



E FEST

THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO
INSTITUTE OF POLITICS



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INSTITUTE OF POLITICS

Fall 2024

Inspiring
thought

Empowering

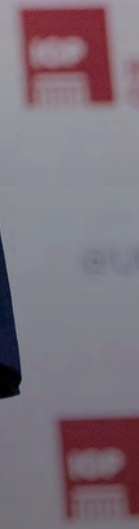


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The 2024 Election

We've had an amazing year so far! With highly consequential elections on the horizon, the nonpartisan University of Chicago Institute of Politics (IOP) pursued a number of different opportunities during Summer 2024 to help young people both get engaged with the issues affecting our democracy and get energized to participate at both the local and national levels.

With the Republican National Convention a short train ride away in Milwaukee and the Democratic National Convention in our backyard, Institute of Politics staff recognized a significant opportunity to provide students with immersive and enriching experiences they were unlikely to receive anywhere else.

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.

Throughout the summer, we administered a poll to take the temperature of youth voting attitudes; we hosted students from Harvard, Georgetown, and Cornell universities, and our Director, Heidi Heitkamp, presided over breakfast meetings, talking all things elections with our students.

Founding Director David Axelrod and Amy Walter of the Cook Political Report broke down the presidential elections during our Axe & Amy events in Chicago and Milwaukee and Michigan Governor Gretchen Whitmer stopped by the IOP to get our students fired up to vote!



Milwaukee Jul 17

*Republican
National
Convention*

In July, students traveled by train to Milwaukee with IOP Director Heidi Heitkamp and Institute staff. Once in Milwaukee, the IOP and UChicago students welcomed nearly 100 high school and college students from across the country for Youth VoteFest! at historic Blue Ribbon Hall, just outside of the Republican National Convention's space. The all-day event included voter engagement workshops, small-group interactions with prominent guests and panel discussions highlighting the role of young adults in the upcoming elections.

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**.



Jan Feb Mar Apr May June July Aug Sept Oct Nov Dec

They also joined an intimate conversation with IOP Founding Director **David Axelrod** and IOP board member **Amy Walter**, publisher and editor-in-chief of **The Cook Political Report**, for a discussion on the latest polling and what the rest of the election cycle would look like.

Christopher Phillips, a rising fourth-year in the College majoring in economics and political science, said that the programming gave him a unique opportunity to learn how to mobilize his peers who are interested in getting more involved in politics.

“Speaking with David Axelrod and Amy Walter, along with other knowledgeable political professionals, also helped provide context as to what I should expect from the RNC in Milwaukee,” said Phillips. “Hearing anecdotes from them helped supplement my holistic understanding of politics in a unique way, and I’m grateful for the exposure the IOP provides.”

The conversations further included former IOP Pritzker Fellow and Cook Political Senior Editor Dave Wasserman and the Cook Political Report team of Jessica Taylor and Erin Covey. The same day, students witnessed a deep dive into campaign polling and research during a conversation with Jeff Liszt, a partner at Impact Research who worked for both of Barack Obama’s presidential campaigns, and former IOP Pritzker Fellow Tony Fabrizio, the chief pollster for Donald Trump’s presidential campaigns.

Yasmin Ali, a rising third-year at UChicago, applied to go on the trip to immerse herself in the campaign process while listening to the issues that mattered most to her conservative peers.

“It was a chance for me to explore and listen with open ears,” she said.



Chicago
Aug 21

Democratic National Convention

At the DNC in Chicago, the IOP convened 300 students from 120 schools across the country for Youth VoteFest! where they participated in voter engagement workshops with our partner, the **Students Learn, Students Vote Coalition**, where students learned how to build voting coalitions in their hometowns, engage voters across partisan divides, and how to run voter education drives in their communities.

Throughout the week, the IOP hosted a number of discussions open to media and students at historic Manny's Deli. IOP Founding Director David Axelrod hosted an event with The Cook Political Report's Editor-in-Chief Amy Walter, Dave Wasserman and other political analysts.

These media briefings provided roughly 60 journalists from major media outlets with a deeper understanding of both the Trump and Harris campaigns.

