. According to a [report by the US Public Interest Research Group](#), 65% of students skipped out on buying textbooks, and 82% of students who reported missing a meal due to COVID-19 also reported that they skipped out on buying textbooks. This shows that students had to choose between doing well in a class or providing for themselves. USG addressed this issue by providing UIC's Faculty OER Incentive Program \$10,000 of the USG budget to add to the program's initial \$20,000 fund, bringing the total up to \$30,000. In the end, the program spent \$27,000 to award nine professors for supporting OER. This saved a total of \$262,457 for 1,100 students collectively.

Supporting Diversity

The Undergraduate Students Government worked tirelessly to ensure our students from all different backgrounds are being heard and cared for through multiple initiatives. We began the year by conducting meetings with the Cultural Centers across campus and the Office of Diversity to create a blueprint for how USG will be involved in their programming. We launched our Newsletter project to feature programming and events hosted by Cultural Centers and further connect with students across campus. If you are interested, you can sign up for our newsletter using this [link](#).

We launched several campaigns and series of events to keep our students informed about their rights on campus and how they can support their peers going through crisis. For example, we launched the Be Aware campaign to raise awareness about conflicts in underserved communities and how they affect our students at UIC. Furthermore, we created a Know Your Rights series of events in collaboration with the Graduate Student Council and John Marshall Law School OUTLaw and covered topics surrounding student employment, graduate student unions, and rights of minority students. In terms of other collaborations, we took part in the Creating Change series launched by the African American Cultural Center where we spoke to students about USG's role in creating change on campus and inspiring others to lead with integrity. Moreover, we collaborate with Muslim Student Association and Hindu Student Council on an interfaith event where we brought students from different faiths together to learn about our differences and discuss ways to support each other on campus. Lastly, we continued the Shake It Up series with the Women's leadership and Resource Cultural Center and the Campus Advocacy Network to raise awareness on gender-based violence prevention on campus and begin discussions on how to hold our peers and faculty members accountable.

Throughout the year, the Diversity and Inclusion Committee worked closely with multiple cultural centers to ensure students' demands are being met and that students are connected with the administration on

KNOW YOUR RIGHTS:

● MINORITY ●

STUDENTS RIGHTS

DATE: March 11th
TIME: 5 PM - 6:30 PM

JOIN US FOR
A DISCUSSION ABOUT THE
RIGHTS OF STUDENTS IN
MINORITY GROUPS

LED BY
THE OFFICE OF
VICE PROVOST FOR
DIVERSITY

REGISTER AT:
GO.UIC.EDU/MINORITYSTUDENTSRIGHTS

PLEASE FILL OUT:
GO.UIC.EDU/USGEVENTSURVEY

PRESENTED BY






multiple levels. For example, we worked closely with the Arab American Cultural Center throughout their MENA Campaign and facilitated multiple events on why it is necessary to include MENA as a race category across documentation and application collected by the University of Illinois System. We passed [legislation](#) supporting this cause and we continue to raise awareness about their campaign and share their platform on social media. Other legislation we passed to support our students was [USG Against Islamophobia](#) where we spoke to student leaders about their campaign against the School of Public Health on accepting donations from organizations who fund islamophobic and anti-Arab hate groups. We are continuing to work with administrators from SPH to solve this issue and provide safety for our students. In response to anti-Asian hate crimes and discrimination witnessed across the country, we passed [legislation](#) supporting the Asian American and Pacific Islanders community as well as the demand letter released by students. Furthermore, we are working with the Asian American Resource and Cultural Center, Office of Diversity and leaders of the Global Asian Studies program to find ways to further support the center and the program as well as provide more funding and allocate resources for Asian students.

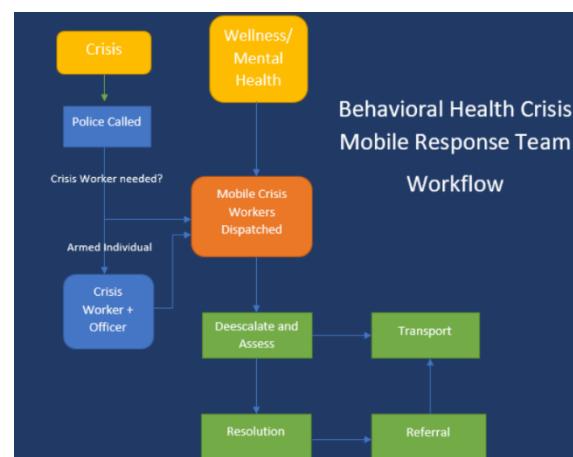
Mental Health

Just like condoms or toilet paper, the members of USG believed that access to menstrual products should be free for students on a college campus. With help from the Chancellor, who agreed to finance the effort, Vice President Hana Ahmed and Secretary Daniela Guerrero were able to commit to the installation of menstrual hygiene product dispensers in 23 bathrooms across campus, not limited to female restrooms but in all-gender restrooms as well. These dispensers are the best on the market, holding a large capacity of both tampons and pads, having braille lettering, and covered by a lifetime warranty. The products in these dispensers are also one of the best of their kind since they are both 100% biodegradable, making them better for the environment, and 100% cotton, making them healthy for student use. This effort was further made possible by cooperation with other student groups on campus including Blood Buds, Code Red @ UIC, and the American Medical Women's Association.

