



# Divided We Stand

 THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO  
INSTITUTE OF POLITICS

**Annual Report**

2024-25



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The 2024-2025 Student Advisory Board outside the IOP House

**The Institute of Politics occupies a unique place in American higher education: nonpartisan, extracurricular programming offering students pathways to engage in politics and public service.**

The Institute of Politics does this through four main programs:

- The **Career Development Program** offers students hands-on opportunities to create meaningful impact through nearly 300 paid internships across the country and around the globe each year across a wide range of fields related to politics and public service.
- The **Civic Engagement Program** mobilizes student engagement through its leadership development groups, allowing our students to explore ways to participate in civic life.
- The **Pritzker Fellows Program** connects students with leading practitioners from politics, public service, government, journalism, and advocacy organizations. Fellows provide invaluable lessons, insights, and mentorship through small-group discussions and office hours.
- The **Speaker Series** hosts hundreds of prominent figures from across the ideological spectrum each year, making the IOP a vital center for civil discourse about the most important issues of our day.

## A Letter from IOP Director Heidi Heitkamp

I have been very fortunate throughout my professional life to have found different ways to serve the public. The opportunity to lead the IOP is particularly close to my heart.

Over the last two years, I have met many amazing young people who are passionate about being a positive force in their communities and in some aspect of public life – whether through a nonprofit, journalism, advocacy work or elected office.

This past year, it has been especially gratifying for me to watch the students who make up the IOP community rise to the moment. As a country, we just went through one of the most divisive national elections in recent memory. At the IOP, we decided we had a bigger role to play beyond simply observing. In the months leading up to the election, our students took action. Every incoming freshman at the University of Chicago received information on how to register to vote, courtesy of UChiVotes, our student-run get-out-the-vote initiative.

Throughout the campaign season, IOP students canvassed, tabled and helped hundreds of their peers get registered. During the summer months, we convened more than 400 students at the Republican National Convention and the Democratic National Convention, leading them through workshops and teaching them how to engage voters in their hometowns and across partisan divides.

After a particularly contentious election season, we could not ignore the raw feelings coming from all corners of the electorate. As a staff, we understood that the problem is not our partisan divides but rather how we work through them.

I'm particularly proud of our 2024 Bridging the Divide conference, where we brought together leaders from across the country to work through the issues that divide urban and rural communities, in an effort to find common ground on issues that affect us all.

Last year, when a group of protesters occupied the IOP, I told them that this was a place for dialogue. "Divided We Stand" – an initiative based on the idea that, however nasty our politics can get, we are stronger when we confront them head-on – came out of this same commitment to free expression.

Over the last year, our Speaker Series, our Pritzker Fellows and most importantly our students have explored the differences dividing us as a country through a series of public events, seminars and small group discussions. In doing so, the IOP community continues to put into practice the University of Chicago's free speech principles.

This is likely my last letter as director of the Institute of Politics. It's been one of the great honors of my lifetime to be a part of an institute with such a critical mission – inspiring the next generation of public service leaders.

All of this work would not have been possible without the commitment and enormous effort of the IOP staff. I have been fortunate to work with amazing people during my career. The IOP staff stands shoulder to shoulder with the best. I would like to particularly thank Zeenat Rahman for her excellent leadership and calm resolve in the face of many day to day challenges.

David, thank you for the opportunity to be part of the IOP mission. I am forever in your debt.

In the pages that follow, we've outlined some of the great work we've done throughout the year.

Thank you to the University of Chicago, the Board of Advisors and community partners. Above all, thank you to the students whose energy, talent and passion inspire us every day. In the pages that follow, the Institute of Politics is pleased to share some highlights of the 2024-25 academic year.







The nonpartisan Institute of Politics is committed to fostering in our students a passion for public service, meaningful dialogue and active engagement in our democracy.

Students from across the country came to Chicago to learn voter engagement strategies from the IOP's Youth VoteFest partner, the Students Learn Students Vote Coalition.



A Note from Our Student Advisory Board Co-Chairs

## In Defense of Nonpartisan Spaces & Difficult Conversations

We've all seen this scene before: a speaker is invited to a college campus and gets shouted down by students (and sometimes faculty) for expressing views outside of what is deemed "acceptable" by the majority.

While protest is a hallmark of a healthy democracy, the unwillingness to engage with opposing viewpoints is not.

In the defense of young people like ourselves, our collective heart is in the right place. Where older generations were more apt to tolerate instances of racism, sexism, homophobia, misogyny and more in the name of civility, we are not.

We are the generation that shouts down speakers at events. Many of our peers take pride in that – our generation fights back when institutions try to "platform" a speaker whose views might result in "harm."

A 2023 survey of Princeton students found that three-fourths believe it's acceptable to shout down a speaker on campus. A more recent survey from last year conducted by the Foundation for Individual Rights and Expression found that two-thirds believe there are at least some occasions that call for a speaker to get shouted down.

What is the point of the university experience if long-held beliefs aren't challenged? What is the point of higher education if we can't debate the issues in good faith without vilifying the people with whom we disagree? How does it bode for society if our generation shies away from debate with those whose perspectives have persuaded many?

We've learned the value of engaging with our ideological opposites through our experiences at the Institute of Politics.



Elisabeth Snyder,  
AB '25

### Elisabeth's Story

I spent the three years before entering college working in Virginia Democratic politics. All my life, I had been passionate about left-leaning causes — raising the state's minimum wage, expanding healthcare access and instituting paid family leave.

As a hardcore Democrat, I spent the summer volunteering on Democratic candidate Terry McAuliffe's gubernatorial campaign and then enrolled at UChicago in the fall, where the Institute of Politics (IOP) would help set me on a path to a long career in politics.

When I arrived on campus, I was most excited to learn from politicians who shared my views. I was surprised, only a few months into my time at UChicago, to find out that the IOP was hosting political strategist Mark Campbell as a fellow. Campbell ran the campaign for Glenn Youngkin — the Republican who had just beaten my candidate in the Virginia governor's race.

This could have been a moment for me to disengage. Instead, I introduced myself.

Nonpartisan institutions like the IOP don't ask us to agree with every speaker we hear at an event or every student we talk to afterward. Instead, these spaces give us an opportunity to engage, even when it is uncomfortable.

That winter, I sat in the front row of Campbell's seminars often. I debated him, challenged him, but also learned from him. I learned more over those eight weeks than I would have if I'd decided to stay in my partisan bubble.

My experience is a lesson we can all learn from. I am still an unflinching Democrat, and Campbell is still a Republican political strategist. But now I understand his perspective and feel comfortable engaging with other Republicans in conversation.

For young people everywhere, finding nonpartisan spaces is critical to learning how to disagree. In an age of social media and partisan politics that feeds us exactly what we want to hear, we need places where we can disagree openly and honestly – democracy demands that of us.

Increasing polarization causes many of us to engage only in circumstances where the people are like-minded and the conversations come easily. There's a role for those situations. But to have a true and enduring democracy, we must collectively commit to welcoming difficult conversations and dedicate ourselves to open dialogue and critical thinking.



Divya Mehrotra,  
AB '25

### Divya's Story

Elisabeth's story is not a one-off. The IOP also offered me a chance to break out of my partisan bubble. As the daughter of two Indian-Americans who immigrated to the U.S. through the H-1B visa program, my family's experiences crafted my political lens. I had never met someone who opposed the H-1B program until I met Mick Mulvaney, the former White House chief of staff during President Donald Trump's first term.

During a series of conversations with Mulvaney at the IOP, I found his views on immigration to be inconsistent with my own reality. I was prepared for a fiery debate, but he was open to hearing my story.

Though neither Mick Mulvaney nor I ultimately changed our views on immigration, both of us are better able to discuss immigration policy after hearing each other's perspectives. As the H-1B visa program and immigration have remained under threat, talking to Mulvaney gave me the experience and confidence to engage with other students and politicians who disagree.

So, the next time I faced a politician who fundamentally opposed my views on immigration, I knew how to disagree without shouting or yelling. While not every conversation left me satisfied, I left knowing that I had the opportunity to challenge someone else and leave them contemplating a new perspective.

Engaging in dialogue, even with those whose views we find abhorrent or antithetical to our lived experiences, is a sign of maturity, not ideological weakness or "selling out" our convictions, particularly in these times when dialogue is disappearing. If we don't lean into difficult conversations, we risk confining ourselves to partisan bubbles where our beliefs remain unchallenged, undeveloped and ultimately incoherent to anyone who doesn't share our lived experiences.

Collectively, we need to be real with ourselves. Retreating to our "safe spaces" and blocking out opinions we disagree with is not only harmful to ourselves and our individual growth, it is a dangerous threat to our democracy.





