

THE UNIVERSITY  
OF CHICAGO  
**INSTITUTE  
OF POLITICS**



# VOTE RESILIENCE

**2020-21 ANNUAL REPORT**

Sophia Michel, AB '22 participates in UChiVotes outreach, Fall Quarter 2020



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## *Inspiring and cultivating a new generation of leaders, activists, and engaged citizens*

The 2020-21 academic year was unlike any other. As the world navigated the public health crisis and economic challenges brought on by the COVID-19 pandemic, the Institute of Politics had to find its footing in a fully virtual year of programming. The pandemic necessitated seismic shifts in the way we create, communicate, and collaborate amidst a racial reckoning and during one of the most consequential and contentious presidential elections in our nation's history.

At a time when our democracy is challenged, the IOP's mission is to provide pathways for our students to bring their desperately needed passions, talents, and energies to the public square. It is a vibrant hub where students can interact with practitioners, gain useful experience, take action and participate in constructive dialogue on the critical issues of the day.

The IOP does this through four main programs:

**The Career Development Program** provides more than 300 paid internships across the country and around the globe, offering our students the chance to do meaningful, often life-changing work in a wide range of fields related to politics and public service.

**The Civic Engagement Program** The Civic Engagement Program oversees eight leadership development groups through which our students develop their capacity to address the needs of the greater Chicago community.

**The Pritzker Fellows Program** brings to campus leading practitioners from politics, public service, government, journalism, and the advocacy and policy worlds to share the lessons of their distinguished careers. Through weekly seminars and office hours, fellows offer students invaluable insights and mentorship.

**The Speaker Series** hosts dozens of prominent figures from across the ideological spectrum each year, making the IOP a vital center for earnest debate and discussion about the most important issues of our day.

This year, **more than 2,100 students** from an array of disciplines participated in programming. More than 700 of them were highly engaged, cementing the IOP as a vital part of UChicago's extracurricular offerings. Additionally, the IOP's alumni network continued to expand and build community through its mentorship program, career panels, and hands-on workshops.

Throughout the year, the IOP continued to innovate and find new ways to engage students while maintaining the sense of community established at its inception.

We owe a tremendous debt of gratitude to the University of Chicago, our Board of Advisors, our community partners, and above all, our students for the successes we achieved during a year like no other. On the pages that follow, we are pleased to share some of the work made possible with the help of our entire community.



Eric You, AB '22 poses with voter outreach sign, Fall Quarter 2020



“The great thing about the Institute of Politics is that you can try things out, whether it’s campaigning or non-profit internships. You can also sharpen your interest when you talk to Fellows or go to Speaker Series events. It’s really a place where you can test and see where in the political world that you want to get involved, or just become a more well-rounded citizen. In the future, as we all go out into the world, we can look back on this time as a great experience.

To me, it’s been the most important thing coming out of the IOP.”

-Bryan Cronan, MPP '22



Aliza Oppenheim, AB '21 (left), and Eric You, AB '22 participate in voter registration drive, Fall 2020



# SPEAKER SERIES

*Providing a forum for leaders and other political actors to share their diverse experiences and insights on key issues of the day*

Each year, the IOP hosts dozens of Speaker Series events, ranging from large-scale events with hundreds in attendance to more intimate, seminar-style discussions geared exclusively toward students. Through the Speaker Series, our students and the general public are provided direct contact with prominent guests spanning a vast spectrum of ideological, professional, and geographical backgrounds, including elected officials, activists, authors, military leaders, and other key practitioners in politics and public service. These guests share their unique insights on domestic and international issues, debate the most important questions facing our world, and answer unfiltered questions from our diverse audiences.

## OUR STORY

By the time the Fall Quarter came around this year, the Speaker Series team had settled into the swing of things when it came to the world of virtual events. All of the scrambling and trial by fire we experienced at the onset of the pandemic served us well for a year in which we took full advantage of the ability to host speakers who otherwise might not have been able to travel to Chicago. While we would always prefer to provide in-person interactions between our speakers and our students, we have come to value the benefits of virtual connections as well – so much so that it's likely the IOP will continue to host some virtual events, even in a post-COVID landscape where university life has returned to some sort of normalcy.