Student Safety

Ensuring the safety of UIC students was one of the primary focuses USG had throughout the year. Led by President Wasan Kumar, USG pushed for an emergency housing program to meet the needs of students facing housing insecurity or in need of a safe place to live. The program consists of the purchase of 5 housing units on a 3-year lease from Campus Housing on East Campus and 5 housing units with the Graduate Student Council on West Campus. Students may directly apply for Emergency Housing or be referred from the DoS after a student assistance. Additionally, the Emergency Housing Program will be overseen by the help of a part time graduate assistant.

A big issue USG saw and addressed was the comfort students felt being engaged by police authority. USG proposed a plan to establish a Mobile Behavioral Mental Health Crisis Counseling



Team. This team will serve as a liaison to the UIC Police Department to assist with calls involving non-violent crises and will provide 24/7 behavioral health services. The Crisis Counselor will assist with the transfer and evaluation of persons of concern for needed behavioral health services including risk assessment. Responsibilities of a crisis counselor may include:

- Responds to a variety of calls in which an armed law enforcement response is deemed unnecessary, including welfare checks, transportation to social or medical services, suspected behavioral or mental health issues, death notices, provision of public assistance or social service resources (such as housing, etc.), and sexual assault, domestic violence, and other traumas (in some instances).
- Facilitate hospital transfers (e.g., from the crisis scenes, Counseling Center, Campus housing, etc.) to the emergency room.
- Follow up with person to facilitate recommendations (e.g., facilitate follow up call to counseling center to help make appointment if needed).
- Utilize trauma-informed de-escalation and harm reduction strategies to respond to emergent needs of people in crisis while maximizing the safety of everyone involved.

USG hopes that with the addition of these crisis counselors, students will feel safer at UIC.



USG additionally sought to ensure the safety of students' wellbeing and health on campus. USG worked with the Vice Chancellor for Administrative Services and pre-health organizations to promote the Flu Vaccine and thus increased the number of flu-vaccinated students at UIC. In March/April, the Student Affairs Committee launched a campaign to promote the COVID-19 vaccine. This consisted of placing flyers around campus and providing students information about the COVID-19 vaccines and how to receive them at UIC. USG also spoke with Chancellor Amiridis and Vice Chancellor Coronado to learn more about COVID-19 safety in the Fall 2021 as UIC campus reopens for in-person learning.

President Report

Campaign for UIC CampusCare Fee Waivers

In May 2020, we worked with UIC's Graduate Employees Organization (GEO) and the Graduate Student Council (GSC) to pen a [letter to UIC's administration](#) calling for a reduction in Campus Care rates for the Fall and Spring semesters from \$445/semester to \$250/semester. We believed the COVID-19 pandemic, combined with loss of income from pandemic-related job loss necessitated increased accessibility to healthcare for all students. While the administration did not reduce rates, they did support increased coverage of Campus Care to include off-campus COVID testing and other services.

Online Tutoring Platform

We worked with Vice Provost for Undergraduate Academic Affairs, Nikos Varelas, on creating a centralized tutoring platform for UIC students to use for easy access to all UIC tutoring services. We proposed this idea, and they worked on implementing it. You can now visit: <https://tutoring.uic.edu/> to find subject-specific and course-specific tutoring.

Black Lives Matter

In response to the murders of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, and so many Black people at the hands of police we released a statement to the campus community supporting the Black Lives Matter movement. We followed this by arranging meetings with Black student leaders across our campus to organize and demand change from our UIC administrators, including supporting the work that went into the [Student Demands letter](#). We held a campus-wide Town Hall with the Chancellor and other UIC leaders to directly answer questions posed by students on UIC's response to structural racism. USG has consistently pushed to hire more diverse mental health counselors, and this year we finally saw an additional 3 Black mental health counselors hired. We have since worked in several capacities, from organizing town halls, uplifting demands, signing/developing petitions, and building intersectional solidarity.

Title IX

I served on a task force to implement the new Title IX regulations. We reviewed and implemented the new regulations, despite the obvious non-survivor centric framing. We were able to get a few significant survivor-centric wins for UIC's Title IX processes, including allowing a "support person" to be brought as part of the new cross-examination and requiring cultural and racial bias training for those involved in informal resolution. We also won extended cultural and bias training for anyone involved in informal resolution.

We worked on a proposal for Deputy Title IX Coordinators to significantly reduce the amount of time Title IX cases take at UIC. We also worked to hold OAE and the Title IX office accountable by requiring they release regular reports on how long cases take, as well as an annual report on sexual misconduct at UIC, reviewed by the Chancellor and a committee composed of students, staff, and faculty. We called for the hiring of a Transformative Justice Coordinator to handle conflict resolution. We focused on improving transparency, accessibility, and accountability, and developing programs like Title IX infographics, summarizing the misconduct policy for students and improved scheduling systems.

DHS/ICE Restrictions on International Students

Over the summer, DHS proposed new guidelines that would severely limit the ability of International students to retain their visa status. During this difficult time, we worked on several projects to support International Students:

1. Organized with International Students Supporting Each Other (ISSEO) on creating a [list of demands](#) to administration. This letter received over 1,100 signatures.
2. We published a [list of in-person courses](#) that students could use to fulfil the new requirements
3. We organized an event with the Counseling Center called 'We Belong' as a space for students to vent and share their frustrations

COVID-19 and UIC Reopening

I served on the UIC COVID-19 Safety and Monitoring Committee, tasked with developing a plan for UIC's reopening. The group developed several programs around testing and monitoring policies. We at student govt lobbied for and won several measures:

- a. Equitable Quarantine and Isolation protocols for housing students (resources like a care manager, meal delivery and mental health support)
- b. Care managers for off-campus COVID positive students
- c. Transparency in COVID-19 rates on campus and in the community; Student inclusion on the decision process to move courses online
- d. Resources for students coming on campus (Wellness package: 2 masks, thermometer, hand sanitizer)
- e. Opposed 'Contract' for students; Opposed doorbell cameras in quarantine dorms

We also worked with the Counseling Center to create a 'We Belong' event to provide a weekly open counseling and conversation hour for quarantined students. We held a Town Hall on COVID-19 and UIC's Reopening with administration for students to directly ask questions. We also developed a COVID-19 Testing guide and reopening FAQs graphic.