Scenes from the IOP's 2024-25 programming



# 1,382

Early voters at our on-campus polling location

# 3,434

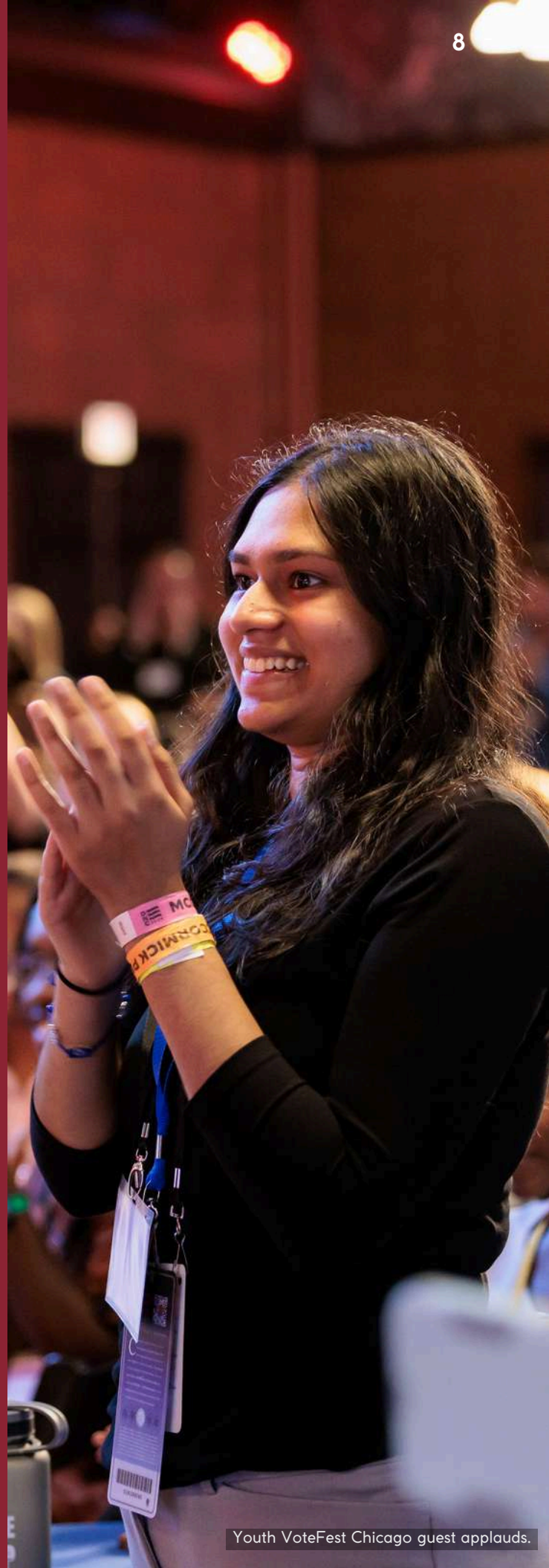
Speaker Series event attendees

# 1,677

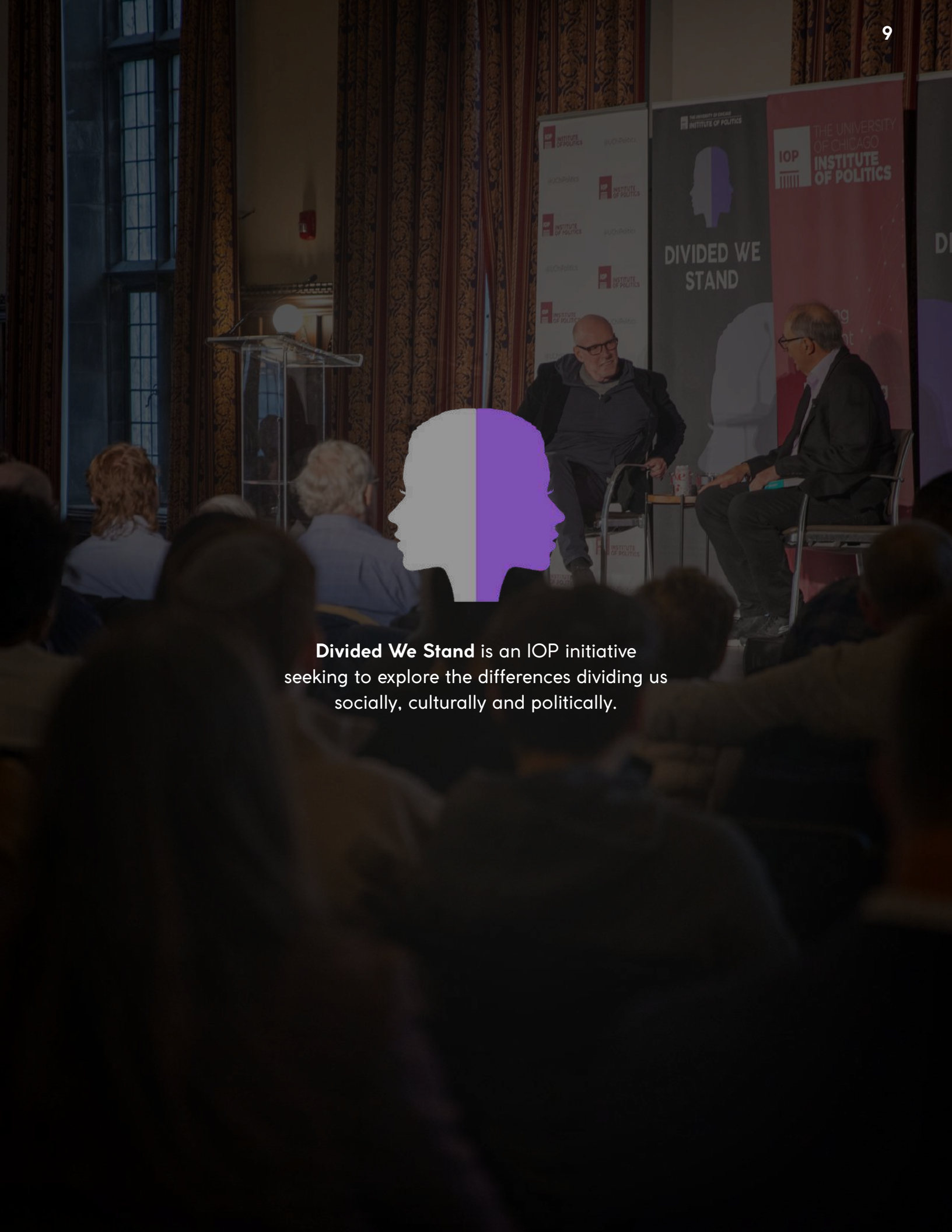
Seminar attendees

# 336

Politics and public service internships funded



Youth VoteFest Chicago guest applauds.



**Divided We Stand** is an IOP initiative seeking to explore the differences dividing us socially, culturally and politically.





Former U.S. Representative Katie Porter (D-CA) (left) speaks alongside Charles Fain Lehman, fellow at the Manhattan Institute (right).

After a decisive yet politically complex 2024 election, we sought to deeply explore — rather than solve — the differences that divide us, the global context and the “horseshoe” economic and political postures that bind the left and right. Divided We Stand is a new IOP initiative seeking to explore the differences dividing us socially, culturally and politically.

To kick off the series, we hosted a thought-provoking dialogue on the politics of wealth and social capital distribution, featuring former U.S. Representative **Katie Porter** (D-CA), former U.S. Deputy Secretary of Agriculture **Xochitl Torres Small** and Manhattan Institute Fellow **Charles Fain Lehman**. This discussion highlighted the populist rhetoric employed by leaders across the political spectrum as well as the complex ideological lines shaping debates around equity and economic fairness.



Magdalene Taylor, writer and sexual culture critic (left), discusses the gender divide with Clay Travis, radio host and founder of OutKick (right).

Our exploration of political divides continued with a deep dive into the gender divide, featuring conservative influencer and radio host **Clay Travis**. This event encouraged students to reflect on the media they consume and the cultural narratives it propels, sparking valuable conversations regarding gender, politics and identity.



Pritzker Fellow Pete Buttigieg (right) invited former Congressman Garret Graves (R-LA) to one of his seminars.

This year, we also challenged each of our Pritzker Fellows to invite a guest speaker to discuss an issue they passionately disagree about during at least one of their seminars. By modeling civil dialogue, the IOP’s fellows, speakers, staff and student leaders put into practice the University of Chicago’s free speech principles.

“I loved the robust debate, the great questions from the students, and the larger conversation our IOP event provoked in the news and social media. To me, it’s exactly what a real campus conversation should ideally produce – lively debate and articulate agreements and disagreements that move beyond the campus into the larger political and news arenas of everyday life.” – **Clay Travis, Gender in the Blender event panelist**





President of UChicago Democrats Kate Davis (left) debates College Republicans President Christopher Phillips (right) in an event moderated by IOP Pritzker Fellow and former NBC Chief Political Analyst Chuck Todd (center).

# College Republicans & UChicago Democrats, Debate

[Watch the livestream on the IOP's YouTube page](#)

"The debate helped forge steady, healthy relationships across rigid political lines at UChicago – an outcome that, at least to me, often feels impossible within the UChicago bubble. Chris and I, despite our very different views, formed a real friendship through the process, one built on respect, shared experience, and a mutual willingness to show up in good faith when it mattered. And the impact didn't stop with us. Sidechat – a student-only social media platform – lit up after the event, with students reflecting on the debate, engaging with the stakes of the election and calling for more spaces like it.

All in all, having the opportunity to participate in the debate will forever stand out as one of my most transformative experiences at UChicago. I gained a newfound confidence in my voice, built up a community, and now get to graduate with a solidified goal: to get back on a debate stage like that one soon – hopefully, as a candidate myself. I am profoundly grateful to the IOP and its staff for believing in me, supporting me and giving me the opportunity to grow in ways I never could have imagined."

– Kate Davis, AB '25

During the Fall Quarter, the IOP hosted the first of its kind student debate featuring Kate Davis, AB '25, president of UChicago Democrats, against Chris Phillips, AB '25, president of the College Republicans, hosted by veteran newsman Chuck Todd.

In front of a packed and raucous audience, Kate and Chris debated immigration, the economy, reproductive rights and which of the two major party candidates would be better for Generation Z.

"It was a great honor and privilege to be asked to participate in the IOP student debate. The event was an incredible experience for me and was important for the IOP and the University of Chicago. **The debate staunchly embodied the university's commitment to (and the student body's desire for) open inquiry and genuine contestation of ideas.** As such, the event's attendance was phenomenal – venue capacity was reached more than 15 minutes before the event began! Thus, it served as a way to excite students – not just the two presenters, but the hundreds in attendance and the several thousand livestream viewers.

"The preparation process and mentorship of several conservative IOP connections was similarly profound, as I became much more literate on the issues through my research and planning. Being able to engage with Kate and the rest of UC Dems was equally enriching. Serving as the representative of the Republican party in this debate helped me to understand the political strengths of both parties in this dynamic moment in our country's history. This was an opportunity to feature authentic supporters of each presidential candidate in an unfiltered setting, and the IOP ought to continue to feature true representatives of the ideologies of both major political parties moving forward."

– Chris Phillips, AB '25



# Dialogue Dinners

“Dialogue Dinners have been a valuable experience for me in practicing discourse and sharing my own experiences in a thoughtful discussion. It is an experience that encourages me to converse with people who differ from me in opinion, background, and perspective. Part of what has made dialogue dinners so impactful to me is having the opportunity to disagree with others and hearing others disagree with me productively, in a way that isn’t confrontational but rather the result of a difference in our lived experience.

“As a participant, I have learned that being willing to share our personal experiences is critical to facilitating thoughtful discourse and conversation. And through hosting Dialogue Dinners, I have learned the importance of listening to others without interrupting or prepping my response. This focus on listening rather than responding has made me better at understanding not only others’ perspectives but also what sets of values and experiences have led them to views on issues that might be very different from my own. Above all, I have enjoyed Dialogue Dinners because they reminded me of the value of simply talking to and connecting with other people.”

– Zeennah Akorede, AB ‘26

**Part of our Divided We Stand initiative, Dialogue Dinners are student-led conversations that allow for productive dialogue and principled disagreement in a welcoming setting. The dinners match students with Pritzker Fellows and are organized around pressing issues of the day.**

IOP Pritzker Fellow Génesis Dávila participates in a student-facilitated Dialogue Dinner.



“This trek solidified my belief that civil discourse is an invaluable resource. The IOP Wisconsin Trek did an outstanding job of exposing us to a variety of viewpoints and promoting respectful exchange. This trek has also motivated me to become more involved in state and local government.” – **Isabel Álvarez, AB '26**

It gave me a lot of hope that on a local level, there are still individuals, red and blue, who are trying their best to create meaningful change in the communities they serve, where the political landscape isn't entirely poisoned by what's going on at a national level.” – **Kacey Archer, AB '28**



Students Katie Hacker, AB '27 (left) and Alyssa Manthi, AB '26 (right) explore Madison on the Wisconsin trek.

# Wisconsin Trek

The IOP took a group of 11 students on our annual spring break trek to spend three days in our neighboring battleground state of Wisconsin. Part of our Divided We Stand initiative, the trek allowed our students to explore the deep divisions shaping Wisconsin politics, from the urban-rural divide to DEI on college campuses.

Traveling to Wisconsin allowed us to look at the issues that matter for split ticket voters and to meet with a wide range of public servants: conservative, liberal and libertarian; rural and urban; state, local and federal. Students were able to dive into the pivotal Wisconsin Supreme Court election during peak campaign season, two weeks ahead of election day. Lastly, students were able to connect with University of Wisconsin–Madison students across the private–public university system divide.

We began the trek in Milwaukee, where we learned about the long labor history of the state on a tour of the Pabst brewery. We continued our background with a polling data presentation from Marquette University Professor **Charles Franklin** followed by an opportunity to engage on health care policy during a discussion led by **Miranda Spindt** from the Wisconsin Institute for Law & Liberty, a conservative think tank.



"The dinner we had with the legislators will definitely be a lifelong memory for me. Hearing stories about why certain lawmakers chose to run for office was particularly inspiring, and was a healthy reminder that the whole point of democracy is that anyone can run." – **Morgan Walker, AB '28**

"I would be remiss if I didn't mention Josh Schoemann and the housing plans he's implemented in Washington County. That was a great example of how the government can deliver for people, how to overcome political opposition, and that even in a conservative county, the government can still invest and deliver in ways you might not expect. I was thoroughly impressed with what he's implemented there!" – **Jakob Gilleylen, AB '25**

Washington County Executive Josh Schoemann discusses his Next Generation Housing initiative with students.



From there, students traveled to Madison, where they joined forces with students from the University of Wisconsin–Madison for a fireside chat with U.S. Senator Tammy Baldwin (D-WI).

On day two, students toured the beautiful Capitol building where they met Crystal Potts, Director of State Relations at UW–Madison and Jenni Dye, Deputy Chief of Staff for Policy to Governor Tony Evers. They then engaged in a campaign simulation for the Wisconsin gubernatorial election in 2026 led by IOP Practitioner in Residence Andrew Mamo.

We ended the day with dinner at UW–Madison Chancellor Jennifer Mnookin's home, where students spoke to a bipartisan group of three state legislators and IOP Director Heidi Heitkamp in small groups about the key policy issues that have shaped their communities and political careers.