Only in the world of virtual events would the Speaker Series have been able to host former President of the Indian National Congress Rahul Gandhi, British Chancellor of the Exchequer Rishi Sunak, Hong Kong activist Joshua Wong, and Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern of New Zealand in the same academic year! We certainly would not have



U.S. Rep. Ayanna Pressley, (D-MA), during a live taping of "The Axe Files," Winter Quarter 2021



Fmr. House Speaker John Boehner, (R-OH), Spring Quarter 2021

had the opportunity to co-host an event with Harvard's IOP on the threat of disinformation.

Hosting events via Zoom meant that we were able to bring together panelists from all over the country to discuss the Defund the Police movement, mayors from several U.S. cities to share challenges they faced while combating COVID, and top experts and practitioners to discuss the rise of violent extremism.

Despite geographic barriers, we were still able to give our students the opportunity to learn from and question former U.S. Defense Secretary Gen. James Mattis; former White House Press Secretary Dana Perino; U.S. Rep. Ayanna Pressley, D-MA; JPMorgan Chase Chairman and CEO Jamie Dimon; former U.S. Attorney General Eric Holder; former Deputy Director of National Intelligence Susan M. Gordon; U.S. Sen. Mitt Romney, R-UT; U.N. Ambassador Linda Thomas-Greenfield; Adm. William McRaven; and Amb. John Bolton.



## In Their Own Words: Speaker Series



**Sophie  
Hare**

Public Policy &  
Spanish

AB '23

Santa Fe,  
New Mexico

I've been pretty involved with the IOP since day one of my freshman year. I knew the IOP was a place I wanted to be, so I got involved as an Events Ambassador and did that for two quarters before the pandemic hit. I went to the Iowa Caucuses, which was one of the greatest experiences of my life as a political science nerd. A group of us were able to track down where MSNBC was filming and we got to meet Mayor Pete's campaign director! We also ran into Andrew Yang. To me, that was such an eye-opening experience because of the immense opportunity that I had in those three days.

This year, I've been a Speaker Series intern, which has been a blast. I've gotten to be in the room – the virtual room where it happens, I guess you could say. The fact that Sen. Mitt Romney acknowledged me in his room and asked how I was doing and what I was studying – I don't think there's another place that I can think of where that would ever happen to me. It's been really incredible.

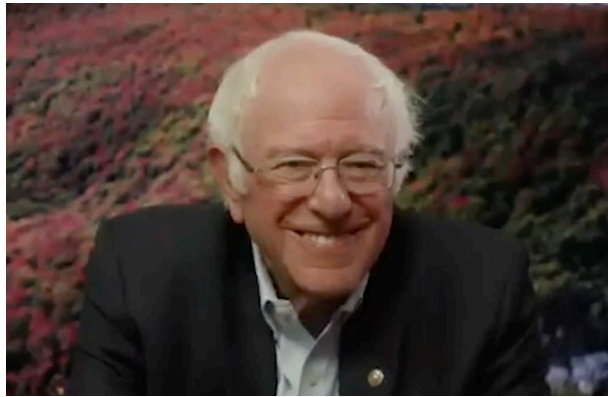
When I came to UChicago, the only thing I knew is that I thought politics was interesting. Since then, I've had my first three professional internships, all of them funded through the IOP. I've gotten career advice, and I'm constantly being connected with people that I find interesting.

The IOP and Speaker Series have given me the opportunity to explore possible career paths, along with the emotional support, the advice that I need, the funding I need, and the space to say, you know what, actually, I don't want to do that. There are no repercussions if I start to go down one path and then decide that that's not the path I want to go on.

I would say that the IOP has really been a home base for me on campus. Especially so during COVID, it's really easy to feel detached from your community when everything's over Zoom. But having a group of staff who's really invested in me and my future has kept me connected to UChicago in a way that I don't think I would have been otherwise. It's a home base, for sure, and probably one of the best things I've done at UChicago.