Since the summer, we have pushed for several other measures. At a Town Hall in November, students brought up an important question: the UIC Rockford Campus had no COVID testing for students, faculty, and staff. We were able to get the Chancellor to commit to solving the issues with Rockford's lack of COVID testing.

Further, we pushed the Chancellor to include students in Illinois latest Phases of COVID-19 vaccination. We asked for student employees to be included in Phase 1C alongside other higher education workers, and the Chancellor agreed to it - this was then conveyed to the student body through a campus-wide massmail.

Grading Policy Change

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Respondus Ban

Respondus Lockdown Browser and other webcam-monitoring proctor software has been shown to be racist, in that they flag students of color for cheating at rates twice as high as their caucasian peers. Beyond this, there are equity and privacy concerns for students such that our own UIC Computing Services recommends against its use. We passed a [resolution](#) calling for the Faculty Senate and Provost Susan Poser to ban these softwares in academic programs, and provided several alternatives. Ultimately, a total ban was not implemented, however several departments and individual faculty began to roll-back use of Respondus with Webcam requirements or Respondus altogether. Some schools, such as the Law School and CS departments completely banned Respondus use.

Critical Ethnic and Gender Studies General Education Requirement

We proposed to create a new general education category for [Critical Ethnic and Gender Studies \(CEGS\)](#), as a way to formally train students in anti-racist, anti-sexist, and anti-xenophobic curricula. [Studies](#) have shown that just 1 mandated CEGS course has led to a 1.4 GPA point increase in students and 21% increase in attendance, indicating that there is a demonstrable effect to adding a new GE requirement. We coordinated with the 5 CEGS department heads in selecting appropriate courses, and submitted a formal resolution to the Faculty Senate. We also collected over [500 signatures](#) in support of this, as well as letters of support from local alderman and state representatives. Currently, we are debating this issue with the Faculty Senators, and the proposal has received the endorsement of Chancellor Amiridis and Provost Poser.

USG Emergency Housing Initiative

In consultation with UIC Wellness Center's Director Carol Peterson, we proposed a [program](#) for the student government to purchase 10 UIC Housing units on a 2-year contract and temporarily lease them for students experiencing emergency situations of homelessness. This initiative coordinates with UIC's existing U&ICare system, and fills a crucial gap by setting aside dedicated housing, to ensure space is available for students who need it. We further coordinated with Jane Addams College of Social Work to hire a [graduate assistant](#) to this project who could work as a case manager for students. Pushed Chancellor to look into working with Chicago housing authority.



Student Leadership Training on Preventing Gender Based Violence

We worked with the Campus Advocacy Network on a [Student Leadership Training](#) for preventing gender-based violence. Studies have shown that effective programs like this have led to a 40-50% reduction in sexual misconduct on college campuses. Our goal is to launch a bystander intervention program for all undergraduate students to take as part of their First-year Seminar. We are currently working to pilot this initiative to ~5000 students with Student Affairs Departments

Policing and Public Safety

1. Created a proposal for a [Mobile Mental Health Crisis Counseling Team](#) as a non-police resource that would assist with mental health crises, provide social services, perform wellness checks and de-escalate situations where policing may not be the best solution
2. Hosted a [Town Hall on Re-imagining Public Safety at UIC](#) for the entire campus alongside the BGSA, GTC, Abolition, GEO, and UICUF
3. Signed on to letters calling for greater policing accountability and worked with the Good Trouble Coalition (GTC) and Abolition @ UIC among other UIC groups
4. Worked with the Public Safety Board to end the use of race modifiers in Public Safety Alerts
5. Lobbied the Chancellor towards increasing resources to the UIC Red Car and student walker programs
6. Successfully pushed UICPD to end eviction of homeless/housing insecure students living out of their cars
7. Pushed the Chancellor to working with Chicago alderman on updating UIC campus safety from speeding vehicles/DUI after the death of UIC student Tushar Patel

Student Mental Health Days

We developed and endorsed a [resolution](#) to include 3 non-instructional “reading days” at the end of each Fall and Spring semester. This would not increase the length of the academic calendar, but simply replace the last 3 days of classes before Finals week. This proposal is currently being debated by the Faculty Senate, where it has significant support in the Student Affairs Committee and received the endorsement of Chancellor Amiridis.

\$15 Minimum Wage for Undergraduate Student Workers

We lobbied and received a commitment from Chancellor Amiridis and Vice Chancellor Tolliver to an annual wage increase of \$1 per hour for Undergraduate Workers until we reach a wage of \$15 per hour.

Increasing Textbook Affordability

We donated \$10,000 to the UIC Library’s Open Education Resources Faculty Incentive Program. This gift was matched by the UIC Provost and UIC Library for a total of \$30,000. Grants were then awarded to 9 faculty members, who created open access resources for their classes supporting 1,100 students and saving students an estimated \$260,000 in textbook costs.