Senator Tammy Baldwin (D-WI) poses with students from UChicago and the University of Wisconsin–Madison.

Our third opportunity for students to deepen their connections with UW students was a chance to sit down with Wisconsin House Speaker Robin Vos and discuss his controversial attempts to dismantle DEI, specifically at UW–Madison. In conversation with Chancellor Mnookin, our students witnessed a great modeling of respectful and impassioned disagreement.

Our final day took us to Washington County, Wisconsin – an exurban community outside of Madison, home to some of Wisconsin's 6,000 dairy farms, one of which students visited to hear farmers' key concerns for the state and country.

The highlight of the day was a session on building social capital with Washington County Executive Josh Schoemann, where he discussed his unique initiative, Next Generation Housing, which provides opportunities for homeownership through county loans and options to repay with community service. Students ended the day with a tour of one of Next Gen's new housing compounds before returning to Chicago, inspired by local politics and full of cheese curds.

# Pritzker Fellows



Former Senator Jon Tester (D-MT), a Pritzker Fellow, leads a seminar in the IOP Living Room.

The Pritzker Fellows Program brings practitioners from politics, government, journalism, advocacy and the nonprofit and policy sectors to campus to share lessons from their distinguished careers. Through weekly seminars and office hours, Fellows offer students invaluable insights and mentorship.





Pritzker Fellow and former Secretary of Transportation Pete Buttigieg speaks to students during a seminar in the IOP Living Room.

# 1,677

Seminar attendees

# 656

Unique attendees

# 408

One-on-one office hours offered

At a time of profound international turmoil, our students were able to hear firsthand from international fellows with direct and current experiences with authoritarian regimes. **Génesis Dávila** and **Natalia Pelevina** captivated students weekly with their first-hand accounts of repression, war, imprisonment and even murder in their respective countries. While the content was at times daunting and left many in the room tearful, Génesis and Natalia were among our most popular fellows by far all year, and many students said they have never been so moved by a speaker on campus.

Former Senator **Jon Tester** – who arrived weekly in his farm jeans and hat – had a large and loyal following among both rural students and those who had no prior exposure to the challenges of rural life in America.

**Ken Cuccinelli** and **Chris LaCivita** challenged students with their explanations and defense of Trump administration politics, while **Xochitl Torres Small**, **Justin Ángel Knighten** and **Shalanda Young** took students through the practical parts of their jobs in the Biden administration, often with exciting simulations.





Snapshots from our Pritzker Fellows' time at the IOP



# Fall 2024 Fellows



## David Axelrod

For an election year as consequential as 2024, there was no one better to offer us weekly campaign updates and penetrating analysis than IOP Founder David Axelrod. A one-time political writer for the *Chicago Tribune*, the chief strategist for Barack Obama's presidential campaigns and a former senior White House advisor, David is one of the most widely quoted – and prescient – political voices in American life.



## Ken Buck

Former Colorado Republican Congressman Ken Buck made the case that an ineffective Congress, the ongoing erosion of open and civil discourse on campuses and a toxic social media landscape constitute a threat to our democracy.



## Kam Buckner

Democratic Illinois State Representative and Assistant Majority Leader Kam Buckner walked students through his experiences on the front lines of the General Assembly as elected officials passed an unprecedented slate of legislation that legalized cannabis, increased the minimum wage, banned assault weapons, eliminated cash bail and added safeguards for reproductive health.



## Génesis Dávila

Defiende Venezuela founder Génesis Dávila, a fearless fighter for human rights, discussed political persecution, arbitrary detentions, crimes against humanity and the historical and contemporary mechanisms used to justify and carry out those acts. Then, along with an all-star lineup of guests, she showed students how they can unmask and dismantle repressive regimes.



## Jordan Sun

State Department alum and military veteran turned tech innovator Jordan Sun shared his expertise in national security, defense, counter-terrorism, robotics and healthcare. In his seminars, students learned about the interplay between public service and the private sector in a rapidly changing technological landscape.



## Katie Tobin

Drawing on her experience as President Joe Biden's top migration advisor on the National Security Council, Katie Tobin explored immigration policy and border security through the lens of foreign policy. Katie and her students discussed Venezuela, U.S.-Mexico relations and the increasingly lucrative criminal smuggling industry.

## Student Spotlight: Albany Parra, AB '28



Albany Parra, AB '28 (left) and Pritzker Fellow Génesis Dávila (right) stand together outside of the Institute of Politics.

First-year student **Albany Parra** was born and raised in Venezuela. “When I first got to campus, I was so excited to learn that Génesis Dávila was a fellow at the IOP. Not only do she and I share a hometown, but we also share a passion for human rights. I actually completely changed my class schedule so that I could attend all eight of Génesis’s seminars.”

In addition to being an avid seminar attendee, Albany also built a personal relationship with Génesis. “She became a mentor to me, and we’re still in contact. At the end of her time here, she printed out photos of the two of us as a gift, and I keep them in my room to inspire me everyday. I found home in my relationship with Génesis as she was someone outside of Venezuela that was still fighting for Venezuela. All of this happened because Génesis saw me, cared about me, and believed in me, and that means so much to me.”

At the end of the seminars, Albany wrote a letter to Génesis as a way to express how meaningful this experience had been. “I really wanted to express my gratitude to her out loud so that she would know how much she has changed my life. It was so inspiring to see her fight for peace and justice in the world. **At the end of her time here at the IOP, I just wanted Génesis to know that all of her hard work has been worth it — and that all the work that activists all over the world do is worth it — because she is now raising up the next generation of leaders.**”

“Her seminars were so impactful for me that now, even though Génesis isn’t a Fellow anymore, I feel a responsibility to keep coming to the IOP and engaging in important conversations. I love what the IOP stands for, and in just my few first months on campus, I feel like the IOP has really become a second home.”

# Winter-Spring 2025 Fellows

## **Pete Buttigieg**

The former Secretary of Transportation and Mayor of South Bend, IN, shared stories and insights from his experiences as a dynamic young political leader at the local and national levels.



## **Ken Cuccinelli**

Cuccinelli, the former Deputy Secretary for the Department of Homeland Security during the first Trump administration, gave students unique insights and real-time analysis into President Trump's immigration and national security policies during his first 100 days in office.



## **Liz Johnson**

The former Chief of Staff to U.S. Senator Mitt Romney took students through her four hardest days in Washington, D.C., from a tough election loss in 2016 to January 6 and the subsequent Trump impeachment vote.



## **Justin Ángel Knighten**

Knighten, a former Associate Administrator with the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), has been on the front lines of natural disasters for years. He offered real-time analysis of the politics and processes of natural disaster responses at a time when the Trump administration is threatening to eliminate FEMA entirely.



## **Natalia Pelevina**

A playwright and Russian political opposition activist, Pelevina discussed her role in political campaigns and protests, including the imprisonment, smear campaigns and killings she and her contemporaries have faced, as well as Russia's ongoing invasion of Ukraine and the U.S.'s shifting foreign policy attitude towards Europe.



## **Jon Tester**

An organic farmer, former butcher and former U.S. Senator (D-MT), Tester brought his many years as an outsider and rural lawmaker to campus, facilitating insightful conversations about modern farming, campaigning, journalism and more.



## **Xochitl Torres Small**

Torres Small was the first Latina to serve as Deputy Secretary of the United States Department of Agriculture. She discussed what she's learned about loss, listening, serving rural communities and maintaining your values in public service.



## **Shalanda Young**

The former Office of Management and Budget Director dove deep into the inner workings of federal budgets and the reconciliation process while helping students make sense of the flurry of administrative actions from the Trump administration's Department of Government Efficiency (DOGE).



# 2024-25 Visiting Fellows



## **Aziz Abu Sarah and Magen Inon**

Palestinian peace activist Aziz Abu Sarah and Israeli peace activist Magen Inon have both have suffered unimaginable loss but have ultimately chosen to work toward peace and reconciliation. Magen, who lost both of his parents in the October 7 terrorist attack, and Aziz, whose older brother was killed by Israeli forces, outlined their shared – and distinct – visions for peace in the region.



## **Charlamagne tha God**

The host of the nationally syndicated radio show *The Breakfast Club* shared insights from his corner of the world, including holding powerful people to account and the transition from legacy to new media.



## **Tonika Lewis Johnson**

Johnson, a Chicago-based social justice artist, guided students through her in-depth exploration of urban segregation that has made her one of the brightest rising stars in the American art scene.



## **Chris LaCivita**

The Campaign Manager for President Donald Trump's 2024 campaign knows better than most that it's Trump's America now, and he showed our students what that means in ways that many in the media and other institutions have missed.



## **Chuck Todd**

NBC News Chief Political Analyst Chuck Todd joined us the week before the election to deconstruct polls in battleground states, break down the closing arguments of both presidential campaigns and help students contextualize the moment in American history.



# Dual Impact

Pete Buttigieg with Jakob  
Gilleylen, AB '25



**"As a Harvard graduate, I'm the product of an IOP like this one.** I was drawn to the freedom of thought that defines universities as a concept and as an ideal, an ideal which is currently under enormous pressure. I believe our most basic principles — freedom of expression, freedom of thought — are shared among liberals, conservatives and independents in this country. And yet those principles are under threat. However, I've been really moved by how I have seen this university community, especially the students here, respond to these threats and stand up for the values that — left, right or center — make it possible for a university and really for a country to function.

**"In the times we're living in, it's really important to have nonpartisan spaces like this one that bring together people with different views and different life experiences. There's not a lot of places like this. It's a really special thing, and I'm really glad to be part of it."** – Pete Buttigieg, IOP Pritzker Fellow, former Secretary of Transportation

**Jakob Gilleylen, AB '25** has been a Fellows Ambassador, a Team Lead and is now a Fellows Intern. Throughout his time at the IOP, he's been continually awed by the one-on-one conversations he's had with IOP Fellows, highlighting the time he spent with people like former Oregon Governor Kate Brown, ACLU LGBTQ & HIV Rights Project Co-Director Chase Strangio and former Secretary of Transportation Pete Buttigieg.

"The Fellows program is probably the best thing at the IOP, and it's because of the conversations you get to have. I don't want to have theoretical conversations — I want to talk about what's actually happening in the world. The IOP is where the people who do the thing come and talk to you."

# Fellows in their Own Words



## Chris LaCivita

*Winter-Spring 2025 Fellow, campaign manager for President Trump's 2024 presidential campaign*

LaCivita came to the IOP during the first weeks of the second Trump administration. He emphasized the importance of diverse political viewpoints everywhere, but especially on a college campus as "a place for developing thought and future leaders."

During his fellowship, **LaCivita participated in a heated but respectful off-the-record conversation about trans issues and the role they played in the 2024 election** with a small group that included both conservative and LGBTQ+ students. "Liberals and conservatives alike should be informed enough to defend their opinions... If I couldn't take the heat, I sure as hell wouldn't come to the kitchen."



## Ken Cuccinelli

*Winter-Spring 2025 Fellow, former Deputy Secretary of Homeland Security during the first Trump Administration*

When Ken Cuccinelli came into the IOP to be a fellow, he "was looking forward to talking to a very attentive, up to date, up to speed, intelligent group of students." After being here for several weeks now, he can report, "that's exactly what I've gotten here."

"It's been a good experience, including, by the way, preparing for what I know is a very intelligent and inquisitive audience. I joke that on a day like this, I'm going to talk about debt and the dollar, and I suspect that half of the class at the University of Chicago will be very well versed on this." And Ken looks forward to conversations with students who come in more skeptical of his positions. His favorite Aristotle quote is, 'the sign of an educated mind is to be able to entertain an idea without adopting it,' and Ken appreciates when liberal-minded students come in to talk with him. "Typically they leave disagreeing but hopefully at least understanding why I take the positions I do."

"For conservatives who care about how policy plays out in the real world and want to share their perspective on that, honestly, people in school, students, are there to hear it. If you're willing to engage in a little, friendly, diplomatic, rough and tumble, questioning your presumptions and all the rest, it's a great place to do it. And, and frankly, if you can't defend your own positions, you're probably not a great representative of those positions anyway."



