



THE UNIVERSITY
OF CHICAGO
**INSTITUTE
OF POLITICS**

Institute of Politics Fall 2022 Report



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Our Mission



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.

[MORE INFORMATION](#)

A Tribute to David



"The first time we met, David and I got into a vigorous disagreement – the details of which don't matter here, other than that I assumed I had absolutely bombed my Student Advisory Board interview. Immediately afterwards, though, David came to find me, shook my hand, and said, "I respect people who stand up for what they believe in." We've been friends ever since. What an incredible accomplishment, to spend the final decade of your career mentoring young people and creating pathways for them to fight for what they believe in. The IOP has produced an entire generation of public servants, and I'm forever grateful to count myself among them."

Caroline Hutton, AB '18

"The IOP introduced me to reporting through the frame of journalism as an act of public service, and David's mentorship as a former reporter and the vast resources he brought to campus were key in shaping my current career. As a student, I appreciated Axe's respect for young people – it meant the world to not only be able to turn to him for advice on a story for The Gate, but to also feel fully heard in brainstorming sessions for UChiVotes or when raising difficult questions during a SAB meeting. Thanks to the community David created on campus, I not only learned and grew as a student, but met many of my closest friends. I'm very grateful to have been able to work with him both at the IOP and after graduation."

Dylan Wells, AB '19



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"There are probably millions of reasons to be in awe of David Axelrod. I'll share just one: it is truly incredible how much he cares about and is invested in so many of us at UChicago. I have seen David reach out and provide support and wisdom to dozens of students – people who have been involved with the IOP for years and people who just walked through the door that quarter alike. He is a mentor in the truest sense of the word. There are very few people who have the capacity and compassion for that...and there is only one David.

The IOP will certainly not be the same without him, but I have absolutely no doubt he will continue to work with and inspire students and community members for many years to come. And for those of us who have already been lucky enough to work with Axe, we will carry all that he has taught us and the determination that he has instilled in us to create a brighter future everywhere we go."

Lucy Ritzmann, AB '21

"If I were to credit one person for my introduction to American politics, it would be David Axelrod. Years before we first met at the IOP's inaugural event, I was a teenager in China following the 2008 presidential election and dreaming of a new life on the other side of the oceans. I received an education of a lifetime at the University of Chicago beyond any degree program, and David helped affirm my identity beyond my training as a physicist. Seven years after graduation, I'm still reflecting on many of the things I learned at the IOP. Thanks David, and congratulations!"

Yangyang Cheng, Ph.D '15





"David, it seems like just yesterday I was running over to the Prudential Plaza and interrupting your campaign meetings to begin executing on your vision and for critical input about the choice of carpet tiles for 5707 South Woodlawn Avenue. Ten years later, that vision has been more than realized with the Institute of Politics beautifully ingrained in the fabric of the finest educational institution in the world, and those, dare I say, perfectly chosen carpet tiles trod upon by global national and local leaders, staff who day and night were and are dedicated to supporting our students and building lasting partnerships.

And of course, now thousands of students who have exactly as you would hoped, been inspired to explore and pursue a wide array of careers in and around public service. You created an ever-growing, nurturing family as only you could, David. And I hope as you look around, you are as proud as you should be about the impact you have had and hopeful because of what this impact means for our collective future.

We love you, David."

Darren Reisberg, IOP Executive Director, 2012 - 2014



"David's passion for students and his belief in the need for all of us to play an active role in civic life is deep and genuine. He often likes to say that democracy is not a spectator sport and that all of us have an obligation to "get into the arena" to try to shape our country and our communities for the better. That was the central idea behind the creation of the IOP – and it's the animating force that's propelled the IOP's programs ever since. As we partnered together, I witnessed that profound commitment first-hand and was inspired by it every day. Ten years later, to see the work IOP students and alums are accomplishing in the world is so inspiring – and so necessary. They are testament to David's founding vision, and like him, they give me hope that we can find our way forward as a nation with a renewed spirit of common civic purpose."