GPA Recalculation Policy

Currently, if a student fails a course at UIC and retakes it, that new grade is calculated in your GPA along with the failing grade, which goes against the common belief held by students. Any (rare) decisions to recalculate GPA are done by the college, not by students. We developed a resolution to change this, and automatically replace previous failing grades with the new one from a retaken course. We are currently working with Vice Provost Varelas to materialize this resolution.

Undergraduate Honor Code

In response to faculty and the provost's claim of an increase in academic dishonesty during the pandemic and online learning, we developed a reasonable and just honor code for all undergraduate students to follow/sign on to. We hope that this document will serve students, while maintaining academic integrity. This is currently being reviewed and voted upon by the Council of Academic Deans.

Condemning Anti-Asian hate

We penned a letter to the campus community condemning the rise in anti-asian hate crimes across the country, while calling on the UIC administration to take action by adequately funding programs that exist to support APIDA (Asian Pacific Islander Desi American) students. We further organized a meeting with Asian student leaders to strategize on penning a letter to UIC administration on changes we would like to see at UIC. We coordinated with Black student leaders and abolitionist organizations to host a summit emphasizing solidarity on our intersectional struggles through this letter. We are currently organizing to get signatures from the UIC community in support of this letter.

Return of Laptop Loaner and Laptop Repair programs

We asked the Chancellor to extend the Laptop Loaner program that CTS (tech solutions) had launched at the start of the pandemic. This request was approved and the program was extended to the fall 2020 and spring 2021 semesters.

Similarly, we requested the computer drop off and repair program be reinstated and that project is currently in progress.

Extend U-Pass opt-in deadline

The Chancellor announced that a significant portion of courses were approved to return in-person by February 8th, 2021, however many students had already opted out of the U-Pass (Ventra) program and had no way to commute to campus. We requested an extension on this U-Pass opt-in/out so that students could opt-in again if needed.

Reviving SAFC Funds to CSI from Rex

For Fall 2020 and Spring 2021, all CSI (Center for Student Involvement) funding of student organizations was suspended. However, USG operates a \$10,000 fund for student engagement. Vice Chancellor Rex Tolliver offered to match that amount and opened funding for CSI to provide for student organizations who request it.



Student Fee Funding for Counseling Center

In 2018, USG and the Roosevelt Network at UIC worked together and organized for a proposal to increase student fees by \$10 and use the additional revenue to hire ~10 counselors at the Counseling Center. At that time, student fees in the UIC budget were not up for vote, but this year they were. We lobbied and worked with Vice Chancellor Tolliver and Dean Deanna to push this proposal forward.

Opposing a Cameras-on Mandate in Undergraduate Instruction

Provost Susan Poser and the Faculty Senate were considering requiring all undergraduate students to keep their cameras on during online classes. We wrote a [letter](#) describing the negative impacts of this plan and our staunch opposition to it. This issue is currently still being debated, and our letter serves as the only piece of student input in those debates.

Vice President Report

Mental Health Coalition

In addition to the initiatives titled Student Fee Funding for Counseling Center and the Student Mental Health Days listed above, the Coalition worked on various initiatives surrounding better mental health outcomes on campus. Most notably, the Coalition suggested the following recommendations to the Mental Health Task Force chaired by Dean Deanna Dean Kashima, with the primary items summarized below:

Changing the Campus Stigma Surrounding Mental Health- Institutional leaders, starting with the president and board of trustees or regents, should articulate the importance of creating a culture of wellbeing on their campus. One that recognizes the range of individual behaviors and community norms that affect wellbeing, acknowledges the magnitude of mental health and substance use issues on campus, addresses the stigma associated with mental illness and substance use disorders, and provides a range of resources to support students with different levels of need. This can include the implementation of town halls for open campus conversations, newsletters for students to keep them informed, and ensuring there is collaboration between campus departments.

Regular Assessments/Re-assessments of Mental Health Resources on Campus- Seeing as to how fruitful the student led survey results were in the Spring semester of 2021, the MHC recommends that the administration conduct such a survey on a regular basis – preferably, every year if not every semester. This survey can help to understand the changing landscape of mental health resources as the administration commits to new improvements and can also help to gauge whether changes that are being considered would land well amongst students. Some important findings from this survey are detailed later in this report.

Community Provider Directory- The Counseling Center should maintain a database that includes providers at the Counseling Center, the Illinois Neuropsychiatric Institute, the City of Chicago, and the surrounding suburbs. This directory should be structured much like the one on Psychology Today, where students can sift through providers while filtering by things like race, gender, age, religion, location, insurance, and other identifiers. This would help students that have the means to access paid services to find the ones that are appropriate for them and would prevent students from feeling abandoned once they have finished their allotted number of sessions from the Counseling Center.

Mental Health First Aid Trainings- In order to have a mutually beneficial relationship between students and faculty/professors it is imperative that there is an understanding of circumstances that are potentially inflammatory for mental health. As such, in coordination with Ms. La Tonja Ellis of Vice Chancellor Tolliver's Executive Leadership Team, the MHC encourages that faculty, student leaders, and advisors undergo mental health first aid trainings. This would allow employees of the University that interact with students to understand when there is a precarious situation and can then direct them to the appropriate resources or assist in supporting them through whatever they may be dealing with.