The Speaker Series aims to host meaningful conversations that both inform students about today's most pressing issues and inspire them to engage with those challenges in thoughtful, proactive ways.

# Speaker Series



Alyssa Manthi, AB '26, Alexandria Porter, AB '25 and Shannon Dye, AB '25 interview Chicago Mayor Brandon Johnson (left to right).



Former Senator Laphonza Butler, Congresswoman Ayanna Pressley and Dr. Anastasia Curwood (left to right) speaking to students

The Speaker Series opened the academic year with an insightful discussion on what a potential second Trump administration would look like through a conversation with **Ken Cuccinelli, Joe Grogan and Morgan Ortagus**. Our election-focused programming continued with a conversation between political strategists **David Axelrod** and **Karl Rove**, exploring the role of battleground states in shaping the race for the White House.

We began the winter quarter with a candid, student-moderated conversation during which three IOP student leaders questioned **Mayor Brandon Johnson**, pressing him on the youth vote, his relationship with the Chicago Teachers Union, transit and Chicago's evolving role on the national stage. The Winter Quarter also marked the beginning of our **Divided We Stand 2025** initiative, which seeks to deeply explore the differences that divide us. To kick off the series, we hosted a thought-provoking dialogue on the politics of wealth and social capital distribution featuring former U.S. Representative **Katie Porter** (D-CA), former U.S. Deputy Secretary of Agriculture **Xochitl Torres Small** and Manhattan Institute Fellow **Charles Fain Lehman**. This discussion highlighted the complex ideological lines shaping debates around equity and economic fairness.

Our exploration of political divides continued with a deep dive into the gender divide featuring conservative influencer and radio host **Clay Travis**. This event encouraged students to reflect on the media they consume and the cultural narratives it propels, sparking valuable conversations regarding gender, politics and identity.

In the final weeks of the quarter, we hosted our most highly attended event of the year – The Future of the Democratic Party – drawing an audience of 600 people. This dynamic panel, moderated by **David Axelrod**, examined the party's evolving strategies and next steps, featuring former Secretary of Transportation and IOP Pritzker Fellow **Pete Buttigieg**, Congresswoman **Marie Gluesenkamp Perez** (D-WA) and **Justin Bibb**, Mayor of Cleveland. Together, they offered insight into how the Democratic party will navigate messaging strategies, policy priorities and a shifting voter base.

Discussions of the leaders and policies most impacted by the changing administration continued into the Spring Quarter. To kick off the quarter, we hosted a timely panel featuring recently terminated employees of independent federal agencies meant to be government watchdogs, followed by conversations on U.S. Secretary of Health and Human Services Robert Francis Kennedy's food policy agenda, the politics of natural disasters and the surge of student deportations across the country. Many students were inspired to hear from Congresswoman **Ayanna Pressley** and former Senator **Laphonza Butler** on their public service careers, inspired by the rich legacy of the first black woman in Congress, Shirley Chisholm.

At least once a quarter, the IOP offers Pop-Up events – hybrid events pulled together quickly to address hot-button news topics. This academic year, the Speaker Series hosted Pop-Ups on the deportation of immigrant students from college campuses and another Pop-Up on the anger surrounding the nation's health care system featuring Senators **Bernie Sanders** (I-VT) and **Chris Murphy** (D-CT).





scenes from Speaker Series events throughout the year





## 2024-2025 Speaker Series Events

Dylan Wells, AB '18, IOP alum and *Washington Post* reporter (left), in conversation with DNC Vice Chair David Hogg (right).



### Are you MAGA or a Socialist?

Jennifer Steinhauer, IOP Senior Director; Faiz Shakir, senior advisor to Senator Bernie Sanders; Mike Needham, former Chief of Staff to Senator Marco Rubio



### Effective Activism Across Generations

Katie Benner, *New York Times*; Dr. Rami Nashashibi, Executive Director of the Inner-City Muslim Action Network (IMAN); Barbara Lee, U.S. Representative (D-CA); Peter Staley, activist and early member of ACT UP



### What to Expect if You're Expecting Trump

Damian Paletta, *Wall Street Journal*; Ken Cuccinelli, former Deputy Secretary of Homeland Security; Morgan Ortagus, former spokesperson for the United States Department of State; Joe Grogan, former director of the United States Domestic Policy Council and assistant to President Donald Trump



### Battleground Banter with Axe & Rove

Ali Vitali, *NBC News*; David Axelrod, IOP Founding Director; Karl Rove, former senior advisor to President George W. Bush



### Haiti: A Deep Look

Fritznel D. Octave, *Haitian Times*; Michèle Pierre-Louis, former Prime Minister of Haiti; Patrick Gaspard, President of the Center for American Progress



### A Chuck Todd Moderated Student Debate: Which Presidential Candidate is Best for Gen Z?

Chuck Todd, former NBC Chief Political Analyst and IOP Pritzker Fellow; Christopher Phillips, AB '25, President of College Republicans; Kate Davis, AB '25, Co-President of UC Democrats



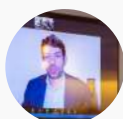
### How Messy Will This Election Be?

Peter Koutoujian, sheriff and former Massachusetts State Representative; Jennifer Steinhauer, IOP Senior Director; Jim Rutenberg, *The New York Times*; Jocelyn Benson, Secretary of State of Michigan; Stephen Richer, Maricopa County Recorder; Claire Atkin, CEO of Check My Ads



### Inside Presidential Transitions: Plans, Protocol & Practical Jokes

Jennifer Steinhauer, IOP Senior Director; Josh Earnest, White House Press Secretary under President Obama; Valerie Smith Boyd, Director of the Center for Presidential Transition and Partnership for Public Service; Professor William Howell, Director of the Center for Effective Government



### Predicting the Geopolitical Future: Strategies to Navigate Global Uncertainty

Marko Papic, geopolitical expert and researcher at BCA Research. Presented by the International Policy Program.



### Guys, It's Global: Unpacking a Year of Tumultuous Elections Across the World

Mark Landler, *The New York Times*; Paul Nantulya, Research Associate and China Specialist at the Africa Center for Strategic Studies; Annika Silva-Leander, Head of North America and Permanent Observer to the United Nations at International IDEA; Dr. Dan Markey, Senior Advisor on South Asia at the United States Institute of Peace



### Norway-US Relations & European Security Policy

Anniken Huitfeldt, Norwegian Ambassador to the U.S. Presented by the International Policy Program.



### A Look At Brandon Johnson's First Year as Chicago Mayor

Heather Cherone, Managing Editor and City Hall Reporter at *The Daily Line*; Greg Pratt, *Chicago Tribune* investigative reporter. Presented by Chicago Style.





Students and community members applaud after the IOP's Effective Activism Across Generations event.



### Brat Summer, Unusually Warm Fall: Real Talk on Energy Policy

Professor Michael Greenstone, Director of the Institute for Climate and Sustainable Growth & EPIC; Heidi Heitkamp, former U.S. Senator (D-ND) and IOP Director; Dr. Ernest Moniz, former Deputy Secretary of Energy



### Mayor Brandon Johnson Takes the Hot Seat

Alyssa Manthi AB'26, Alexandria Porter AB'25, Shannon Dye AB'25, Chicago Mayor Brandon Johnson



### The Future of Israel & Palestine: From Incalculable Loss to a Viable Tomorrow

Zeenat Rahman, IOP Executive Director; Aziz Abu Sarah, Palestinian peace activist and IOP Pritzker Fellow; Magen Inon, Israeli peace activist and IOP Pritzker Fellow



### Everybody Hates the Healthcare System

Thomas Fisher, MD MPH, attending emergency medicine physician at the University of Chicago Medicine; Jennifer Steinhauer, IOP Senior Director; Senator Chris Murphy (D-CT); Senator Bernie Sanders (I-VT)



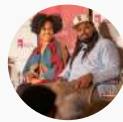
### The Politics of the Haves & the Have Nots

Jennifer Steinhauer, IOP Senior Director; Katie Porter, former U.S. Representative (D-CA); Charles Fain Lehman, fellow at the Manhattan Institute; and Xochitl Torres Small, former U.S. Deputy Secretary of Agriculture and IOP Pritzker Fellow



### Trumpian Tumult: Lessons from Europe

David M. Herszenhorn, *The Washington Post*; Maurizio Caprara, Italian journalist; Laura Thornton, senior director of global democracy programs at the McCain Institute at Arizona State University; Dalibor Rohac, senior fellow at the American Enterprise Institute



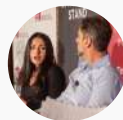
### Walls Are Witnesses: The Future of Black Chicago

Natalie Moore, Director of Audio Journalism Programming at Northwestern Medill School of Journalism; Tonika Lewis Johnson, social justice artist and visiting IOP Pritzker Fellow; Sherman "Dilla" Thomas, Chicago Urban Historian; Eve Ewing, Director of Undergraduate Studies, UChicago Department of Race, Diaspora and Indigeneity



### Pipe Dreams or Progress? Tackling Chicago's Lead Crisis

Michael Hawthorne, *Chicago Tribune*; Dr. Michael Tiboris, Global Water Fellow for the Chicago Council on Global Affairs; Nicole Roesler, AB '26, Presented by Chicago Style.



### Trad Wives and Alpha Males: Gender Relations in the Blender

Dr. Daniel A. Cox, director of the Survey Center on American Life at the American Enterprise Institute; Magdalene Taylor, writer and sexual culture critic; Clay Travis, radio host and founder of OutKick; Hanna Rosin, *The Atlantic*



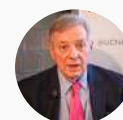
### The Future of the Democratic Party

David Axelrod, IOP Founding Director; Justin Bibb, Mayor of Cleveland; Congresswoman Marie Gluesenkamp Perez (D-WA); Pete Buttigieg, former Secretary of Transportation and IOP Pritzker Fellow



### That's What She Said: Stories & Strategies from Political Speechwriters

Jennifer Steinhauer, IOP Senior Director; Henry Connelly, former speechwriter for Speaker Nancy Pelosi; Sarah Hurwitz, former speechwriter for President Obama; Mike Ricci, former speechwriter for Speaker Paul Ryan



### Constitutional Crisis Cometh?

Heidi Heitkamp, former U.S. Senator (D-ND) and IOP Director; Senator Dick Durbin (D-IL); William Baude, Professor of Law at the University of Chicago; Mattathias Schwartz, *The New York Times*



## David Hogg: American Activism in the Balance

Dylan Wells, AB'19, *The Washington Post*; David Hogg, March for Our Lives co-founder and vice chair of the Democratic National Committee (left to right)



## A Fireside Chat on the State of U.S. Diplomacy

Zeenat Rahman, IOP Executive Director; Shefali Razdan Duggal, former U.S. Ambassador to the Netherlands



## Championing the South Side: Channyn Parker on Justice & LGBTQ+ Advocacy

Channyn Parker, CEO of Brave Space Alliance, trans justice advocate and Humanitarian Freedom Award winner; Alina Randhawa, AB '27. Presented by Chicago Style.



## Sanctuary or Stomping Grounds? Chicago in the Second Age of Trump

Kam Buckner, Illinois State Representative. Presented by Chicago Style.