In the middle of the week, during the IOP's main Youth VoteFest! rally, hundreds of students heard from, Florida **Rep. Maxwell Frost**, who explained how passion beats ambition and how he channeled that passion to become the first Gen-Z member of Congress; former six-term Illinois **Rep. Adam Kinzinger** encouraged students to fight for democracy; Illinois **Rep. Delia Ramirez** told students to stay rooted and get active; Tennessee state **Rep. Justin Pearson** had the crowd standing on their feet; and Michigan **Lt. Gov. Garlin Gilchrist** told students how to support our local communities.

Later, **Astead Herndon** from *The New York Times* stopped by for a live taping of “The Run-Up” podcast with special guest Chicago **Mayor Brandon Johnson**. To close the event, **Mayor Pete Buttigieg** stopped by and surprised students with an impromptu Q&A before hitting the stage for his DNC speech at the United Center.

“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,” said **Emily Morgan**, a graduate student at the Harris School of Public Policy. “What that means is that it can’t just be me and my friends — it has to be everybody and everybody’s friends.”





Youth VoteFest Milwaukee
and Chicago by the Numbers

400

student attendees from

120+

high schools, colleges and
universities from across
the country



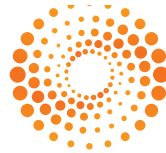
In the News



[Gen Z Voters Gather Near DNC to Discuss Increasing Youth Voter Turnout, Civic Engagement](#)



[WATCH: Gen Z voters reveal issues that will sway their vote in 2024](#)



[Harris super PAC founder says public polls are too optimistic](#)



[An 'unparalleled experience': UChicago students at the Democratic, Republican conventions](#)

[Youth Vote Fest Energizes Students at RNC & DNC](#)

['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](#)

[Teens for Trump? Republicans eye gains among US youth](#)

[Nonpartisan group teams up with conservatives to boost youth voter engagement at RNC](#)

[The Republican National Convention Was a "Man's World"](#)

[Republicans Sure of Trump 2024 Win Regardless of Democratic Ticket](#)

[Rep. Darin LaHood lifts the curtain for an insider look at the Republican National Convention](#)

[The Republican Party is trying to attract young voters. Can they increase support before November?](#)

[Young political activists get lesson in organizing from some high-powered Democrats](#)

[University of Chicago event focuses on turning out youth vote at DNC](#)

[Laura Washington: Kamala Harris must engage with voters on crime to maintain momentum](#)

[University of Chicago's Youth VoteFest encourages Gen Z voters at DNC](#)

[Lawmakers Discuss Engaging Young Voters](#)

[What Young Democrats have to say about higher education](#)



Lights, Camera, Action

Separate from the youth rallies and media briefings, the IOP funded **more than 50 internships** at CNN, ABC News and with the DNC Host Committee. These students received behind-the-scenes access to convention planning and insights into how major news outlets cover the conventions.

“I learned about the messaging and strategy behind conventions and party politics,” said rising second-year student **Michelle Du**, who interned with CNN. “This was truly a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity, and I got unprecedented access to politicians and the media.”





Students also had the opportunity to attend live tapings of *The Daily Show* with Jon Stewart and the DNC Convention at the United Center, where they witnessed speeches from former First Lady Michelle Obama, former President Barack Obama and the historic roll call to nominate Kamala Harris as the Democratic nominee.

“Being on the floor of the convention was an amazing experience,” rising fourth-year political science student Justin Taylor said. “Being so close to the congressmen and delegates really humanized the election process for me and reminded me that it’s the votes of regular people that create the change we want to see.”

Additionally, Michigan **Governor Gretchen Whitmer** met and spoke with students at the IOP House and IOP staff hosted a series of breakfast discussions with students from Georgetown’s, Harvard’s and Cornell’s institutes of politics, in which students talked with Director Heidi Heitkamp about the importance of public service and how to get involved in politics.



The IOP x GenForward Youth Poll

The Institute of Politics and the **GenForward Survey** collaborated to produce an original survey ahead of the November 2024 elections sampling millennials and members of **Generation Z** - oversampling young people of color within those cohorts.

Many of the trends that ultimately swung the election to president-elect Trump were visible in the results of the poll. While pundits predicted that a wave of youth enthusiasm could swing the election for Harris, our poll showed that the race was tight even among young voters, with young men and Latinos leaning significantly towards Trump compared to the 2020 election.