# 2020-2021 Events Calendar

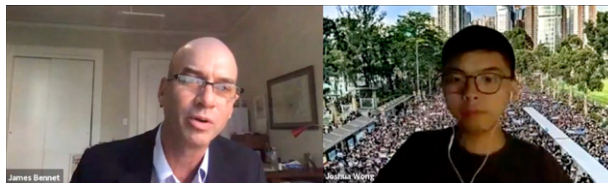


## Live Taping of “The Axe Files” with U.S. Sen. Bernie Sanders (I-VT)

with David Axelrod

## How’s Chicago Doing? A COVID-19 Update with Dr. Emily Landon

UChicago Medicine Executive Medical Director for Infection Prevention and Control; moderated by David Axelrod



## Joshua Wong: Fighting for Democracy in Hong Kong

with Pro-Democracy Activist and Nobel Peace Prize nominee Joshua Wong; moderated by IOP Pritzker Fellow and Former *New York Times* Editorial Page Editor James Bennet (left)

## Reporting from the (Virtual) Trail: A Campaign Check-in

with Peter Hamby, Snapchat’s Head of News; Alexi McCammond, *Axios* Reporter; Astead Herndon, *The New York Times* National Political Reporter; moderated by David Axelrod

## SCOTUS After RBG

with UChicago Professor of Law Aziz Huq and CBS Chief Legal Correspondent Jan Crawford

## Public Health is Local Too: A Mayoral Panel on COVID-19

with mayors Richard Irvin, Aurora IL; Nadine Woodward, Spokane, WA; Nan Whaley, Dayton OH; moderated by *The Washington Post* National Public Health Reporter Lena Sun



## Live Taping of “The Axe Files” with former National Security Advisor John Bolton

with David Axelrod (left)

## Election 2020: Foreign Interference & U.S. Intelligence

with Sue Gordon, former Principal Deputy Director of National Intelligence; moderated by IOP Pritzker Fellow and CNN national security analyst Samantha Vinograd



## Former U.S. Attorney General Eric Holder on Voter Suppression

moderated by IOP Pritzker Fellow and *New Yorker* staff writer Jelani Cobb (right)

## City So Real: Chicago’s Summer of Protest

with Steve James, Academy-award nominated director; Amara Enyia, public policy strategist; moderated by WGN Evening News Anchor Tahman Bradley

## Axe and Friends: Post-Election Roundtable

with Institute of Politics Board Members Stephanie Cutter, chief program executive for the 2020 Democratic National Convention; Ed Gillespie, former RNC chairman; and Bakari Sellers, former South Carolina State Representative and current CNN Political Commentator; moderated by David Axelrod



### **Admiral William McRaven in Conversation with David Axelrod**

former commander of the U.S. Special Operations Command, with David Axelrod

### **Pete Souza: The Way I See It**

former White House photographer with David Axelrod



### **Live Taping of “The Axe Files” with Sen. Mitt Romney (R-UT)**

with David Axelrod

### **Live Taping of “The Axe Files” with Representative Ayanna Pressley (D-MA)**

with David Axelrod

### **Making Sense of the Moment**

with IOP Pritzker Fellows Tim Alberta, chief political correspondent for *POLITICO*; former U.S. Senator Heidi Heitkamp, (D-ND); former U.S. Representative Will Hurd, (R-TX); and Kara Swisher, host of “Sway” and opinion writer for *The New York Times*; moderated by David Axelrod

### **Post-Inauguration Meet Up with Professor Will Howell**

Sydney Stein Professor in American Politics and Director of the UChicago Center for Effective Government

### **#46: The Challenges Ahead**

with Patrick Gaspard, former White House Office of Political Affairs director; Robert Gibbs, former White House Press Secretary; Shailagh Murray, former Senior Advisor to President Obama; Pete Rouse, former White House Chief of Staff; moderated by David Axelrod

### **Gen. James N. Mattis in Conversation with David Axelrod**

former Secretary of Defense and four-star general with David Axelrod



### **Breaking: Local News Under Pressure**

with (clockwise) Michael Klingensmith, Publisher and CEO of the *Minneapolis Star Tribune*; Nykia Wright, CEO of the *Chicago Sun-Times*; Tom Rosenstiel, Executive Director of the American Press Institute; moderated by Elizabeth Green, CEO and Founder of *Chalkbeat*

### **Healing Our Republic: Partisanship & Polarization in America**

with IOP Pritzker Fellows Heidi Heitkamp, former U.S. Senator, (D-ND); Will Hurd, former U.S. Representative, (R-TX); moderated by David Axelrod

### **Impeachment Trial Meet Up with Professor William Baude**

Professor of Law, Aaron Director Research Scholar, The University of Chicago Law School



### **A Conversation with Member of Parliament Rahul Gandhi**

MP and former President of the Indian National Congress; moderated by Dipesh Chakrabarty, UChicago Center in Delhi Faculty Director