## POTUS Power Plays: Hear from the Fired

Shalanda Young, former Director of the Office of Management and Budget & IOP Pritzker Fellow; Michael Missal, former Inspector General of the Department of Veterans Affairs; Jennifer Abruzzo, former general counsel for the National Labor Relations Board; Rohit Chopra, former Director of the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau



## The Congressional Legacy of Shirley Chisholm

Laphonza Butler, former U.S. Senator (D-CA); Congresswoman Ayanna Pressley (D-MA); Dr. Anastasia Curwood, author of the book *Shirley Chisholm: Champion of Black Feminist Power Politics*



## Class, Currency & Capital: Scott Galloway & David Axelrod in Conversation

Scott Galloway, entrepreneur, author, NYU Stern Business School Professor; David Axelrod, IOP Founding Director



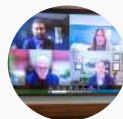
## Is It Still the Economy, Stupid? Four Decades of Democratic Strategizing

David Axelrod, IOP Founding Director; James Carville, political strategist; Lis Smith, campaign consultant



## Is RFK Jr. Right About Our Food System?

Julie Creswell, *The New York Times*; Brian Choi, Managing Partner & CEO at the Food Institute; Dr. Marion Nestle, acclaimed nutritionist; Jon Tester, former U.S. Senator (D-MT), organic farmer and IOP Pritzker Fellow



## Students & Scholars Snatched & Deported

Jennifer Steinhauer, IOP Senior Director; Natalia Pelevina, playwright, Russian political activist & IOP Pritzker Fellow; Congressman James P. McGovern (D-MA); Miriam Jordan, *The New York Times*; Brian Hauss, senior staff attorney with the American Civil Liberties Union; Ken Cuccinelli, former acting Deputy Secretary of Homeland Security and IOP Pritzker Fellow



## Fires, Floods & F\*ck Ups: The Ugly Politics of Disasters

Zeenat Rahman, IOP Executive Director; Justin Ángel Knighten, former Associate Administrator at FEMA & IOP Pritzker Fellow; Carol Pritchett, Mayor of Lure Lake, North Carolina; Michael Brown, former Director of FEMA during Hurricane Katrina



## IOP in London: Populism, Putin & the Shredding of the Atlantic Alliance with Christiane Amanpour

David Axelrod, IOP Founding Director and Christiane Amanpour, CNN's chief international anchor



## IOP in Paris: Populism, Putin & the Shredding of the Atlantic Alliance with Clarissa Ward & Roger Cohen

David Axelrod, IOP Founding Director and Christiane Amanpour; Clarissa Ward, CNN's chief international correspondent; Roger Cohen, *The New York Times* Paris Bureau Chief



## The Reality of Immigration & Deportation in Chicago

Ammar Ghouse, AB '27; Doan Tran, AB '27; Muzaffar Chishti, Senior Fellow at the Migration Policy Institute; Nubia Willman, former Director for the Office of New Americans for Chicago Mayor Lori Lightfoot; Ronald Vitiello, Senior Advisor to the Department of Homeland Security and U.S. Customs and Border Protection. Presented by Chicago Style and the International Policy Program.



## Pakistan's Domestic & Global Challenges: A Conversation with Hina Khar

Hina Rabbani Khar, former Foreign Minister of Pakistan; Divya Mehrotra, AB '25. Presented by the International Policy Program.



## South Korea in Political Turmoil: The Aftermath of Two Impeachments

Karl Friedhoff, the Marshall M. Bouton Fellow for Asia Studies at the Chicago Council on Global Affairs; Timothy Martin, Korea Bureau Chief at the *Wall Street Journal*; Sadie Darbro, AB '26. Presented by the International Policy Program.



## Pizza with Podcasters: Know Your Enemy in Conversation with Crooked Media's Reid Cherlin

Reid Cherlin, Executive Editor at Crooked Media; Matthew Sitman and Samuel Adler-Bell, Know Your Enemy podcast





### **Tariffs, Trade & Tech, Oh My! Gina Raimondo Speaks**

David Axelrod, IOP Founding Director; Gina Raimondo, former U.S. Secretary of Commerce and 75th governor of Rhode Island



### **The Frenzied First 100 Days: Covering Trump in Unprecedented Waters**

Jonathan Weisman, *The New York Times*; Annie Linskey, *The Wall Street Journal*; Zeke Miller, Associated Press; Eliana Johnson, *The Washington Free Beacon*



### **Romania and Eastern Europe at a Crossroads: Elections, Security, and the Future of the Region**

Simina Tulbure, Vice President of the Renew the European Project of Romania party; Sanjay Srivatsan, AB '25; Isabel Yamada, AB '27



### **Hasan Piker Off the Stream & in the Flesh**

Hasan Piker, Online streamer and political commentator; Astead Herndon, *The New York Times*



### **Opposition in Very Difficult Times**

Génesis Dávila, human rights lawyer & IOP Pritzker Fellow; Jiore Craig, disinformation expert; Evan Mawarire, pastor, former political prisoner, and Zimbabwean opposition leader; Lobsang Sangay, former President of the Central Tibetan Administration



### **GOALLLLLLL!!! The Geopolitics of Global Football and World Cups**

Stanis Elsberg, head of Play the Game; Steven Goff, Football Reporter at *The Washington Post*



### **Poder en Progreso: The Rise of Female Leadership Across Latin America**

Génesis Dávila, human rights lawyer & IOP Pritzker Fellow; Rosa María Payá, Cuban democracy activist and human rights advocate; Her Excellency Alejandra Solano, Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Costa Rica to the Organization of the United States



### **From Delta to Electric: Tracing the Chicago Blues Legacy**

Ivy Ford, musician; Mickey Dietler, UChicago professor; Jacob Steinberg, AB '26

## **Speaker Series by the Numbers**

# 3,434

## Speaker Series event attendees

# 1,851

## Unique attendees



In April, protesters disrupted our panel discussion on the Trump administration's mass deportation campaign. Guest speaker **Ronald Vitiello**, senior advisor to the Department of Homeland Security, was shouted down on multiple occasions as he tried to explain the administration's policies. Each disruption of the event was intended to stifle the exchange of ideas among our panelists.

In the face of this concerted effort to derail our programming, IOP staff met the moment, confronted the protesters and made sure the event could proceed. At the nonpartisan Institute of Politics, we vet every speaker we invite to campus to ensure we host quality, well-rounded discussions on the most pressing issues of the day. As a nonpartisan institution, we neither endorse nor oppose the views of our guests. We will, however, vigorously defend their right to express themselves.



## In Their Own Words: Speaker Series



Katie Hacker introducing The Future of the Democratic Party event

**Katie Hacker**

AB '27, Speaker Series Intern

"Going into this past election cycle, I knew that civil discourse and engaging with different opinions on campus was going to be really important, and Speaker Series events are a great way to do that. As an intern, I love being able to take on a more significant role in not only bringing those events to campus but also making sure they're including the depth of conversation and variety of opinions that the IOP is committed to.

"Katie also had the opportunity to give the introduction for **The Future of the Democratic Party** event. "It was an honor to be asked to introduce the speakers and the event. I was very involved in canvassing work, student organizing, and campaigning for both the Harris campaign and downballot Democratic races, so I was very grateful to be able to introduce an event about a topic I care so deeply about. During the event, we got to tackle really important questions about what the Democratic Party stands for now and it needs to stand for in the future. It felt like the cherry on top of my IOP experience this year."



Alyssa Manthi, Alexandria Porter and Shannon Dye interviewing Chicago Mayor Brandon Johnson (left to right)

**Alexandria Porter**

AB '25

In January, Alexandria had the unique opportunity to interview **Chicago Mayor Brandon Johnson** alongside two of her IOP peers. "I often have an attitude of assuming I'm not qualified enough to do something, so to be asked by the IOP staff to participate in this event was really flattering and a reminder of what I'm capable of. At some points it felt weird to be on stage, on the other side of an IOP event, but Mayor Johnson was really nice and it was such a cool opportunity to engage with a public official in that way. From my point of view, the media focuses most strongly on the bad things, and while it's not to say that those things aren't true, it's also nice to talk about the positive things Mayor Johnson has done for Chicago and all that he's accomplished. It was also just an experience I will never forget."



New York Times Paris Bureau Chief Roger Cohen (left) and CNN Chief International Correspondent Clarissa Ward (center) speak with David Axelrod (right) in Paris about the shredding of the Atlantic alliance.



CNN's Chief International Anchor Christiane Amanpour (left) and David Axelrod in conversation



# IOP in Europe



Scenes from the IOP's events in London and Paris

The IOP went international during the 2024-25 school year, hosting events in London and Paris. In both cities, IOP Founding Director **David Axelrod** hosted public discussions on the rise of populism in the U.S. and Europe and the fraying relationships among Western countries. He was joined by **Christiane Amanpour** and **Clarissa Ward** of CNN and **Roger Cohen** of *The New York Times*. At the UChicago Boyer Center in Paris, David also taught a seminar to students studying abroad.



# Policy Challenges

Mike Hernandez, MDiv '26 (left) presents during the Lame Duck policy challenge.



Twice a year, the Institute of Politics hosts a policy challenge for students of all levels and academic specializations, seeking solutions to a local, federal or global problem. Members of the winning team receive \$500 each and get their idea sent to the appropriate legislative body.

For the first time since the challenge was introduced three years ago, the IOP invited students from a variety of colleges and universities around the country to participate.

For our fall challenge, students were tasked with creating their own **lame duck legislation**. In the spring challenge, pivoting off the news once again, **we offered participants the chance to create their own DOGE – Department of Government Efficiency.**

The highlight of the year was our **Policy Challenge Super Bowl**, in which all participating students, acting as state lawmakers or a nongovernmental organization, developed a plan to address a single policy area that benefits both rural and urban communities. The IOP provided the prompt and offered technical assistance to complete these proposals. The winners from their respective contests at the University of Kansas and the University of Cincinnati then presented their proposals at the IOP's first-ever Policy Challenge Super Bowl!

The Super Bowl – won by a team of students from the University of Kansas – was judged by IOP Pritzker Fellow and former U.S. Senator **Jon Tester (D-MT)**.



Three University of Kansas students won the IOP's first policy challenge Super Bowl.

W+ board members pose in front of the IOP House.



The Civic Engagement Program mobilizes student engagement through its leadership development groups, which allow our students to explore ways in which to participate in civic life.

# Civic Engagement



The IOP Civic Engagement team started the year by welcoming more than 1,000 new students and highlighting opportunities for them to get involved in IOP programming. During UChicago's orientation period, Civic Engagement shared with them additional opportunities to make their voices heard in upcoming local and national elections.

During the Winter Quarter, the Civic Engagement team shifted its focus to leadership development. This included annual Winter Quarter cohorts for W+, Spectrum, Leaders of Color and the Launch leadership retreat. The Winter Quarter cohorts focused on skill-building and learning about hot topic issues from experts. The Launch leadership retreat brought together more than 20 students to build community, practice dialogue and learn about pathways to public service.

Entering into the Spring Quarter, the Civic Engagement team continued its programming with Dialogue Dinners and student group events while also recruiting for next year's student leadership positions, including membership on the Student Advisory Board. Developing a strong bench of student leaders is key as staff continues to adjust our programming to better serve the needs of students in the current political climate.

Left to right, Shannon Dye, AB '25, Davis Turner, AB '26 and Harlem Moore, AB '25 lead UChiVotes to the polls.



## Civic Engagement Groups

### Bridge

Bridge brings volunteers into Cook County Jail and the Illinois Youth Center to provide creative writing workshops and voter education for incarcerated individuals. Bridge also puts on events focused on criminal justice.

### The Gate

The Gate, UChicago's political newspaper, publishes long-form articles on university, local, national and global politics.

### Leaders of Color

A student-run leadership development program for undergraduate students of color.

### Spectrum

A group for queer people who are interested in public service, queer political and policy issues and building leadership skills.

### TechTeam

TechTeam creates websites, builds apps and designs digital tools for community organizations and local government. TechTeam also puts on events focused on civic tech and provides tech and skill-building workshops.

### UChiVotes

A student-led, nonpartisan voter engagement initiative created to boost voter turnout and engagement on the UChicago campus.

### W+

W+, Women and Gender Minorities in Public Service, works to create a space that empowers female, nonbinary and trans students to explore and cultivate their passion for public service.

## In Their Own Words: Civic Engagement

"Groups like Leaders of Color are incredibly important and I'm proud to say that I was a part of leading and fostering that community," Alex said. "Early on in my IOP time, I was lucky to have a lot of third- and fourth-year friends who looked out for me and encouraged me to be a part of Leaders of Color. They told me that it would be a great environment for me to be a part of. Teaching leadership skills is the main goal of the IOP's student cohorts, but it was also important for me to build meaningful friendships with other students of color who shared my interest in politics. Those relationships were what made me want to apply for a board position with LoC, to be able to keep that space going for other students of color."