Steve Edwards, IOP Executive Director, 2014 - 2017

"Your belief in our democracy, and the ability of each and every one of us to better it, is well known. Thank God for it. As a country, we're better and stronger for it. And as individuals around you, we're uplifted and emboldened by it in dark and deflating moments. But beyond believing in our democracy, you've built it. After the White House, you could have done any number of things more lucrative or cushy. I have so much admiration that you chose to architect something new - to roll up your sleeves and work your back off. And look at what you've built: more than 10,000 students whose lives have been changed, and who are now going on to contribute to the project of our democracy. Kudos. And thank you for giving me the gift of a lifetime when you called to offer me the ED role in December 2017. It has been an honor and a joy to be part of this IOP story and community. Cheers to what you've believed in, what you've built, and what and who you've brought out the best in. We salute you, thank you, and love you!"

Gretchen Crosby Sims, IOP Executive Director, 2018 - 2021

David, what you've built with the IOP is truly extraordinary. You've created a community of doers, motivated to make the world a better place. You understood how to take the ethos of the University of Chicago, and connect the life of the mind with concrete experiences in a powerful way. And you only have to look at our amazing alumni to see that your theory was correct. I first saw the inquisitiveness and smarts of our students when I was a Fellow in 2015, and now daily as executive director. Thank you for giving me such an extraordinary opportunity. You often say the most important office in a democracy is that of citizen. You, my friend, are a model citizen who has done so much to build the strength of our democracy. You've given so many an opportunity to be leaders, build bridges, and celebrate the beauty of our community. Our students, staff, and board are all grateful for your leadership. Thank you for devoting your life's work to building our democracy. And thank you for being an exemplary figure of public service for all of us.

Zeenat Rahman, IOP Executive Director, 2021 - Present



Fall Numbers at a Glance



Students check out IOP opportunities at Politapalooza 2022.

486

Registered to vote through
UChiVotes

293

Highly-engaged Civic
Engagement students

1,511

Unique Speaker Series
attendees

251

Students placed in summer
internships

350

Unique students attended
Pritzker Fellows Seminars

140

Hours of one-on-one mentoring
with Pritzker Fellows

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“Being involved with the IOP has made it possible for me to pursue a career in public service. It has broken down barriers that would've kept me from gaining experience in the field, given me a chance to meet some of the best policy practitioners in the world, and empowered me to chase my dreams. I wouldn't be who I am today without the IOP's support.”

Estrella Hernandez,
AB '23 Student Advisory Board
Co-Chair



We Have a New Director!

In October, the IOP announced former U.S. Senator Heidi Heitkamp as its next director. The first woman elected to the U.S. Senate from North Dakota, Heidi earned a reputation for working constructively with members on both sides of the aisle on nationwide affordable housing, reforming the nation's housing finance system, and a number of initiatives aimed at addressing the health and safety of Native American and indigenous families. Before accepting the new position, Heidi was a familiar face around campus from her time as a Pritzker Fellow, participating in numerous public events, and serving on the IOP's senior advisory board.

"The Institute of Politics is a special place. Each time I've been on campus, I've come away energized by UChicago students and their passion for engaging in public service and their drive to shape the world around them. I am excited to join this thoughtful and insightful community of bright young minds."

Heidi Heitkamp

Former U.S. Senator (D-ND)



Career Development



Students participate in career-building workshops and treks.



Career Development students pose during Washington, D.C. trek.

Fall Quarter Highlights

This past summer, the Career Development team placed **251 students** in summer internships with public service organizations across the country and around the world, including the White House, the U.S. Department of State, with several members of the U.S. Congress, the British and Mexican embassies to the U.S., the Hoover Institution, the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library & Museum, the Latino Policy Forum, the Aspen Institute, ABC News and more.

This academic year, the IOP will support more than **50 paid internships** in and around Chicago, including with Chicago Mayor Lori Lightfoot's office, Chicago Public Schools, the Illinois Finance Authority, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, Alliance for the Great Lakes, Blackroots Alliance, Asian Americans Advancing Justice, and several other organizations.

This summer, the Career Development team will resume summer programming in Washington, D.C. beginning with a spring break trek for students to explore career opportunities by engaging with leading elected officials and staff, journalists, and think tank policy experts.



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The Latino Policy Forum staff have gone above and beyond to provide myself and the other intern with real substantive work. Over the course of my internship, I gained significant insight into how the policymaking process functions in Illinois, including how coalitions are formed and legislative champions are recruited, as well as greater experience navigating Illinois databases to access and research information pertinent to state issues.