## Live Taping of “The Axe Files” Ten Lessons for a Post Pandemic World with Fareed Zakaria

host of CNN’s Fareed Zakaria GPS,  
with David Axelrod

## Combating Violent Domestic Extremism

with Mary McCord, former Acting Assistant Attorney General for National Security; Jonathan Greenblatt, National Director and CEO of the Anti-Defamation League; moderated by Kathleen Belew, UChicago Assistant Professor of U.S. History

## What Happened When Redditors Took on Wall Street

with Chamath Palihapitiya, (right), venture capitalist and CEO of Social Capital; moderated by Kara Swisher, Editor-at-Large at *New York Magazine*, host of the “Sway” and “Pivot” podcasts, and IOP Pritzker Fellow

## Meet the Spring 2021 Pritzker Fellows

with Justin Amash, former U.S. Representative (L-MI); Nathan Law, activist, former member of the Legislative Council of Hong Kong and Founder of Demosistō; Cecile Richards, Co-founder of Supermajority and former President of Planned Parenthood; Heather McTeer Toney, Climate Justice Liaison at the Environmental Defense Fund and former EPA Regional Administrator; Sally Yates, former Deputy U.S. Attorney General and former Acting U.S. Attorney General; moderated by David Axelrod



## The Axe Files: JPMorgan Chase Chairman & CEO Jamie Dimon in Conversation with David Axelrod



## Legacy of Nancy Reagan

with Karen Tumulty, (left) former IOP Pritzker Fellow and Political Columnist for *The Washington Post*; moderated by *New York Times* best-selling author Kate Andersen Brower

## Former Speaker of the House John Boehner

U.S. Representative, (R-OH) from 1991 to 2015; moderated by Tim Alberta, IOP Pritzker Fellow and staff writer at *The Atlantic*

## Live Taping of “The Axe Files” with Linda Thomas-Greenfield

U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations, with David Axelrod

“As a public policy student, I am looking to engage in politics and law very directly, so the IOP has allowed me to connect easily with incredible political figures. I’m getting to talk with people who’ve been successful at such a high level, and it has been important to me and for the larger community because anyone affiliated with UChicago can just show up. The IOP gives opportunities for people who don’t care about politics at all to start paying attention, because they have the opportunity to show up and meet with someone at such a high level involved in government and politics.”

- Ali Sait, AB ‘24





### Defund or Reform the Police?

with Josie Duffy Rice, President of The Appeal, (top left); Roberto Villaseñor, former Tucson Police Chief, (bottom left); Quinton Lucas, mayor of Kansas City, (bottom right); moderated by Adam Harris, *The Atlantic* staff writer, (top right)

### Joint Session of Congress Meet-Up with Cody Keenan

former White House Speechwriter



### Everything Will Be Okay: Life Lessons for Young Women (from a former Young Woman)

with former White House Press Secretary and Fox News Channel anchor Dana Perino; with Ed Gillespie, IOP Board of Advisors member and former RNC Chairman



### British Chancellor of the Exchequer Rishi Sunak

Chief Financial Minister for Prime Minister Boris Johnson; moderated by David Axelrod



### Martin Baron, Former Executive Editor of the *Washington Post*

with David Axelrod

### Crip Camp: A Disability Revolution

with documentary film producer, writer, and director Nicole Newnham; moderated by MSNBC columnist Liz Plank

### What Does Freedom Mean To You?

with former IOP Pritzker Fellow and U.S. Representative Justin Amash, (L-MI); and IOP Board of Advisors member and former Massachusetts Governor Deval Patrick



### Live Taping of "The Axe Files" with Jacinda Ardern

New Zealand Prime Minister, with David Axelrod



# PRITZKER FELLOWS

The Pritzker Fellows program brings a cohort of domestic and international practitioners – elected officials, journalists, activists, policymakers, diplomats – to campus each quarter for deep dives into salient issues of the day. This year, 14 stellar Pritzker Fellows shared their knowledge and experience with more than 500 unique students in seminars and one-on-one conversations.

## OUR STORY

When we launched the completely remote Pritzker Fellows program it was hard to know what to expect. Would students log on to yet another Zoom discussion if they didn't have to? Would Fellows bond with their student ambassadors? How would they get to know attendees? Would it be possible for the Fellows to have an impact while only communicating on screens?