### Alexandria Porter, AB '25

Leaders of Color Co-Chair



Leaders of Color board members Faith Augustine, AB '25 (left) and Alexandria Porter, AB '25 (right) pose for a picture.

"I joined *The Gate* in my first year as an opinion writer before becoming the opinion section editor, and now I'm the co-editor-in-chief. Stepping into a leadership role has been really rewarding. I've been really proud of getting a chance to shape *The Gate* into what I know it can be. Teddy – my co-Editor-in-Chief – and I have seen the publication grow over time, and this year we've almost doubled the number of writers we had last year.

"For me personally, being the editor-in-chief at the beginning of the Trump administration has been fascinating. To do this work at a time where free speech issues are at the forefront of the political discourse and journalists are in a vulnerable position feels really important. We've done a lot of reporting on the courts and legal controversies in the past couple of months, which has been driven by our writers' desire to dive into the complex issues of the moment. In that way, we're creating unique journalism from young people's perspective, and I view that as something that adds to the larger conversation."

### Ava Partridge, AB '26

Editor-in-Chief of The Gate



Ava Partridge poses with Eva Herrick, AB '27 and Gina Montagna, AB '26 (left to right) during their DNC media internships.



As co-chair of IYC Bridge, **Alero Simon** plans weekly writing lessons, games and activities for her and the volunteers to do with the incarcerated youth in the Illinois Youth Center in St. Charles.

"We really get to see them be super creative, and sometimes they get really personal and let us know about their lives in such a beautiful way."

Alero's proudest moment was the day she knew she'd finally built up trust with the young men she'd been seeing every week. "We got into this argument about Kendrick Lamar, and I remember one of the prison guards literally had to go get a speaker and play some of the songs we were arguing about. When they started writing that day, they were just so engaged and so willing to participate. I remember thinking, 'Wow, I've been working up to this moment, and everything that's come before has just been so worth it.'"

When Alero graduates, she knows she will come away from the IOP with "a renewed love for public service." Her post-graduate plans have been thrown into turmoil by cuts the Trump administration has made to positions in government, but Alero says that, after being a part of the IOP, **"I've seen that there are so many ways to do good and to help people. I will always have the opportunity to serve others."**

**Alero Simon, MPP '25**



Alero Simon, MPP '25 introduces the speakers for Fires, Floods & F\*ck Ups: The Ugly Politics of Natural Disasters.

## Bridge

Bridge volunteers provide creative writing workshops and voter education to incarcerated individuals in Cook County Jail and the Illinois Youth Center.

**Henry Cantor, AB '25**



Henry Cantor (right) poses with Michigan Governor Gretchen Whitmer (left).

"I first joined Bridge my first year and joined leadership by my third year to help restructure the program. We provide civic education and ballot training in Cook County Jail, the first jail in the country to become a polling place in 2019. My favorite part about Bridge is that it forces us to ask a lot of tough questions about voting that are hard to see when you've grown up thinking voting is the most powerful tool we have as citizens. Why does it matter to vote when our vote won't break a tie? How does voting lead to any meaningful change? That's why we began focusing on the judicial retention races, because most voters aren't impacted as heavily by these races, but the voting population at CCJ can make a real difference in removing judges who they feel are doing a bad job.

"In the last two years, I'm really proud of how we're thinking creatively about bringing programming to the jail. We produced a video about voting, started a book club and expanded our curriculum to include more ways to get involved, even while incarcerated. I'm so excited to see how the program grows beyond my time at UChicago."





The line outside our on-campus early voting location for the 2024 presidential election stretched for blocks.



## UChiVotes

UChiVotes is the IOP's student-led, nonpartisan voter engagement initiative created to boost voter turnout and engagement on the UChicago campus.



Davis Turner holds up a 24 with his fingers.

As co-chair of UChiVotes, **Davis Turner**, AB '26 was instrumental in planning and executing their voter engagement initiative. The UChiVotes early voting site drew 1,300 students, the largest turnout UChicago has seen since UChiVotes started.

"We went all in on the planning, from May until November, so it was really rewarding to see such high turnout. I think the pre-orientation work we did to get new students registered was especially successful, and it helped us recruit really enthusiastic first-year voting ambassadors.

"It was great to see some of our new initiatives in practice, such as having notaries at the IOP to help students easily get their ballots notarized and handing out free stamps for mail-in ballots. We also tried to engage the graduate schools more than we had in previous years by hosting trainings and walks to the polls. We even ran a contest with the undergraduate student athletes where the teams who had the most members registered to vote got a pizza party. I think we did a great job expanding the types of students who UChiVotes interacts with."

### BY THE NUMBERS

# 1,382

Early voters at our on-campus polling location

# 98

Trained and active voting ambassadors

# 2,121

TurboVote sign ups

# 413

UChicago athletes pledged to vote

# 800+

Individuals in pre-trial detention received voter education from IOP students

# Launch

An IOP Leadership Retreat



Launch attendees pose for a group picture at the Garfield Park Conservatory.

Launch is an intensive leadership development program for newly engaged students. Employing a cohort model, the experience is meant to bond and familiarize students with one another emphasizing peer-to-peer interactions and mentorship.

The program's goals focus on training in civil discourse and civic engagement. Leila Brammer, Director of Curriculum for the Chicago Forum for Free Inquiry and Expression, taught students about the value and practice of civic disagreement. Saturday, students had the chance to engage with one of our community partners, Chicago Votes, to learn how civic engagement looks in action.

The students were also physically immersed in Chicago's broader community and much of the programming was hosted at the Garfield Park Conservatory on Chicago's West Side. There, students engaged in workshops with Practitioners in Residence Caroline Hutton, Andrew Mamo and Saat Alety about identity, professionalism and finding their "why."

Sunday brought students back to the IOP House for reflection, bonding, brunch and an informal conversation with IOP's Director of Career Development Mark Schauerte and an overview of the IOP's offerings beyond civic engagement. In the following quarter, students self-organized a Launch Reunion where they once again practiced civic discourse with one another and reflected on how they've been impacted by Launch.



# Springfield, IL Trek

***“The way we got to see bipartisanship in action was awesome,” said Aparna Ramakrishnan, a University of Illinois-Chicago student. “They were incredibly candid and heartfelt about their roles and experiences.”***

During the Spring Quarter, more than 60 students applied for 10 spots on an overnight trek to Springfield, Illinois.

The train from Union Station to Springfield marked the first time many UChicago students had left Chicago to see the rest of Illinois. Lunch upon arrival in the capital with former Illinois state historian, Samuel Wheeler, “was really cool to hear a bit about Springfield history, and I thought it was great to set the tone for the trip,” said Ava Iwasko, AB '27.

Students spent Sunday afternoon touring Springfield’s historic sites before a mentoring dinner with leaders from the Edgar Fellows program, a nonprofit organization founded by former Illinois Governor Jim Edgar. The program focuses on bipartisanship and leadership development for Illinois public officials. The IOP and Edgar Fellows teams also partnered to launch the inaugural College Capitol Connections, a full-day event in the Illinois Capitol and Governor’s Mansion, exposing 50 students to potential careers in and around Illinois state government.

Campuses across Illinois sent students to the College Capitol Connections program, including the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign, the University of Illinois Chicago, the University of Illinois Springfield, Eastern Illinois University, Southern Illinois University Carbondale, Illinois Wesleyan University and Governors State University.

Jose Alvarez, AB '28 (left) and Tyler Shasteen, AB '26 (right) walk around Springfield.



Students started the day in the Capitol with a tour and some networking before getting an insider's look at what it's like to work in and around the building from a former Illinois state representative and a former longtime political journalist.

Illinois State Representative Kam Buckner, an IOP Pritzker Fellow and Illinois House Assistant Majority Leader, convened a bipartisan discussion with Illinois House Republican Leader Tony McCombie to discuss their leadership roles in the Illinois General Assembly and share their personal stories of public service. "The way we got to see bipartisanship in action was awesome," said Aparna Ramakrishnan, a University of Illinois–Chicago student. "They were incredibly candid and heartfelt about their roles and experiences."

Illinois Gov. J.B. Pritzker and First Lady M.K. Pritzker opened the Governor's Mansion to students for a luncheon and afternoon sessions begun by a keynote address from Deputy Governor Andy Manar, a former Illinois state senator and county board chair.

IOP Alumna Isabella Hurtado spoke with Republican State Rep. Bradley Fritts to share firsthand accounts of how students can enter public service immediately after graduating from college, through the Dunn Fellowship in the Illinois Governor's Office for Hurtado, and running for a seat in the Illinois General Assembly for Fritts.

The College Capitol Connections final session at the Governor's Mansion had students taking opposing views at their tables to debate Gov. Pritzker's proposal to require Illinois school districts to develop guidelines to bar the usage of cell phones in K-12 classrooms.

A tour of the Governor's Mansion and a closing dinner with many of the day's speakers capped the day before UChicago students boarded a train bound for Chicago's Union Station.



State Rep. Kam Buckner (right), an IOP Pritzker Fellow and Illinois House Assistant Majority Leader, in conversation with Illinois House Republican Leader Tony McCombie (left)



## Student Reflection: Emily Morgan, MPP '25, IOP Experiential Programming Graduate Assistant

"Attending the **2024 Iowa Caucus trek** was where I first fell in love with experiential learning. Thanks to my work now as a Graduate Assistant for Civic Engagement, I truly believe that experiential learning is the key to transforming students' lives. **The treks that we run facilitate student learning outside of the classroom and they change both hearts and minds.**"

Last summer, at the beginning of Emily's role as Civic Engagement Graduate Assistant, she was crucial day-of support for the **Milwaukee RNC trek** and hosting students from other universities during the DNC in Chicago. Now, during the academic year, Emily takes on a planning role for the student treks.

Looking back on this year's adventures, Emily was especially proud of the **Chicago Public Schools trek**.

"The exact week Mayor Johnson requested the resignation of the entire Chicago School Board of Education was when we had a trek all about Chicago's very first school board elections. The two reporters that we hosted on the trek panel were the ones who had broken the story just a couple days before. Not only was the timing of the trek perfect, but, more importantly, learning about how Chicago Public Schools runs is hugely impactful to the citizens of Chicago, so it was a great first trek of the year."

The **Wisconsin trek** also stands out as a highlight from this year. "We were in Wisconsin right before the election for a spot on the Wisconsin Supreme Court, so it was a unique time to be there. The most rewarding part of that trek was getting to connect with UW-Madison students, many of whom had attended our Bridging the Divide Conference. Seeing our IOP students bonding with the UW-Madison students was so inspiring. They're building peer networks and truly making each other better citizens."

Emily was also a key part of the IOP's second-ever **Launch** retreat, a three-day leadership retreat for first and second-year students.

"Breaking Bread Over Difference is the capstone experience of the Launch weekend, where students put together civic discourse skills to the test. They are encouraged to seek out differences of opinion and dive into those, and it was amazing to see students learn that division is not something to be afraid of but rather something to lean into. I'm really excited to see them become leaders in the world."



IOP Graduate Assistant Emily Morgan, second from right, leads trek attendees around Chicago.

# Career Development

The Institute of Politics funds over 300 internships each year across the country and around the world. These opportunities offer students the chance to do meaningful, often life-changing, work in a wide variety of fields related to politics and public service.

Our summer internship placements included 266 summer internships nationwide and overseas, with a particular concentration in Washington, D.C. and Chicago.

Academic-year internships in and around Chicago included 70 funded placements in the Office of the Chicago Mayor, Illinois Policy Institute, Advance Illinois, Chicago Public Media WBEZ, Illinois Justice Project, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, Illinois Department of Human Rights and more.

Career Development staff and interns also hosted 26 **career workshops** during the academic year, focusing on preparing students to apply for internships and enhancing their resumes, cover letters, knowledge of public service careers and networking skills. Staff and interns also held more than 160 individualized, one-on-one career advising sessions with undergraduate and graduate students.