Working on the policy case studies for the Forum's Multicultural Leadership Academy has been a fascinating process and has opened my eyes to the intricacies of getting legislation passed and what it takes to succeed in a career like this. The Forum staff have been incredibly generous with their time and have gone out of their way to help me with any and all questions I've had.

Lucas Freitag
AB '25

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Civic Engagement students participating in the Chicago Transit Authority trek.

Civic Engagement

Fall 2022 Chicago Bound cohort



Fall Quarter Highlights

This year the Civic Engagement team has focused on building a welcoming and inclusive community, encouraging students to engage in the midterm and municipal elections, and connecting them to the broader civic engagement community throughout the midwest.

Civic Engagement kicked off the Fall Quarter with the Chicago Bound program, which provides students a foundation to become well-informed, active members of the city. Through Chicago Bound and a series of voter education efforts, IOP staff connected with **300 students** before the school year began in earnest.

Through two receptions – one for first-generation and low-income students and another for conservative students – the Civic Engagement team introduced another **80 students** to IOP programming, creating intimate spaces for relationship building.



Conservative
Student Reception



FGLI Student
Reception

IOP Civic Engagement Groups

Leaders of Color (LoC) is a student-run leadership development program for undergraduate students of color. Through cohort-based training, workshops, and speakers, LoC prepares students of color for leadership positions across campus and in the public sector.

This year LOC built a tremendous community, welcoming **30 students** into the cohort. Outreach from student leaders to registered student organizations and other UChicago partners resulted in a reception at the Smart Museum of Art with **over 200 students in attendance**.

Leaders of Color 2022-23 cohort kick-off event





The Gate is an independent, undergraduate publication covering politics and policy at the local, national, and international levels. The Gate's content is developed, written, and published by students.



Spectrum aims to empower LGBTQ+ students with a community of peers and opportunities to expand their leadership skills and passion for public service. Through volunteering, workshops, career development initiatives, and community-building events, Spectrum aims to heighten the visibility, acceptance, and leadership aptitude of UChicago's LGBTQ+ community.



TechTeam develops digital tools to support local non-profit organizations. TechTeam members are trained in coding and digital strategy and act as technology consultants for public service clients.



W+ works to create a gender-expansive space that empowers female, nonbinary, and trans students to explore and cultivate their passions for public service. W+ is a community of growth and learning through quarterly programs for leadership building, mentorship, and engagement both on and off campus.

Bridge Writing Workshop utilizes creative writing as an outlet for self-expression in workshops with incarcerated youth and adults. The program lessens the distance between incarcerated populations and the UChicago community in hopes of building solidarity.

The Cook County Jail Voter Education Project hosted workshops on civics and voting rights for incarcerated individuals in advance of the midterm elections. This quarter Civic Engagement partnered with Chicago Votes, a nonpartisan organization focused on activating the youth vote in Chicago. Volunteers reached 300 voters in Cook County Jail.



The IOP has been an avenue of engagement because it allows me to connect with people and organizations that I don't think I would have otherwise. I've been able to engage across the Chicago community, particularly with the political engagement community, which has been a profound experience.

The UC Open Data Project is a branch of the SAB TechTeam and what we do is take data and turn it into something that's more accessible and visible to other people.

There are a number of organizations around campus that collect data on the area, but it's hard for most people to access that data because it's in the form of tens of thousands of data points on a spreadsheet. An average person can't look at that and really see a pattern. What we generally do is collect that data and transform it into something that is more accessible and visible. So you're not looking at a spreadsheet of 10,000 data points. You're just looking at a graph that can hopefully demonstrate some information that's more clear to you.