Suffice it to say, the program succeeded in being a fulfilling experience for our students and Fellows – it was clear from the first seminar that everyone entered with a spirit of “we are all in this together.” The informality of our zoom sessions quickly broke down barriers and allowed for authentic discussion. Together, our Fellows and students explored and worked through the immediate and future challenges this pandemic year presented to us all.

Community and access were the hallmarks of the program this year. Community because the students (particularly first-years in the College and at the Harris School) needed it, and the Fellows program created it – we had more regular attendance at seminars than ever before, and the bonds our Fellows made with students were real and lasting. Access because our virtual format allowed our Fellows to bring guests and create experiences that have not been possible when we are in person.

*Engaging students directly with a diverse cohort of elected officials, policymakers, and journalists to help them identify practical pathways into public service*



IOP Pritzker Fellow and former U.S. Representative Justin Amash, (L-MI), (top right) introduces guest Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez (left side in red), during a Pritzker Fellows Seminar, Spring Quarter 2021

I think the Fellows program brings a sense of realism to everything that we're discussing. It's one thing to be reading about what Republicans or Democrats are up to. But it's an entirely different thing to actually be working with those people ... I think there's always a disconnect between the picture that you have in your head versus the people you meet. And it's very easy to forget that the people making these decisions are like people like you and me.

- Zebeeb Nuguse, AB '22





2020 Presidential Candidate Pete Buttigieg, (top left) and former Florida Governor Jeb Bush (third-row middle), speak with students during Fall Quarter 2020 seminar hosted by Pritzker Fellows Addisu Demissie and Scott Jennings

For example, one day Addisu Demissie and Scott Jennings brought Pete Buttigieg and Gov. Jeb Bush to the same seminar. James Bennet could bring guests from around the world. Heidi Heitkamp invited a range of voices from rural America, from ranchers and tribal leaders to farmers to boilermakers. Heather McTeer Toney could explore the intersection of climate change and social justice with grassroots activists – all people of color – across the country. Jelani Cobb introduced our students to an array of cutting-edge voices on race and systemic racism. Kara Swisher brought tech stars who shared their iconoclastic perspectives. The list is endless, and every Fellow excelled.

In one of Justin Amash’s seminars this spring, after his frank appraisal of the dysfunction and perverse incentives of Congress, one student asked him, “so why do you do it?”

Amash smiled, and then grew serious: “I do it because I believe in the principles upon which this country was founded and I think we can build a better future.” That spirit permeated throughout our Fellows seminars this year – leaving students primed for a future where they can attack the big, big problems facing the world and find their own pathways into public service, be it through policy-making, electoral politics, activism, or the simple act of conversation with someone whose personal narrative or ideas are unfamiliar to them.

Needless to say, our Fellows left the IOP similarly inspired by our students, the one gift that we can always deliver. The Fellows team – staff, interns, and Student Advisory Board chair – are very proud of the vibrant community that was the Fellows program this year.

“[The IOP] gives students opportunities to expose themselves to as many viewpoints, as many contrasting ideas, as many different aspects of any question as they can. I say to students, this is the easiest time in your life to become more knowledgeable about a subject. And so, take full advantage of it, even to the point of maybe annoying people a little bit. But be sure you seize on every opportunity to interact and have those conversations. All that knowledge and all that experience and all the interaction becomes useful to you over the course of your career.”

- Jelani Cobb, Fall Pritzker Fellow

## 2020-21 Fellows

### Fall Quarter



#### **James Bennet**

Former Editor of the *New York Times* Editorial Page and Former Editor-In-Chief of *The Atlantic*

The award-winning journalist and foreign correspondent examined the state of the world in discussions with guests from across the globe. He walked students through what challenges the rise of China represents to the American idea; what explains the resurgence of the populist, authoritarian model in Europe; and what the changing dynamics of the Middle East mean for our foreign policy.



#### **Jelani Cobb**

Journalist, Professor, and Staff Writer at *The New Yorker*

A historian and accomplished author, Cobb gained national acclaim for his writings on race, politics, history, and culture. In his seminars, Cobb discussed race in America; where the push for social justice can go after recent protests; what can be achieved by a new racial awakening in the U.S.; and the policies needed to eliminate structural racism in America.