During the 2024 political conventions, the IOP supported 39 media internships at the **DNC** in Chicago and six media internships at the **RNC** in Milwaukee. Students had the opportunity to gain experience in political communications while working with both ABC and CNN during their live coverage at the convention venues.



IOP summer interns pose for a photo with IOP staff and Pritzker Fellows at our annual Summer in Washington reception.



# Practitioners in Residence

## Practitioner Spotlight

As a student, Caroline Hutton, AB '18 was a member of W+ (the IOP's leadership development group for women and gender minorities), an IOP Intern, a Pritzker Fellows Ambassador and the co-chair of our Student Advisory Board.

**"The IOP gave me a lot of really great mentors who encouraged me to go into campaigns and public service. W+ was truly my family on campus. That cohort of people was so exceptional and formative for my UChicago experience."**

Now, as Director of Voter Protection for Democratic Party of Wisconsin, Caroline oversees the party's efforts to protect voter rights, ensuring that every citizen is able to cast their ballot. And as a Practitioner in Residence, Caroline was able to model for our students what a fulfilling career in politics and public service can look like while giving them actionable tips and insights as they stepped into their first jobs or internships.



Andrew Mamo, Caroline Hutton and Saat Alely (left to right)

The IOP launched the Practitioners in Residence program this year with the goal of bringing three practitioners in the fields of politics and public service to campus to serve as career mentors for our students. Our first cohort of practitioners included two IOP alums who, after graduating, went on to work on the Hill, political campaigns and voting rights advocacy.

**Andrew Mamo**, AB '18 joined the IOP fresh off the Tammy Baldwin for Senate campaign, in which he served as the Communications Director.

**Caroline Hutton**, AB '18 is a voting rights organizer and the Director of Voter Protection for Democratic Party of Wisconsin.

**Saat Alely**, a longtime IOP internship employer partner, is a partner at Federal Hall Policy Advisors who was named to The Hill's Top Lobbyist list in 2023.

Collectively, the three of them led 15 workshops during which students learned about careers in political communications, fundraising, national security, community organizing, congressional offices and speechwriting. The practitioners also advised students in 125 individualized, one-on-one career advising sessions.



IOP academic-year interns gather at the IOP for a mixer.

## 2024-2025 Academic-Year Internships

- Axe Files
- Chicago 2024 Host Committee
- Chicago Public Schools, Chief Executive Office, Board of Education Liaison
- Life Span
- U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (Energy & Environment Lab)
- Illinois Policy Institute
- Mercury LLC
- Advance Illinois
- Chicago Housing Authority
- Community Organizing and Family Issues (COFI)
- Consulate General of Mexico in Chicago
- Genesys Works
- Illinois Coalition for Immigrant and Refugee Rights (ICIRR)
- Illinois Department of Human Rights, Office of the Deputy Director
- Illinois Finance Authority/Climate Bank
- Illinois Justice Project
- Office of Lieutenant Governor Juliana Stratton
- Office of U.S. Rep. Jonathan Jackson (IL-O1)
- Partnership for College Completion
- Reform for Illinois
- Southside Together Organizing for Power (STOP)
- U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (Region 5)
- World Business Chicago
- WBEZ (WBEZ's daily talk show Reset)
- Chicago Votes
- City of Chicago, Alderman Desmon Yancy, Ward 5
- City of Chicago, Chief Homelessness Officer
- City of Chicago, Office of Budget & Management
- City of Chicago, Office of the Mayor, Policy Team
- City of Chicago, Treasurer's Office
- Cook County Commissioner Anthony Quezada, District 8
- Cor Strategies
- JusticeText
- LiftUp Enterprises
- Magnify Strategies
- Civic Federation
- National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI) Chicago
- Latino Policy Forum
- Social Security Administration
- A Better Chicago
- Illinois Department of Juvenile Justice
- Illinois Department of Labor
- City of Chicago, Alderman William Hall, Ward 6
- American Farmland Trust
- CPOST
- Ignite Blue Partners
- Illinois State Senator Robert Peters
- Lilette Advisors
- The John Howard Association
- City Colleges of Chicago
- Coppin Community Center
- Cook County Department of Research, Operations, and Innovation
- Metropolitan Water Reclamation District of Greater Chicago (MWRD)
- City of Chicago, Office of the Mayor, Education, Youth, and Human Services Team
- Office of State Representative Kam Buckner
- Illinois Department of Human Services
- City of Chicago, Office of the Mayor, Office of Immigrant, Migrant, and Refugee Rights
- Cook County Housing Authority
- Cook County Clerk



# 2024 Summer Internships

- A Better Chicago
- ABC News
- ABC News at the Democratic National Convention
- AccessBridge International USA, LLC
- Administration for Children and Families
- Advance Illinois
- American Enterprise Institute
- American Society of Anesthesiologists
- Arab American Institute
- Asia School of Business, Center of Technology, Strategy, and Sustainability
- Asian Americans Advancing Justice
- Asian and Pacific Training Centre for Information and Communication Technology for Development
- Aspen Institute Religion and Society Program
- Axe Files
- Ballotpedia
- BallotReady
- Blackroots Alliance
- Breakthrough Collaborative
- Brookings Institution
- Busara Center for Behavioral Economics
- Center for Economic Research in Pakistan
- Center for Global Health / INPER Mexico
- Center for Medicare and Medicaid Innovation
- Centre for the Sustainable Use of Natural and Social Resources (CSNR)
- Chakr Innovation
- Chicago 2024 Democratic National Convention Host Committee
- Chicago Public Media, WBEZ
- Chicago Public Schools, Chief Executive Office, Board of Education Liaison
- Chicago Sun-Times
- Chicagoland Chamber of Commerce
- City Colleges of Chicago
- City of Chicago, Mayor's Office, Business and Neighborhood Development
- City of Chicago, Alderman Lamont Robinson, Ward 4
- City of Chicago, Department of Family and Support Services (DFSS), Policy and Advocacy
- City of Chicago, Office of Budget and Management
- City of Chicago, Office of the Mayor, Policy Team
- City of Chicago, Treasurer's Office
- City of Evanston, Budget and Finance Office
- Civic Committee of the Commercial Club of Chicago
- Civic Consulting Alliance
- Civic Nation
- CNN at the Democratic National Convention
- CNN at the Republican National Convention
- Collective for Social Science Research
- College of Information and Cyberspace, National Defense University
- Community and Economic Development Association (CEDA) of Cook County
- Community Organizing and Family Issues (COFI)
- Conservation X Labs
- Consulate General of Mexico in Chicago
- Cook County Department of Research, Operations, and Innovation
- Cor Strategies
- CSX Transportation
- Delta Health Alliance
- Directorate General of Customs and Excise, Ministry of Finance of Indonesia
- Directorate General of Taxes, Ministry of Finance of Indonesia
- Disability Lead
- Dobson DaVanzo and Associates
- Economic Innovation Group
- Edgar Fellows
- Environmental Law and Policy Center
- Federal Criminal Justice Clinic, University of Chicago Law School
- Federal Hall Policy Advisors, LLC
- Federal Trade Commission
- Ferox Strategies
- FirstRepair
- Founderland
- Fulton County Superior Court
- Gender Rights Watch (GRW)
- Genesys Works
- Georgia Public Defender Council
- Government of Pakistan
- Grassroots Analytics
- Greater Chatham Initiative
- Grove Climate Group
- Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA)
- Healthy Schools Campaign
- High School Law Review
- Hispanic Federation
- Hoover Institution Project on China's Global Sharp Power
- Housing Assistance Council
- Hudson Institute
- Idara-e-Taleem-o-Aagahi
- Illinois Coalition for Immigrant and Refugee Rights
- Illinois Department of Human Services, Associate Secretary's Office, Poverty Commission

# 2024 Summer Internships

- Illinois Finance Authority
- Illinois Justice Project
- Illinois Office of Broadband
- Illinois Policy Institute
- IMAGO Global Grassroots
- IMUMI
- Indonesian Chamber of Commerce and Industry
- Institute for Governance Reform
- Institute for Justice Clinic on Entrepreneurship
- International Finance Corporation
- International Research and Exchanges Board
- Institute of Politics Career Development
- Institute of Politics GenForward Survey
- John Howard Association
- JusticeText
- Langenfeld and Associates
- League of Women Voters
- Legal Services Corporation
- Life Span
- Los Angeles District Attorney's Office
- Magnify Strategies
- Marakuja Kivu Research
- Mercury Public Affairs
- Metropolitan Water Reclamation District of Greater Chicago
- Movement Labs
- National Able Network
- NEJ Consulting, LLC
- New Democrat Coalition
- Office of House Minority Leader Hakeem Jeffries
- Office of Former Chicago Mayor Lori Lightfoot
- Office of Illinois State Representative Kimberly DuBuclet
- Office of Illinois Governor JB Pritzker
- Office of Immigrant, Migrant, and Refugee Rights in the Office of the Mayor of Chicago
- Office of Mick Mulvaney
- Office of U.S. Congressman Raja Krishnamoorthi
- Office of U.S. Senator Amy Klobuchar
- Office of U.S. Senator Andy Kim
- Office of U.S. Senator Bill Cassidy
- Office of U.S. Senator Joe Manchin
- Office of U.S. Senator Jon Ossoff
- Office of U.S. Senator Marco Rubio
- Office of Vivek Ramaswamy, America First
- Opportunity International
- Oshkosh Chamber of Commerce
- Pakistan Water and Power Development Authority
- Partnership of Public Service, Center for Presidential Transition
- Pathfinder International
- Precision Strategies
- Primary and Secondary Healthcare Department, Government of Punjab
- Project Unloaded
- Public Opinion Strategies, LLC
- Public Strategies Washington
- QForce, Inc.
- Reform for Illinois
- Results for America
- Securing America's Future Energy Foundation
- Seven Letter
- Shriver Center
- Southside Together Organizing for Power (STOP)
- Susan B. Anthony Pro-Life America
- Swiss Consulate General In Chicago
- The Aspen Institute - Community Strategies Group
- The Commit Partnership
- The Cook Political Report with Amy Walter
- The Dispatch
- The Frost Group
- The German Marshall Fund of the United States
- The Partnership for Public Service, Research, Evaluation, and Modernizing Government
- The Urban Unit, Urban and Regional Development
- The World Bank, B-Ready
- The World Bank, Development Impact Evaluation
- The World Bank, Mind, Behavior, and Development
- Tiger Hill Partners
- Town of Chapel Hill, North Carolina
- Trilogy Interactive
- U.S. Department of Energy
- U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
- U.S. Department of Justice
- U.S. Department of State
- U.S. Department of Treasury
- U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission
- University of Chicago Booth School of Business
- University of Chicago Energy and Environment Lab (U.S. Environmental Protection Agency)
- Understanding Us
- United Nations Center for Counter-Terrorism
- United Nations Development Program
- United Nations, Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific
- University of Chicago Office of Federal Relations
- Urban Institute
- WilmerHale Legal Services of Harvard Law School
- Win Climate
- WisPolitics.com
- World Business Chicago
- Young Invincibles



## Career Development by the Numbers



# 336

Total Internships

# 266

Summer Internships

# 70

Academic-Year  
Internships

# 49

Interns at the  
RNC and DNC



### Office of U.S. Senator Marco Rubio

Marco Rubio is the United States Secretary of State and a former U.S. Senator (R-FL).



### Gender Rights Watch

Gender Rights Watch is a leading advocacy organization with roots in Lahore, Pakistan and NYC, USA whose mission is to champion the rights of all gender minorities in Pakistan and across the globe.



### Center for Economic Research in Pakistan

CERP is a leading impact-driven organization focused on improving decision making through rigorous research, advanced analytics, and advisory services for public and private sectors.