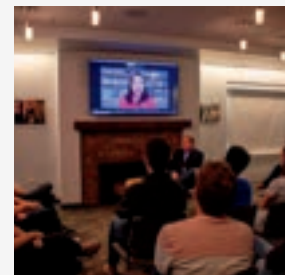
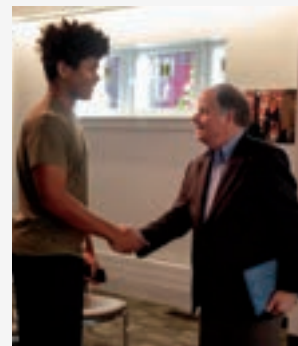
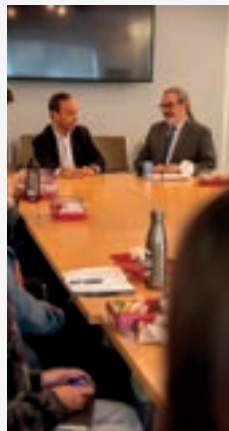
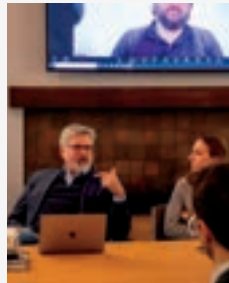
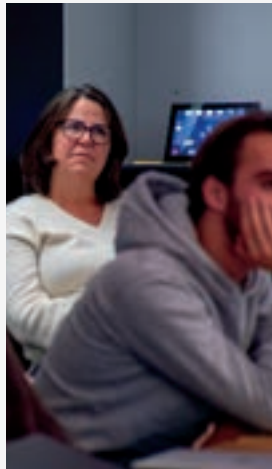
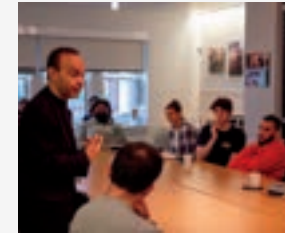
One of the things we're looking at is our rent rates in Hyde Park. So if a person wanted to, they could look up individual data points or rent prices of several different apartment buildings, but in that case, you're usually looking at them one by one, and it's hard to collect information about everything at once. So what we're doing is collecting that information and we plan to convert that into a map that will be more visible and easy to access for people. It's about collecting data that are available, but perhaps not understandable and turning that into something that's more accessible.

Ramarko Bhattacharya

AB '24

TechTeam Open Data Project

Pritzker Fellows





IOP Director David Axelrod (left) with FQ22 Pritzker Fellows (left to right) Rana Ayyub, Laura Dove, Doug Jones, Steve Hayes, Luis Gutiérrez

The Fall Quarter Pritzker Fellows cohort was exceptionally strong, and student participation was high throughout the quarter with **296 unique students** attending seminars throughout the quarter.

Pritzker Fellows Laura Dove and Doug Jones attended each others' seminars regularly, which was a treat for students. Fellows consistently engaged with their ambassadors and student groups including College Democrats, College Republicans, Leaders of Color, and Spectrum. They also spent time with graduate students at the Harris School of Public Policy and the UChicago Law School. Fellows complete immersion on the UChicago campus this quarter created an incredibly rewarding experience for Fellows and students.

Rana Ayyub Investigative Journalist from India

An award-winning investigative journalist and global opinion writer at The Washington Post, Ayyub led a series of eye-opening seminars about India today, the crackdown on the press in Narendra Modi's India and threats to journalists worldwide with a range of guests including The New Yorker's Dexter Filkins, Palestinian policy analyst Rula Jebreal, former Deputy National Security Advisor Ben Rhodes, and Muslim student activist Afreen Fatima.

Laura Dove Former Senate Secretary for the Majority

Dove, who served under Senator Mitch McConnell (R-KY) took students deep inside the U.S. Senate for a candid, insightful look at how the legislative body really works. Among the highlights were a conversation with the current senate parliamentarian and her deputy as well as visits from President Joe Biden's Deputy Director of the White House Office of Legislative Affairs, Reema Dodin, and President Donald Trump's Assistant Secretary of State for Legislative Affairs, Mary Elizabeth Taylor.

Luis Gutiérrez

Former U.S. Representative (D-IL)

The former Chicago alderman and U.S. congressman drew on his long career in politics to walk students through how progressive change is made and the community's role in pushing policymakers toward that change. He brought his amazing storytelling to seminars that dug into the rollercoaster ride of his work leading immigration reform.

Steve Hayes

CEO & Editor of The Dispatch, NBC News Political Analyst

The longtime political writer and analyst, led a fascinating series of seminars that examined the arc of conservative media from the early days of radio to the rise of Fox News and the state of media today.

Doug Jones

Former U.S. Senator (D-AL)

The prosecutor who brought justice to the victims of the 16th Street Baptist Church bombings, flew in from a different state each week to give a play-by-play of the run-up to the midterm elections, discussions about how the Democrats can gain ground in the South, and provided a legal analysis of the January 6 hearings and other investigations into former President Donald Trump.

Fall Quarter 2022 Pritzker Fellows pose at the IOP.