Behavioral Health Crisis Mobile Team – The MHC strongly supports the implementation of such a unit so that the campus can provide for the 24/7 mental health needs of students, with the draft

proposal seen here. This is especially important in matters of racial equity and safety of all of our students on campus, regardless of their identity. Furthermore, hand in hand with this suggestion is the recommendation that the Counseling Center hire more trauma-informed and 24/7 crisis counselors.

Mental Health Coalition- Survey Results

Overall, the survey had roughly 700 respondents, which could be greater if USG was able to have a direct line of communication with the student body. Survey respondents included all levels of study: undergraduate, graduate, and professional students. Alarming, a majority of respondents had an overall negative impression of usage and accessibility of mental health resources on UIC's campus. The students identified academic, financial, and emotional stressors as the greatest areas of need. However, when asked which resources were used, the Success Centers like ACE, LARES, AAAN, and others are not very highly used. Students are well aware of the Counseling Center and the Wellness Center, but services like the 24/7 Crisis Hotline, The Office of Applied Psychological Services, and the United Support Network are not as well known.

Overall, the Disability Resource Center had a relatively positive response compared to other services, like the Counseling Center. The Wellness Center, the Neuropsychiatric Institute, the Office of Applied Psychological Services, had a more neutral response.

Another alarming finding of the survey is that professors, faculty, and teaching assistants do not seem to be understanding students' mental health needs. Some highlighted concerns were that despite accommodations given through the Disability Resource Center, some professors do not understand the concerns or do not appropriately address them. Many excerpts of open-ended survey responses showed an increased desire for empathy or sensitivity training, as suggested in the above recommendations. Furthermore, the survey found that students mostly relied on their peers and their advisors when needing mental health support. This again, supports the idea of encouraging mental health first aid training around campus.

Students identified a variety of concerns about barriers to access on-campus services. These included working around their schedule, being unsure of which resources to use, distance from campus, long wait times, and increased costs.

Students also found that professional individual support was their first most preferred source of mental health support. Furthermore, introducing the idea of walk-in appointments was also well received. Lastly, having the ability to anonymously text or message either to set up appointments or to receive services was also desired by students.

Introducing the idea of preventative measures that are subsidized through the university, like apps such as Headspace or Calm had a rather ambivalent response. Furthermore, post-COVID students, post-COVID would still appreciate being able to use online platforms like Zoom or Doxy. Most notably, students had a really positive reaction to identifying the need for 24/7 crisis counseling. Again, this is supported by the recommendation of the Behavioral Health Crisis Mobile Team. Lastly, students expressed the need to expand Campus Care coverage of mental health resources. Given that the Counseling Center is understaffed, allowing for coverage of services off-campus and online services (like Better Help) would benefit students greatly.

The results of this survey helped to identify potential areas for improvement within the mental health resources on campus, while also highlighting the things and changes that have been working well. Continuing to conduct such surveys can only help to have well-informed solutions and identify students' main concerns. The Mental Health Coalition is dedicated to upholding the recommendations proposed as a product of analyzing this survey data.

Menstrual Hygiene Initiative

Menstruation can often impede students from participating in classes as they normally would – whether this is because of the financial burden introduced by having to buy period products, because of the fear of leakage or embarrassment, or because of pain that can occur during menstruation. In order to alleviate some of this burden in any way that we can, we worked with the Chancellor to fund this initiative that provides free menstrual products to anyone on campus that may need it.

According to the plan created by USG in coordination with Blood Buds, Code Red at UIC, and the American Medical Women’s Association, there are 23 bathrooms across campus that should include menstrual product dispensers that can be used free of cost for students. Each of these dispensers carries 50 pads and 50 tampons at a time. The pads are medium flow and have wings. The tampons have a smooth-tip applicator. Both items are 100% cotton and 100% biodegradable. These dispensers and products are contracted through Aunt Flow, the company that provides both. The bathrooms in which these dispensers are placed will not be limited to women’s restrooms, but will include all-gender restrooms as well.

The following buildings have been identified for installation of these dispensers, with the number of bathrooms in each building listed in parentheses:

- Daley Library (5)
- Student Center East (4)
- Behavioral Sciences Building (2)
- Lecture Center B (1)
- Burnham Hall (1)
- Stevenson Hall (1)
- University Hall (1)
- College of Urban Planning & Affairs (1)
- Douglas Hall (1)
- Science and Engineering Lab East (1)
- Science and Engineering Lab West (1)
- Science and Engineering South (1)
- Academic and Residential Complex (1)
- Architecture and Design Studios (1)
- Education, Theatre, Music, and Social Work (1)

Bonfire Liaison

In order to share the initiatives undertaken through the Undergraduate Student Government and to provide necessary and requested information to students, it was important to establish a connection between Bonfire, the independent student news group, and USG. As such, within USG administration shall exist a role in which a person maintains their USG duties, reports to the USG Chief of Staff, communicates with Bonfire when information is requested for articles, and can write articles about USG initiatives if desired.



Treasurer Report

Library Locker

Working with the UIC Library we were able to fund the implementation of more amenities in the library such as a USG & UIC Library branded charging locker which keeps students tech safe, secure, and fully charged. This will further enhance the student experience for UIC students once campus re-opens.

Budget Creation

As the Treasurer it is my responsibility to create the budget and ensure it is inclusive of all our members and initiatives we plan to create during the year.

UIC Open-Source Textbooks

With the hard work of President Wasan and his initiative in funding UIC Library's Open Education Resources Faculty Incentive Program I was able to successfully transfer USG funds into this initiative which will save students money in terms of textbook costs.