#### **Addisu Demissie**

Democratic Strategist and Former Campaign Manager for U.S. Senator Cory Booker, D-NJ



#### **Scott Jennings**

Republican Strategist, Columnist, and CNN Political Contributor

Demissie (who was tapped by then-Democratic presidential nominee Joe Biden to help organize the 2020 Democratic National Convention) and Jennings (who has held senior campaign positions for U.S. Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell, R-KY and President George W. Bush) offered students a lively week-by-week, under-the-hood look at the 2020 presidential campaign.



#### **Samantha Vinograd**

CNN National Security Analyst and Former Member of the National Security Council

Vinograd is a former deputy U.S. Treasury attaché to Iraq in the George W. Bush administration and a former senior national security official under President Barack Obama. In her seminars, Vinograd led a review of the national security implications of COVID-19; explored how fighting the pandemic put a strain on critical national security work; and discussed what national security recovery might look like.



## 2020-21 Fellows

### Winter Quarter



#### **Tim Alberta**

Staff Writer at *The Atlantic* and Former Chief Political Correspondent for *POLITICO*

Alberta, author of *The New York Times* bestseller “American Carnage,” is widely recognized as one of the most incisive political reporters working today. Alberta led a series of seminars on the decline of the country’s core institutions – government, media, organized religion, and law enforcement – and explored how America might recover some of its civic cohesion.



#### **Heidi Heitkamp**

Former U.S. Senator, D-ND

Heitkamp, Co-founder and Chair of the One Country Project, discussed the complex economic, social, and demographic challenges that divide America and the policy solutions that might address them. Her guests included a wide variety of practitioners from rural America.



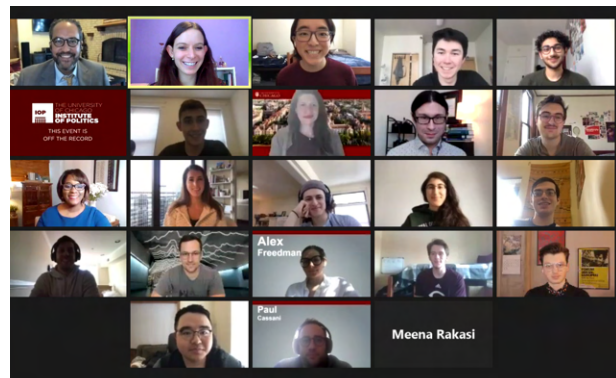
#### **Will Hurd**

Former U.S. Congressman, R-TX

Hurd, a former CIA officer who had just finished his third term as the U.S. Representative from Texas’ 23rd district before joining the IOP, explored the challenges facing the next generation of leaders as American economic and military dominance is challenged.

“I wish those conversations that I was having at the Institute of Politics were examples of the kinds of conversations we had in our national politics. If we did, our country would be way better off.”

- Will Hurd, Winter Pritzker Fellow



IOP Pritzker Fellow and former U.S. Rep. Will Hurd, (R-TX), (top left), chats with students during Winter Quarter 2021 seminar



#### **Kara Swisher**

Editor-At-Large, *New York Magazine*, and Host of two podcasts: *The New York Times*’ “Sway” and “Pivot” from *New York Magazine*

Swisher, a contributing opinion writer for *The New York Times*, led a series of conversations with tech leaders and policymakers about the impact and power of tech in every aspect of our lives, and what government policies can be implemented to hold them accountable.

## 2020-21 Fellows

### Spring Quarter



#### **Justin Amash**

Former U.S. Representative from Michigan's  
3rd Congressional District

Amash, a Republican member of Congress who left the party in 2019 and became the first Libertarian Party member to serve in either house, led seminars discussing libertarian principles and exploring the nuances of libertarian policy choices in current politics.



#### **Nathan Law**

Activist, Founder, and Former Chairman of Demosistō,  
Former Member of the Legislative Council of Hong Kong

Law, a leader in the 2014 Hong Kong democracy protests known as the Umbrella Movement and one of *TIME Magazine's* Top 100 Most Influential People of 2020, led seminars while exiled in London. He discussed with students his activism in Hong Kong and threats to freedom around the world more broadly.



#### **Cecile Richards**

Co-Founder of Supermajority, Former President of  
Planned Parenthood

Richards, author of the *New York Times* bestseller *Make Trouble*, was named one of *TIME Magazine's* 100 Most Influential People in the World in 2011 and 2012. She led seminars exploring the ways in which women are leading in politics and how women are poised to become the most powerful political force shaping policy moving forward.