I was paired with Indian investigative journalist Rana Ayyub. Within minutes of meeting her, I found myself speechless listening to her story. Meeting Rana and getting to talk with her has been a truly eye-opening experience. I've come away from her seminars and our conversations with a deeper appreciation of a lot of issues and I've been simply awestruck and inspired by her courage to continue fighting for freedom and democracy in the face of great challenges and great personal risk.

I've also enjoyed getting to know another Pritzker Fellow, Laura Dove. I confess that initially, I was skeptical that I, decidedly liberal, would fully appreciate the views of Laura, an institutionalist who worked under Mitch McConnell. However, I could never have been more wrong! In Laura, I found one of the kindest and warmest people I've ever met. Though our political views may differ, I learned a lot from her talking about everything from politics, life, and music (Laura is a fellow musician and she's so sweet she even came to my concert dress rehearsal). Over the quarter, I really came to appreciate her view on things. Getting to know Laura has been a reminder that though politics can vary between people, commitment to democracy and love of country can be strongly shared. Attending Laura's seminars and getting to know her has been a major highlight of my Fellows ambassadorship.

Overall, the Pritzker Fellows program has been amazing as it's been great to talk to, learn from, and get to know such wonderful and accomplished people, and the experiences I've had here will personally stay with me longer than anything I've learned in classes.

Jakob Gilleylen

AB '25



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The Institute of Politics Fellows Program is one of my favorite activities here at the University of Chicago because of its unique ability to both push students outside of their comfort zone, while, paradoxically, create a safe space to do so. Both years I participated in the program I was assigned to Fellows that I differed on many political issues, and both times this made me initially nervous to speak openly in front of them. However, these fears were largely unfounded. Russell Moore and Steve Hayes are extremely thoughtful and curious people who are, although grounded in their beliefs, happy to have constructive conversations with anyone they encounter. Whether it be during their seminars, office hours, or grabbing a meal with the Fellows team, I felt comfortable asking them clarifying questions and engaging with them on an array of topics. The students feed off that energy and, from my experience, it makes them more willing to open up to their other team members as well. In this way, I believe the Pritzker Fellows program creates an environment that encourages exactly what is currently lacking in our country – respectful and collaborative dialogue across the aisle.

Reilly O'Flaherty

AB '23

Speaker Series



Representative
Liz Cheney (R-WY)



Executive Director of the
Drug Policy Alliance
Kassandra Frederique



Former President of Brazil
Dilma Rousseff



Swipe Out Hunger Founder
Rachel Sumekh



Fall Quarter Highlights

One of the central goals of the Speaker Series this year is to highlight the ways in which students can harness their own agency and inspiration to tackle policy problems. We kicked off the fall with a bipartisan panel of young people who started nonprofits to take on food insecurity on campus, climate change, and economic inequality, with an emphasis on cooperating with people with ideological differences to achieve change. The Speaker Series was also deliberate in starting conversations with veteran students around campus and their civilian counterparts, in an effort to help bridge those divides – a central mission of the IOP.

Additionally, the Speaker Series highlighted the 2022 midterm election cycle with numerous events leading up to and after the races. Pulling back the curtain on politics and policymaking were U.S. Representative Liz Cheney (R-WY), former Vice President Mike Pence, former Brazilian President Dilma Rousseff, and many other distinguished guests.

Through large-scale public events, students participated in conversations around the impact of drug decriminalization on states and cities, gun safety, and the way in which politicians across the globe are using religious nationalism as a tool for repression.



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From College Republicans' perspective, this quarter at the IOP has been fantastic. We had the incredible opportunity to meet with former Vice President Mike Pence in a student session, and had front row seats to the thought-provoking discussion afterwards. We've gotten to learn from IOP Fellows Laura Dove and Steve Hayes, through their seminars, office hours, and special student sessions held specifically for College Republicans members. Finally, through the Conservative Student Mixer, we were able to connect with conservative students on campus and help promote College Republicans' events. We appreciate all the hard work of everyone at the IOP!

Chad Berkich
AB '25



As a first-year graduate student at the Harris School of Public Policy, I came to the University of Chicago immediately searching for programs and groups that I would like to engage with. Every student, faculty, and staff member I spoke to quickly directed me to the Institute of Politics. By the way, each person praised the IOP's consistent and robust programming, it was apparent to me that it is an integral aspect of the University of Chicago's campus community. The very first event that I attended was "Meet the Fall 2022 Pritzker Fellows," where I had the opportunity to be introduced to a new set of Pritzker Fellows, each coming from various backgrounds in government, politics, policy, international affairs, and journalism. As someone that is genuinely interested in a career in policy or public service, hearing these Fellows reflect on their in-depth experiences and influential careers was the perfect place to be.