Protests at the Democrats' Convention Weren't as Big and Disruptive as Some Expected

Julie Bosman, Mitch Smit, Ernesto Londoño, and Nicholas Bogel-Burroughs



Interview with Professor Cathy Cohen and IOP Executive Director Zeenat Rahman

Reset with Sasha Ann-Simons



For young adults, it's all about the economy

Editorial Board, *The Chicago Sun-Times*

Key Stats

1382

Early voters at our on-campus polling location

98

Trained and active voting ambassadors

2121

TurboVote sign ups

413

UChicago athletes pledged to vote

800+

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



Nonpartisan Voter Engagement

In 2024, **UChiVotes**, the IOP’s student-run voter engagement initiative, recruited and trained over 90 voting ambassadors to serve as campus connectors, helping connect students with the issues that matter most to them, therefore, increasing student participation in local and national

Throughout the Fall Quarter, UChiVotes continued to strengthen campus partnerships, collaborating with UChicago Athletics, the Office of Campus and Student Life, the Undergraduate Student Government, and many other campus student organizations. These relationships proved crucial in creating comprehensive voter mobilization education across the University of Chicago campus. Signature accomplishments include partnering with College Orientation and meeting every first-year student to deliver a voter registration and engagement pitch. This proactive approach ensured that civic engagement became an integral part of the student experience from day one.

UChiVotes students, along with staff, also operated an on-campus early voting site - a tremendous success, where more than 1,300 voters cast their votes over a three-day period.

IOP students also took their experiences and passion for nonpartisan voter education off campus through our innovative partnership with **Cook County Jail**. In the Spring and Fall of 2024, students delivered more than 800 voter education workshops in Cook County jail. These voter education sessions focused on the history of voting rights, ballot guides, and nonpartisan civic learning.

Interacting with individuals in custody was a transformative experience for students, with many sharing that volunteering at the jail was the most meaningful involvement of their college careers.



UCH VOTES
Early Voting at Reynolds!
Wed | Oct 30 - Fri | Nov 1
10 am - 5 pm
(Bring Proof of Residency and Photo ID)

NO LEFT TURN
LOW ZONE





Speaker Series

In closing out the tumultuous 2024 election year, the Speaker Series opened the Fall Quarter with panels that examined polling trends after the shake-up at the top of the Democratic ticket. During large public events, students and community members were also offered a preview of a second Trump administration through a raucous conversation with some of his former officials.

We also hosted the **Lame Duck Policy Challenge**, where students from across campus teamed up to write a congressional bill on any issue they believed could pass during this period between the November election and the beginning of the new Congress in January 2025.

In a first for the Institute of Politics, staff programmed a wildly popular debate that featured **Kate Davis**, president of the University of Chicago Democrats and **Christopher Phillips**, president of the College Republicans, facing off on issues including the economy, student loans and the border. Adding to the excitement of the event was its host: Veteran NBC news host and Visiting Pritzker Fellow **Chuck Todd**.



Fall 2024 Pritzker Fellows



David Axelrod

For an election year as consequential as this one, no one was better to offer us weekly campaign updates and penetrating analysis than IOP Founder David Axelrod. A onetime 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 have eroded trust in institutions and 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 as the General Assembly has 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, the Darien Gap, U.S.-Mexico relations, and the increasingly lucrative criminal smuggling industry.



Chuck Todd

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



Fall 2024 Pritzker Fellows

During the Fall Quarter, we were delighted to welcome back Founding Director **David Axelrod**, who expertly guided students through the end of the election cycle with his insider takes and guests, including Trump campaign manager **Chris LaCivita**. **Génesis Dávila**, a Venezuelan lawyer whose NGO is dedicated to human rights advocacy before international bodies and courts, was an electrifying and highly engaged presence on campus, filling the room each week with her expert and empathic eye on the fight against political persecution around the world. This cohort, including former Congressman Ken Buck, State Representative Kam Buckner, tech innovator Jordan Sun, national security expert Katie Tobin and veteran journalist Chuck Todd, helped our students make sense of the moment we're in and guided them on how they could be difference makers in the future.



Career Development

Throughout the calendar year, the Institute of Politics funds **300+ public service internships** where students gain first-hand experience in advocacy work, policy, governance, journalism, civic tech and more. Please see our academic-year internship list on the next page.



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-01)
- Partnership for College Completion
- Reform for Illinois
- Southside Together Organizing for Power (STOP)
- US 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
- Chicago Department of Family and Support Services
- 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



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