YDSA Conference Funding

Young Democratic Socialists of America is a club at UIC which needed funding to attend a virtual conference. USG sponsored them attending the event in hopes to ensure the leadership of the organization prospers into the upcoming year.

LAUGH @ UIC Speaker Funding

LAUGH @ UIC is a laughter therapy club on campus which aims to create a stress-free environment through the act of forced laughter also known as laughter yoga. USG funded their notable speaker Dr. Kataria to host an event during U&I care week.

Electric Scooter Docks

The Sustainability Department has shown interest in making more accessible parking for those with electric scooters. USG aims to help this cause by funding the docks and choosing appropriate locations for these to be implemented and installed.

End of the year Party

At the end of the fall semester 2020 USG members hosted an end of the year event. I as the Treasurer ensured everyone was reimbursed for out of pocket expenses.

Get-Vaccinated Campaign Funding

Out of the Student Affairs committee an initiative to promote vaccines was made, I ensured funding for this initiative went smoothly and efficiently.



Red Shoes Review Merchandise Funding

Red Shoes Review is an art and literary magazine club on campus, due to COVID-19 and lack of in person events to build solidarity we funded their merchandise. USG's brand will be promoted through their magazines and merchandise.

UIC Chess Club Merchandise Funding

UIC Chess Club showed interest in building solidarity through merchandise, to help with their mission we funded them merchandise with USG's brand promoted on them.

Pre-Law Society Funding

Pre-Law society wanting to make their club more official reached out to USG to create certificates which have a USG seal of approval and graduation cords. USG has decided to fund these initiatives to promote our brand and show we continue to support our clubs on campus.

Canva Pro Funding

Public relations committee has shown interest in purchasing a pro version of their canva account, funding for this initiative will be helpful to all future public relations committee directors and graphic designers.

End of the year food Funding

Due to the nature of online learning food has not been available every meeting like the past, therefore USG has decided to fund food orders for its members via carry-out.



Chief of Staff

Textbook Affordability

Textbooks are one of the most expensive materials a student must pay, coming as digital material where students are forced to buy them via access codes for a fixed unnegotiable price. This cost, often high, can be a hinderance to a student's success and as such, we sought to make textbooks more affordable. President Wasan Kumar and I met with Janet Swatscheno, Head Librarian of the Open Education Resources (OER) Program, to discuss open education and how USG and her can collaborate. We also provided the OER Program \$10,000 of USG funds. As a result, the OER Program was able to fund \$27,000 to professors for OER which saved a total of ~\$260,000 for ~1,100 students collectively. This is just the beginning. We plan to create a Faculty Open Education Award, funded by USG to incentivize professors to use OER. In addition, with Illinois PIRG, we plan to take textbook affordability to state legislation by lobbying state officials.

Connecting the Undergraduate Student Government and Student Senate members

This year, we have received many pushbacks from the Faculty Senate for our initiatives. As such, we realize we need to increase both the number of student senators and their involvement so that there is true student representation in the Faculty Senate. To do this, I met with student senators and plan to create more cohesiveness by normalizing meetings between student senators and USG members.

Diversity and Inclusion

Cultural Centers & Campus Units Collaborations

- African American CC: Creating Change series. Facilitated the event and spoke to students about student government activism and USG's role in creating change on campus.
- Campus Advocacy Network: Know Your Rights Title IX Regulations. We invited an attorney (Christina Zuba) from Chicago Alliance Against Sexual Exploitation to give a presentation on the new regulations and how students can take action at UIC, Leadership Training for student leaders to prevent gender-based violence.
- Women's Leadership and Resource Center Shake It Up Series: series of events highlighting gender-based violence struggle and making thoughtful conversation on how we can take action to eliminate practices that deepen the problem within the community.
- ArabAm CC: Fall Open House, Middle East and North Africa Campaign
- Disability CC: Know Your Rights: Minority Students Rights
- Latino Cultural Center: Know Your Rights: Minority Students Rights
- Asian American Resource and Cultural Center: Know Your Rights: Minority Students Rights, AAPI training (mentioned below)
- Office of Diversity: Know Your Rights: Minority Students Rights, AAPI training to educate students on how to safely respond to anti-asian hate crimes and discrimination as well as protect our community against racial injustice (still in the works).

Counseling Center Collaborations

- Therapists in their office drinking coffee podcast: an outreach project launched by CC intern. We created the flyer for them and connected them with Mental Health Coalition of USG
- Conversation Hour: series of events discussing various topics around mental health.

Projects & Campaigns

- Newsletter: Featuring Cultural Centers and highlighting USG events and initiatives. Students can register through the website. We adopted Campus Groups as a platform.
- Be Aware: We want to raise awareness on social issues around the world that directly impact UIC students. Organizations featured: Relief for Yemen, Palestine's Children Relief Fund, Association for Justice in Kashmir, Students for Justice in Palestine
- Flu Vaccine Campaign with several pre-health organizations and the Office of the Vice Chancellor for Administrative Services
- MENA Campaign: Adding a MENA category on applications and documentation collected by University of Illinois System
- Leadership Training for student leaders
- AAPI training (still in the works; not much details yet)

Events

- Know Your Rights Series with John Marshall Law School OUTLaw and Graduate Student Council (4 total events)
 - The series covered the following topics: Student employment and career service resources, graduate employees union and legal services, minority students rights and how they are protected by the university, rights of student protestors (still in the works).
 - Interfaith Conversation Hour with Muslim Student Association and Hindu Student Council which brought students together to discuss how our religious differences could still unite



us when we find out that we all want to spread love, justice and peace in our communities and on campus.