Another event that sincerely stood out to me was with the former White House Director of Speechwriting for President Obama, Cody Keenan. He spoke about his upbringing, his time interning for Senator Ted Kennedy, grappling with imposter syndrome, and the process of becoming the director of speechwriting. What interested me the most was how he navigated the challenges of the role, writing about various subjects like immigration, healthcare, and race. Despite the imposter syndrome he felt, his story emphasized the importance of identifying what you're skilled at and being consistent with it throughout the role. In Keenan's case, his unique ability to organize and craft a story is what made his speeches compelling and thoughtful. To do well in most roles in public service or management, it's simply necessary to be organized. This was tangible information that I'm sure other students and I will use as we progress through our own careers and personal lives.

However, the commitment the IOP has to fostering a space for public engagement goes beyond its Speaker Series and discussions with civic leaders. Through career-focused workshops and résumé or cover letter advising appointments, the IOP has cultivated my professional development and supported me in my desire to explore public service and politics.

These countless programs have also been a source of motivation for me as I get through the quantitative-focused core courses at Harris, reminding me of my passions for service and community engagement. I'm incredibly grateful for the opportunities that the Institute of Politics has provided me, and I intend to continue being an active member of its community.

Semeredin Kundin
MPP '24



Fall 2022 Speaker Series Events

'90s Kids: Getting Sh*t Done Outside Government

Zeenat Rahman, Benji Backer, Rachel Sumekh, Lily Rocha

Looking Toward the Midterms

John Dickerson, Jazmine Ulloa, Nathan Gonzales, Lis Smith

Cody Keenan and Ten Unforgettable Days in the White House

David Axelrod, Cody Keenan

Hacks & Axe, Part 1: Pollsters

David Axelrod, Tony Fabrizio, John Anzalone, Sarah Longwell

From Muskets to M16s: America's Unique Relationship to Guns

S.E. Cupp, Ryan Busse, Chad King, Alison LaCroix

Combat and Congress: Two Veterans in the House Talk Shop

Kayla Williams, Peter Meijer, Jake Auchincloss

Taking It To The Streets: The Power Of Iranian Women Now

Jennifer Steinhauer, Negar Mortazavi, Saeid Golkar

Hacks & Axe, Part 2: How About the House?

David Axelrod, David Wasserman, Steve Israel, Tom Davis

Maggie Haberman: The Trump Whisperer Comes to Town

Mark Leibovich, Maggie Haberman

Meltdown in the U.K.: What Just Happened?

Jennifer Steinhauer, Gary Gibbon, David Muir

Roads to Restoration: The Power of Narrative and One Woman's Journey from Prison to Journalism

Joel Ebert, Keri Blakinger

Hacks & Axe, Part 3: Midterm Mulling with Matzo

David Axelrod, Jonathan Weisman, Mo Elleithee, Tim Phillips

IPP: A Conversation with Sigrid Kaag, Minister of Finance of the Netherlands

Niels Ras, Sigrid Kaag

The Highs and Lows of Drug Decriminalization

Mona Zhang, Cassandra Frederique, Tera Hurst, Robin Kniech

IPP: Volodymyr Sheiko, Director General of the Ukrainian Institute

Maksym Kuzhdin, Volodymyr Sheiko

Everything Is Inflation and Inflation Is Everything

Hal Weitzman, Austan Goolsbee

In Conversation with Rep. Liz Cheney

Katherine Baicker, Liz Cheney

Now What? A Post Midterm Analysis

David Axelrod, David Chalian, Nsé Ufot, Laura Dove

The Authoritarian's Playbook

Zeenat Rahman, Rana Ayyub, Katherine Stewart, Elizabeth Shakman Hurd

The Future of Democracy in Brazil: In Conversation with Dilma Rousseff, Former President of Brazil

Simon Romero, Dilma Rousseff

A Town Hall with Incoming IOP Director Heidi Heitkamp

David Axelrod, Heidi Heitkamp

On the Record with Vice President Mike Pence

David Axelrod, Mike Pence

UCHI VOTES

UChiVotes is a student-led, non-partisan voter engagement initiative founded to boost voter turnout and engagement at UChicago.