## In Their Own Words: Career Development



Brylee Cruz, AB '27

**Brylee Cruz**, AB '27 is a research and policy intern with the **Chicago Mayor's Office of Immigrant, Migrant, and Refugee Rights**. Brylee had initially applied for a different position. When that opportunity didn't work out, the IOP Career Development team worked with the Mayor's Office to create this role for Brylee. "The IOP played such a key role in facilitating my internship – the position wouldn't exist without their help to create it."

**"As a first-generation student, the IOP's help is especially meaningful to me as I navigate career opportunities that are completely new to me and my family."**

When Brylee first started her internship, she wasn't sure about what a career in public service might look like. "This was my first experience working in government or policy, and I didn't think I was interested in this kind of work until now. Honestly, my time with the Mayor's Office has changed my outlook on my career. I always thought I wanted to be a corporate lawyer, working in immigration and while I still aspire to be an immigration lawyer, now I wonder how I'll come back to a career in public service after law school."



Autumn Rivera, AB '27, Zeennah Akorede, AB '26 and Gina Montagna, AB '26 at the Democratic National Convention (left to right)

Last summer, **Zeennah Akorede**, AB '26 had two internships through the IOP that gave her two very different perspectives on what a career in politics can look like.

"For the majority of the summer, I was an advocacy intern for the **American Society of Anesthesiologists (ASA)**, which is a lobbying group based in Washington D.C. After that internship wrapped up, I was a runner for **ABC News** during the **Democratic National Convention** in Chicago."

Zeennah was drawn to the ASA internship because it combined two of her passions: healthcare and policy. "I wanted to understand how the health system – and healthcare specifically – overlapped with politics, so the ASA internship was a perfect opportunity to do that. It was exactly the kind of role I was looking for. Lobbying, as a field, wasn't something I had been exposed to before, but the advocacy work excited me as a chance to fight for policy that I really care about."

The ABC News internship was a chance for Zeennah to see behind the scenes of the DNC, learning how such a large-scale event is covered from a media perspective. "I've always been enthralled by political analysts like David Axelrod and Donna Brazile, so to be a part of making that media effort come to life was so amazing."



Marine Veteran **Anthony Beaupre**, MPP/MBA '26 was a part of the IOP's inaugural Hometown Internship cohort and he worked with the Oshkosh, Wisconsin Chamber of Commerce as a Summer Fellow. "Essentially, I took on an independent consulting project for the Chamber of Commerce to figure out how we could entice young people to stay in Oshkosh instead of moving to bigger metropolitan cities like Milwaukee and Chicago. In my role, I was able to revitalize a program called the Young Professional Network, a once-a-month networking opportunity for 18-40 year old professionals in Oshkosh."

**"The Hometown Internship Program is a great opportunity to have a stake in your hometown and community. I lived in Oshkosh until I was 18, and then I moved away for almost the same amount of time, so I was excited to relearn and reconnect with the place I came from. It's amazing for students to see that there are opportunities for them all over the country, not just in the biggest cities."**



Anthony Beaupre poses for a picture.



Corner of Main Street in Oshkosh, Wisconsin

# Hometown Internship Program

As part of our effort to get students involved in state and local politics across the country, the IOP funded nine summer internships as part of our new Hometown Internship Program, which allowed students to pursue substantive, career-oriented internships in politics, journalism, policymaking and other public service fields in their hometowns. We particularly focused on providing pathways for rural students to contribute to their hometown communities. Internship employers included the Town of Chapel Hill in North Carolina, the West Virginia Department of Environmental Protection, the Health Policy Institute of Ohio and the Oshkosh, Wisconsin Chamber of Commerce.

# IOP 24



Representative Maxwell Frost (D-FL) speaks to students at Youth VoteFest.



IOP students from UChicago, Georgetown, Harvard and Cornell universities greet Michigan Governor Gretchen Whitmer ahead of the DNC.

Yasmin Ali, AB '26 takes in the atmosphere at the RNC in Milwaukee.



# IOP 24

Over a total of four days in Milwaukee and Chicago, the IOP hosted nearly 400 students for voter engagement training, funded 50 student internships and provided students access to prominent local and national elected officials, journalists, policymakers, voting advocates and more.

During the summer of 2024, with the **Republican National Convention** a short train ride away in Milwaukee and the **Democratic National Convention** in our backyard, Institute of Politics staff spent the better part of the year planning innovative ways to offer students enriching experiences they could carry with them for the rest of their lives.

One highlight we're most proud of is **Youth VoteFest** – our two-part, immersive experience where high school and college students from **more than 60 institutions** across the country came together to listen and learn from each other, discuss the most pressing issues of the day and develop the skills to go back to their communities and get out the vote.

During both Youth VoteFest events in Milwaukee and Chicago, students participated in voter engagement workshops put on by our partner, the **Students Learn, Students Vote Coalition**. They learned how to build voting coalitions in their hometowns, engage voters across partisan divides, run voter education drives in their communities and much more.

IOP student Emily Morgan, MPP '25 summed up the importance of Youth VoteFest:

"The youth vote is the sleeping giant in the United States political arena, and if we want to be taken seriously as a voting bloc, then we have an obligation to start showing up to the polls. What that means is that it can't just be me and my friends – it has to be everybody and everybody's friends," Morgan said.

Alongside our Youth VoteFest events, **50 students participated in internships with the DNC Host Committee and with media organizations**, including CNN and ABC News. These students received behind-the-scenes access to the inner workings of convention planning and insights into how major news outlets cover the conventions.

"I learned about the messaging and strategy behind conventions and party politics," IOP student and CNN intern Michelle Du, AB '27 said. "This was truly a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity, and I got unprecedented access to politicians and the media."

In both cities, IOP Founding Director **David Axelrod** hosted "Axe & Amy" media briefings with The Cook Political Report's Editor-in-Chief **Amy Walter**, **Dave Wasserman** and other Cook political analysts. These briefings helped journalists from major media organizations contextualize the presidential election with a view on the ground from battleground states as well as down-ballot races to watch for.

**Watch: David Axelrod, Amy Walter, Dave Wasserman and Sarah Longwell hold media briefings at the RNC and DNC**



IOP Founding Director David Axelrod, Democratic pollster John Anzalone, Sarah Longwell, Republican political strategist and publisher of The Bulwark, and Amy Walter, Editor-in-Chief of The Cook Political Report (left to right)

**Watch: Pete Buttigieg takes question from IOP student.**



Additionally, the IOP hosted a series of breakfast discussions with students from **Georgetown University's**, **Harvard University's** and **Cornell University's** respective institutes of politics. Students talked with IOP Director Heidi Heitkamp about the importance of public service, how to get involved at the local and national levels and how to navigate careers in politics.

In Milwaukee, students heard from former four-term Republican Congressman **Trey Gowdy**, campaign consultant **Whitley Yates**, conservative environmentalist **Benji Backer** and media personality and Fox News guest **Clay Travis**.

In Chicago, students heard from "Tennessee Three" Representative **Justin J. Pearson**, Democratic Congresswoman **Delia Ramirez**, former Republican Congressman **Adam Kinzinger**, voting advocate **Jahnvi Rao** and Gen-Z Congressman **Maxwell Frost**.

Students were also treated to a live taping of The New York Times's "The Run-Up" podcast with **Astead W. Herndon** featuring special guest Chicago Mayor **Brandon Johnson** and an impromptu Q&A session with **Pete Buttigieg**.



Students also attended live tapings of **The Daily Show with Jon Stewart** and received floor passes to get inside the United Center, witnessing speeches from former First Lady **Michelle Obama**, former President **Barack Obama**, Vice President **Kamala Harris** and more as well as the historic roll call to nominate Harris as the Democratic nominee.

At the convention hall, students and staff ran into dozens of IOP alumni and former Pritzker Fellows, from *Washington Post* reporter Dylan Wells to former Chicago Mayor Lori Lightfoot, turning the DNC into an unexpected homecoming for the political practitioners that have walked through the doors of the IOP.



IOP Director Heidi Heitkamp (right), speaks to a reporter in the media hall at Youth VoteFest in Chicago.



Tennessee Representative Justin J. Pearson empowers Chicago Youth VoteFest attendees to see the importance of the youth vote.



Jacob Steinberg, AB '26, Simone Nelson, AB '26 and Leonardo Lopez Sarmiento, AB '27 (left to right) watch former President Barack Obama give the keynote address during the second day of the DNC.

## Media Recap

- University of Chicago event focuses on turning out youth vote at DNC
- Young Political activists get lesson in organizing from some high-powered Democrats
- RNC Milwaukee; importance of youth vote event held
- 'Youth Voterfest': U. of Chicago Institute of Politics hosts RNC event
- Youth vote targeted at 'party-agnostic' event for teens, college kids during GOP convention
- WATCH: Gen Z voters reveal issues that will sway their vote in 2024
- Nonpartisan group teams up with conservatives to boost youth voter engagement at RNC
- The Republican Party is trying to attract young voters. Can they increase support before November?
- Harris super PAC founder says public polls are too optimistic

# IOP Staff

**Heidi Heitkamp**

Institute of Politics Director

**Zeenat Rahman**

Executive Director

**Koran Addo**

Director of Communications

**Emma Deutsch**

Production Manager

**Ashley Jorn**

Deputy Director, Fellows Program

**Ella Kumano-Maloney**

Speaker Series Program  
Coordinator

**Laresa Lund**

Assistant Director, Career  
Development

**Katrina Propson**

Director of Operations and  
Budget

**Sarah Palmisciano**

Program Coordinator, Pritzker  
Fellows & Speaker Series

**Purvi Patel\***

Director of Civic Engagement  
\*Departed in February 2025

**Dani Salazar**

Senior Multimedia Producer

**Mark Schauerte**

Director, Career Development

**Jennifer Steinhauer**

Senior Director, Speaker Series  
and Pritzker Fellows

**Matilda Thornton-Clark**

Assistant Director, Civic and  
Student Engagement

**Lindsey Winters**

Executive Assistant



# Board of Advisors

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Board of Advisors Chair  
Founding Director of the Institute of Politics

## Heidi Heitkamp

Director, Institute of Politics  
Former U.S. Senator (D-ND)  
Co-Founder and Chair of the One Country Project

## Tim Alberta

Political Columnist, *The Atlantic*

## Stephanie Cutter

Partner, Precision Strategies  
Former Deputy Campaign Manager for Barack Obama

## Bob Dold

Former U.S. Representative (R-IL)  
Partner, Forbes Tate

## Anna Galland

Former Executive Director of MoveOn

## Ed Gillespie

Senior Executive Vice President, AT&T  
Former RNC Chairman

## Larry Grisolano

Partner & CEO, AKPD Message and Media

## Sofia Haft

Communications & External Affairs, Anduril Industries

## Astead Herndon

Political Columnist, *The New York Times*

## Bill Kristol

Director, Defending Democracy Together  
Editor-at-Large, *The Bulwark*  
Founder, *The Weekly Standard*

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Former U.S. Secretary of Transportation

## Keisha Lance Bottoms

Former Mayor of Atlanta, Georgia

## Isaac Lee

Executive Chairman, Exile Content Studio

## Claire McCaskill

Former U.S. Senator (D-MO)

## David Muir

Former Director of Political Strategy for UK Prime Minister Gordon Brown

## Stephanie Murphy

Former U.S. Representative (D-FL)

## Shailagh Murray

Former Senior Advisor to President Barack Obama

## Beth Myers

Co-Founder, The Shawmut Group  
Former Senior Advisor to U.S. Presidential Candidate Mitt Romney

## Darren Reisberg

Vice Chancellor for Administration, Vanderbilt University

## Bakari Sellers

Former State Representative (D-SC)

## Sonal Shah

CEO, The Texas Tribune

## Marc Short

Former Chief of Staff to the Vice President of the United States

## Erin Simpson

Program Officer, Technology and Society, Ford Foundation

## Bret Stephens

Op-Ed Columnist, *The New York Times*

## Karen Tumulty

Political Columnist, *The Washington Post*

## Amy Walter

Publisher and Editor-in-Chief, The Cook Political Report

## Howard Wolfson

Senior Advisor, Bloomberg Philanthropies

# Student Advisory Board

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Undergraduate Liaison

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