- MENA Town Hall: we spoke about the legislation we passed regarding the USG's support for the campaign and explained further how USG is in full support for ArabAmCC efforts.

Legislation

- I. USG Support for the MENA Campaign
- II. Transformative Justice Coordinator (not yet introduced)
- III. Student Leadership Training
- IV. Deputy Chairs to Expedite Title IX Hearing Processes *** May not be necessary
- V. USG Against Islamophobia
- VI. USG Stands in Solidarity with the AAPI Community
- VII. Ramadan Attendance Exemption



Legislative Affairs

Representative Lakeshia Collins Get Out To Vote Event

The week before elections, my committee and I worked on various events, in tandem with SAC, SLCE, and Illinois PIRG, so that we may ensure new voters are being registered prior to election day, and know how and why it is important to be active in their voting plans. Representative Lakeshia Collins and her Chief of Staff Frederique Desrosiers both attended an event to speak and discuss the importance of civic engagement and voter education.

Get Out To Vote Initiative

The Student Leadership and Civic Engagement Office works every election year to ensure that voting on campus is being promoted, and ensure that voters are being educated. USG took a part in the creation of events and outreach that occurs via their programming, and we had a day of events and meetings with SAC during early voters days to push people to early vote.

Title IX Initiative

In the past semesters, there have been various issues that have impacted the university and its Students in regards to their safety. There specifically has been issues in regards to survivors of sexual assault. Due to this, the committee worked with various organizations and offices on campus to find ways to improve the care provided to survivors on our campus. From this we gathered various action items, and have been slowly working with Title IX to fix these issues.

Title IX Letter Rework

One of the previously aforementioned action items that needed to be worked on was the letter sent out to people who filed a report to the Title IX office. The letter itself is long and not cohesive, with no ability to navigate through it. The committee worked to restructure the letter and include ways that make it easier on the recipient. The edits have been completed, and await approval from Title IX.

Mental Health Coalition Initiatives

In coordination with the Vice President of USG, work was done to make mental health services more accessible for those on campus. Things worked on this semester include a survey to gauge mental health resources on campus, which collected over 700 responses. These responses were used show admin and faculty the need of students on campus.



Public Relations

Promoted 2020 US Elections

During Fall 2020, PRC worked with the Legislative Affairs Committee (LAC) to urge students to vote for the nationwide 2020 Elections. Using USG's social media, we shared resources regarding events, debates, who's on the ballot, student led talks about why students should vote, and UIC's voting website.

Created Infographics for Title IX

When the Trump administration updated Title IX policies, PRC worked with the USG President and Diversity and Inclusion chairwoman to make updated policies more comprehensive for UIC's student body. We created infographics and promoted Title IX events hosted by UIC's Campus Advocacy Network (CAN).

Promoted External and Internal Events

PRC's duty is to raise awareness of USG initiatives and help promote non-USG events to the student body. We've created and promoted flyers for committees, and shared flyers as per outside request.

Updating the USG Website

Throughout the year, PRC updated the website by creating a more accessible method for students to contact and get to know USG; as well as making the homepage more user friendly. Listed below are some notable updates:

- Updated "Contact Us" feature to give a more direct access to the type of personnel most beneficial for the student.
- Updated "Request Funding from USG" feature where students can immediately contact USG's Treasurer.
- Added new members to "Meet Our Members"
- Made committee officers more accessible to contact in "USG committees"

USG Branding

PRC purchased USG branded merchandise to create a sense of community within USG and prepare for promotional efforts when UIC opens campus in Fall 2021. Along with the USG merchandise initiative, PRC collaborated with the Treasury committee to add USG branding to items we've funded and purchased (e.g., the collaboration with USG x UIC library).

YouTube Initiative

Due to remote learning in the 2020-2021 academic year, PRC recorded and uploaded USG general body meetings to YouTube for the sake of transparency and accessibility for those interested in learning and following USG's initiatives. PRC worked with the Chief of Staff to enter USG in the Chancellor Student Service and Leadership Award (CSSLA) competition.



Student Affairs

On-Campus Internships and Research Opportunities Spreadsheet:

Problem Identified: As a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, there has been a significant decrease in the availability of internship opportunities globally. This particularly affected students as internship experience is an essential part of a student's educational experience and provides a hands-on experience to apply classroom concepts in the real world.

Response: UIC offers a large proportion of on-campus internship opportunities that cover a vast array of topics; I put together a spreadsheet where students can quickly identify these opportunities and apply to the available on-campus internships. It will also give students a chance to be more connected to UIC and form better relationships with the university's personnel. This sheet also includes on-campus research opportunities with contact information and department.

It will be the responsibility of future Student Affairs committee members to ensure that this is up to date.

https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1CjSIKZCT_sUdRZut6myrFY5cxLjY9GbKV2KRWFM6v0/edit#gid=0

GPA Recalculation Policy:

Problem Identified: UIC's current recalculation policy fails to allow a student who may have failed a class or received a "D" to have an opportunity to repair their GPA.

Response: Formed a document alongside the President to the provost to propose the university administration amends the current GPA recalculation policy to include a grade replacement clause. This grade replacement clause will allow students who retake eligible courses (courses with grades "D" or "F") the option to have the second grade replace the initial grade in the calculation of the student's final grade point average.

https://docs.google.com/document/d/1vEDOhf_eNESBNoCTobIzCIzl6Y13Kbxg_00fxz9dmm0/edit?usp=sharing

First-Year Seminar Expansion:

Problem Identified: First-year courses are only offered to people in specific majors/ colleges. Begs into the question of learning and opportunity inequities based on a student's course of study. If these first-year seminar courses are so beneficial, why aren't they mandatory across every major?