In 2018, 39 percent of University of Chicago students voted in the midterm elections, a 19 percent increase from the 2014 midterm elections. While UChicago voting rates have grown, and are consistent with the national youth voting average, this campus remains far behind the voting rates of peer institutions.

During an academic year where congressional midterm elections, statewide elections, and Chicago's municipal elections will be held, UChiVotes has put together a multi-pronged plan to help students register, turn out to vote, get informed, and participate.



UChiVotes students run campus-wide voter information and registration drives.



Pritzker Fellow Laura Dove meets with students during the Student Advisory Board Midterm Watch Party.



During the Fall Quarter, UChiVotes students:

Helped 486 people register to vote

Recruited more than 60 undergraduate and graduate voting ambassadors

Increased Instagram followers to 1,117 up from 720 at the beginning of the year

Engaged with more than 4,000 potential voters via list hosts

PROJECT BATTLEGROUND

With national elections becoming more and more consequential, many of the IOP's most engaged students were searching for ways they and their peers could play active roles in the races that will help decide the future trajectory of U.S. politics. After much brainstorming, the IOP launched Project Battleground, an intensive, multi-week initiative where students learned the ins and outs of working on political campaigns and covering campaigns as journalists. Twenty-five students were selected to Project Battleground's inaugural cohort out of nearly 100 who applied. Students participated in a series of workshops throughout the summer and fall to gather the tools to work on a campaign or cover one as a journalist – knowledge that helped students apply what they learned to work on gubernatorial contests in Wisconsin and Texas, a campaign for mayor of Chicago, and a state Senate race in Connecticut.

PROJECT BATTLEGROUND



Tara Farwana
MPP '23

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When I got the opportunity to work with last year's Student Advisory Board chairs, Beau Simon and Jackie Rosa, to develop Project Battleground with the IOP, I was excited to create a program that would be a hands-on skill-building experience for students. With so much at stake in this year's midterms, and tremendous excitement among the student community around getting involved in nearby campaigns, it felt like the right time to create a curriculum that allowed students to understand all the different components of a campaign.

We never could have imagined the interest and excitement from students about joining the program – we brought in a dedicated cohort of nearly two dozen students across undergraduate and graduate programs. They actively engaged with every single guest speaker, went out of their way to volunteer or work for campaigns at the local, state, and federal levels, and brought thoughtful questions and conversations to our digital Slack platform. It was this incredible group that made the program so successful.

Over the summer, we held Zoom sessions every few weeks on a different component of running a campaign. We kicked off with a session on Campaign Roles and Structures to set the stage but quickly moved into the nuts and bolts of running a campaign – including Digital and Field Organizing, Finance, Data, and so much more. We brought in some seasoned campaign veterans (like Mark Campbell and Edward Chapman, a leading opposition researcher) and some up-and-coming talent (like Rob Flaherty, who ran Digital for the Biden Campaign, and Jimmy Van Den Berg, who was the political director for Jim Bognet's House campaign in Pennsylvania). Often, we would have sessions hosted by one Republican and one Democrat, which made the perspective even more interesting. The balance of perspectives brought the cohort unique perspectives and fostered incredibly interesting discussions.

Personally, the program could not have come at a better time. I began working as the director of campaign operations on Kam Buckner's mayoral campaign in May and the Project Battleground programming began over the summer. As we moved through each step of my campaign, there was a Project Battleground session on the topic that allowed me to learn from an expert about how to do it to the best of my ability. The program absolutely exceeded expectations. On top of all of the programming, we also got to attend a congressional debate between U.S. Rep. Krishnamoorthi and his opponent, Chris Dargis. We also got to engage in student sessions with Lis Smith and Dave Wasserman. The experience has been invaluable and will undoubtedly give future campaign leaders the skills they need to succeed.

Dialogue Dinners

The IOP's focus on civil discourse and dialogue programming is a natural extension of our commitment to free expression and strengthening democracy. Dialogue Dinners seek to create a culture where students lean into ideological disagreements and find ways to engage in civil discourse.