Response: I proposed Mandatory first-year seminar courses for every major (this could perhaps be limited to students with less than xx credit hours, just like UPA 120). Transfer students, inter-college transfers are exempted from this class requirement. Dr Lan Chaplin, a marketing professor, is also advocating for the expansion of FYS. Sharing the fact sheet with the problem and solution can help Dr Chaplin advance this proposal to a decision agenda to make these changes.

Made an email introduction between them and potential continuing USG student affairs members.

https://docs.google.com/document/d/1fr9_WEWJDAm3ZRc84YNh9UwrmqBg61AAiBWIV5APsgA/edit?usp=sharing

Get Vaccinated Campaign:

Problem Identified: With vast information about the COVID-19 vaccine being disseminated.

Response: A survey to understand the opinions the UIC community has about the COVID-19 vaccine.

https://uic.ca1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_2oCbJdABnzUQFQa

A social media campaign to educate UIC students about the vaccine, its efficacy and how taking the vaccine are progressive steps to return to normalcy.

https://www.canva.com/design/DAEYMWw53Ow/share/preview?token=_uRj5Q0k9L5SZurQaRKcHw&role=EDITOR&utm_content=DAEYMWw53Ow&utm_campaign=designshare&utm_medium=link&utm_source=sharebutton

Setting up a table outside the vaccination centre to hand out “I got vaccinated” stickers.

Put posters around campus with information about the importance of receiving the vaccine COVID-19 vaccine.

Closed Captioning for Online Classes:

Problem: The university provides limited disability resources for online learning, particularly for students who are hard of hearing.

Response: Require professors to turn on Closed Captioning for all online courses, providing students with the opportunity to have the live transcript option during class.

Improvements to the USG website/ newsletter:

Problem: Working as a student marketing assistant for the university and with extensive experience in marketing/ PR material, I made suggestions to the head of the public relations committee on the website’s bettering. I also observed that the USG newsletter appeared to focus on other organisations with minimal emphasis on the work of the USG.

Response: Worked to meet with the head of PRC and Diversity and Inclusion (which puts together the newsletter) to make plans to rectify these errors and rebrand the whole newsletter for future USG administrations.



Campus Life

COVID-19 and UIC Reopening

I attended Student Organization Roundtables with CSI to discuss procedures and COVID safety measures student organizations would be required to follow. This information was then distributed to the student body via infographics. I also worked with on campus facilities (such as the UIC library) to distribute information to students on how they would operate during COVID-19. Additionally, we worked with the Counseling Center to create a recurring event called “We Belong”. This program provided students in quarantine with a space to talk about their mental health needs, as well as the opportunity to interact with those in a similar situation.

International Student Support

My committee and I were very dedicated to addressing the concerns many international students had, including the confusion that arose from the ICE directive.

We also planned a virtual event around Thanksgiving that would serve as a space for international students who remained on campus to interact with those in a similar situation and have fun during their break.

Honor Code

My deputy chair and I worked on an Honor Code for all students that was sent to Provost Poser and the Dean’s Council/Academic Senate. Our intent was for it to serve as a contract between student and professor, in which students would understand the expectations that come with academic integrity and professors would not assume the student to be guilty.

AAPI Demands Letter

Following the Georgia shooting that involved the murders of six Asian women, we gathered a group of Asian student leaders at UIC to compose a letter to UIC containing the demands of Asian students for better treatment and resources. The most notable demands included:

- I. Divesting from the police
- II. Fund and approve the GLAS major
- III. Providing support for international students
- IV. Addressing gender based violence on campus

Wellness Center Student Panels

I worked with the Wellness Center on multiple occasions to arrange student panels in which students could share their experiences and tips on studying and being successful in classes during the pandemic. Both events had a large turnout.

Mental Health Coalition

My deputy chair and I were a part of the Mental Health Coalition. We created a survey assessing students’ opinions on the mental health resources offered on campus, then proceeded to present this information to the Counseling Center.



USG Newsletter

We created a newsletter to be distributed to the student body that would let them know of upcoming events sponsored by USG, as well as highlight some of the work we were doing.

Executive Branch

President Wasan Kumar

Vice President Hana Ahmed

Chief of Staff Matthew Almendras

Diversity and Inclusion Chair Bayan Hammad

Legislative Affairs Chair Dahlya El-Adawe

Public Relations Chair Aitanna Nadala

Student Affairs Chair Tegha Obire

Campus Life Chair Michelle Zhou

Legislative Branch

Speaker of the House Daisy Stancheva

Treasurer Anshu Nidamanuri

Secretary Daniela Guerrero

Representatives:

Abigail Pettineo

Arthur Kasowki

Danyah Thnaibat

Jada Nneji

Jocelyn Aranda-Ortiz

Kayla Taylor

Malack Abdelsalam



Matt Selvaraj

Megan Bi

Michael Fernandes

Misty Villagomez

Mohammed Haq

My Nguyen

Nora Alsaadi

Sarah Khan

Sarah Malik

Nina Henry

Quinton Crisman

Zaid Vohra

Advisors

Keith Ellis

Dre Parker

Student Trustee

Jocelyn Bravo