Each Fall Quarter Pritzker Fellow participated in a student-led dialogue dinner. Student leaders met in advance with the Fellows and developed topics together, and the student then prepared an outline for the discussion. The dinners covered topics including partisanship and polarization with Doug Jones; the politicization of the social safety net with Laura Dove, journalism and free speech in India with Rana Ayyub; race in politics with Luis Gutiérrez; and ensuring the future of journalism and civil discourse with Steve Hayes. The feedback from students and Fellows was enthusiastic, and Fellows in particular enjoyed the opportunity to work with the student moderators and to meet in an intimate setting with students who were open to thinking about these topics in different ways.





Teams present their student debt relief policy proposals.

The \$1.6 Trillion (Student Debt) Question

Just before the Fall Quarter began, the Biden administration moved to cancel student loan debt for tens of millions of Americans, at a cost of nearly \$400 billion. The subsequent national conversation made clear that broad structural changes to the student loan program are necessary. Instead of convening experts to discuss possible solutions, IOP staff decided to enlist students to create new ones. Students from across campus were invited to compete in a contest to craft legislation that would make a meaningful difference in college affordability. Contestants were tasked with explaining how they would target student aid, how it would be paid for, and to structure their potential legislation in a way that could realistically attract bipartisan support. Participants were encouraged to meet with IOP Pritzker Fellows **Laura Dove**, the former secretary for the majority in the U.S. Senate, and former U.S. Senator **Doug Jones** to help refine their proposals.

More than a dozen teams, representing a broad ideological spectrum came up with an array of policy ideas. Three finalists presented their policy proposals to **incoming IOP Director Heidi Heitkamp**. The former Democratic U.S. Senator from North Dakota put each team through intensive Senate-hearing style paces before settling on a winner.

That team's proposal was sent to the U.S. Senate Health, Labor, Education, and Pensions Committee with members of the winning team each receiving a \$500 cash prize. This challenge set the table for future problem-solving contests across a broad array of issues during the rest of the academic year.



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“It’s amazing that we got the opportunity to propose legislation about a major issue directly to the U.S. Congress. Mentorship from IOP Fellows and senior University leaders throughout the competition along with Senator Heitkamp’s tough questions in the finals provided an outstanding experience and made sure we sent our best feasible proposal forward.”

Rob Callahan (center)
MA '23

The winning policy proposal team poses after the student debt relief competition (left to right) Emily Barnett, Rob Callahan, and Graham Harwood.

Preview: Spring Break Treks

St. Louis

Nine years after the killing of Michael Brown in Ferguson and the unrest that followed, many questions still remain about the criminal justice system in St. Louis and around the country. Against this backdrop, the Civic Engagement team is leading a Spring Break trek to the St. Louis region to meet with local leaders and discuss the aftermath of the region's racial reckoning, criminal justice reform, and public safety.

Washington D.C.

Washington, D.C. is the hub that keeps the federal government operating – home to nearly every federal agency, the U.S. Congress, the White House, and numerous organizations that shape public policy. The Career Development team will connect students with leaders across D.C.'s landscape to help them pursue future public service internships and careers.



Preview: Campaign Journalism Conference

This coming Spring, the IOP will host its third Campaign Journalism Conference, an effort to help prepare reporters to cover upcoming presidential elections.

Covering campaigns has become increasingly complicated. Polling breakdowns, a shift in how people vote, the rise in distrust of election results, and a reshaping of the electorate have combined to make it so. As such, journalists need a mix of traditional and new tools to cover the 2024 White House race.

The conference will convene a team of established and rising practitioners, helping to reset a system of assumptions and practices that may no longer apply in modern campaigns.

Further, the conference will explore the mistrust consumers have of news organizations, how to use data and voter voices to report, and instruct on election law and voting mechanics. Above all else, this two-day boot camp will strive to be as user-friendly for reporters as possible, equipping them with practical tools to cover the campaign ahead.



Scenes from 2018 Campaign Journalism Conference

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My involvement at the Institute of Politics has inarguably been one of the most important experiences in my life, both professionally and personally. Having separated from the US Navy with the intention of pursuing a career in public service, the IOP elevated my ability to do by exposing a diverse array of perspectives and providing me with a variety of internship opportunities. Most importantly, by selecting me to serve as Co-Chair of the Student Advisory Board, the IOP has afforded me the opportunity to spark a passion for public service in my fellow students.

Ricky Holder,
AB '23 Student Advisory Board
Co-Chair





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