#### **Heather McTeer Toney**

Climate Justice Liaison at the Environmental Defense Fund  
and Senior Advisor to Moms Clean Air Force,  
Regional Administrator, U.S. EPA

Toney, the first woman, first African American, and the youngest person to serve as Mayor of Greenville, MS, later went on to serve in the Obama Administration as part of the Environmental Protection Agency. Toney led a series of discussions about the intersection of climate change and climate justice, and the tactics, partnerships, and strategies necessary to address the climate crisis in minority communities.



#### **Sally Yates**

Former Deputy U.S. Attorney General and  
Former Acting U.S. Attorney General

Yates, who served in the U.S. Department of Justice for more than 27 years, specialized in prosecuting public corruption cases. The former Obama Administration official led students through in-depth discussions of some of the challenges to equal justice under the law in the U.S. justice system, including a close look at how lawyers and non-lawyers can make a difference.



## In Their Own Words: Pritzker Fellows



**Bryan  
Cronan**

Master of  
Public Policy

MPP '22

Griffin,  
Georgia

I first learned about the UChicago IOP a few years ago when I was with friends in Cambridge, MA. I've always been curious about politics, so when I applied to graduate programs, the IOP was a major draw for me to come to the University of Chicago.

I wanted the opportunity to hear from great Fellows and interact with students who are also interested in politics. After starting my program in Fall 2020, I have been to almost every single Fellows seminar, and I've met with almost all of the Fellows during their office hours.

I was also one of the leads at UChiVotes, reaching out to students before the election. During the Winter Quarter, I was a Fellows ambassador for Kara Swisher, and now I'm a team lead for representative Justin Amash. I have also led one of the Civic Dinners.

Being a Fellows ambassador has been one of the greatest experiences I've had at UChicago by far! I was able to spend time with the Fellows, ask them personal questions, and I've had real conversations and FaceTimes with them. Getting to work with Kara was truly fantastic – I've been a big fan of hers for a long time. I got to ask her questions I had while listening to her podcast and reading her articles.

I was also an intern through the IOP's Activism and Community Engagement (ACE) program at the non-profit Young Invincibles. I got to work on a bill that would look at financial literacy amongst young adults in the state legislature of Illinois. Having worked in the private sector before coming to Chicago, I have always wanted to experience non-profit sector work, and the IOP gave me the chance to do something that I wouldn't be able to otherwise.

The great thing about the Institute of Politics is that you can try out for things, whether it's campaigning or non-profit internships. You can also sharpen your interest when you talk to Fellows or go to Speaker Series events. It's really a place where you can test and see where in the political world that you want to get involved, or just become a more well-rounded citizen. In the future, as we all go out into the world, we can look back on this time as a great experience. To me, it's been the most important thing coming out of the IOP.

# CIVIC ENGAGEMENT

*Providing pathways for  
students to activate  
their interest in politics  
via civic engagement*

During the 2020-21 academic year, the Civic Engagement program provided students a broad range of opportunities to explore public service, journalism, the democratic process, and the challenges that permeate all areas of public life.

## OUR STORY

The Civic Engagement program has always been a place for students to unlock their leadership potential through immersive learning, direct service, educational travel, and community service. Civic Engagement leaned into the challenges of the academic year trying to recreate the spirit and impact of our work with limited opportunities for in-person engagement.

**BY THE NUMBERS**

ENGAGED WITH  
**700+**  
**UNIQUE**  
**STUDENTS**  
DURING THE 2020-21  
ACADEMIC YEAR TO DATE

This year was about learning right alongside our students. They deserve immense credit for being our teachers and helping us adapt to the challenges of remote learning. With their help, we were able to incorporate different digital tools to help students foster a sense of community with their peers. Almost overnight, we had to become experts on different platforms, including Slack, Jamboard, and an organizing app called Team created by IOP alums!

We also used more project-based learning using digital publications to capture their work in several of our programs, including Chicago Bound, Bridging the Divide, and the Bridge Writing Workshop.

Our new circumstances meant immersing ourselves in the particulars of logistics and virtual event planning. Our goal was to make online programming feel communal, fresh, and exciting, while attempting to stave off Zoom fatigue among our students.

Staff became regulars at the Hyde Park Post Office, shipping swag to students and creating safe opportunities for students to pick up supplies. Where possible, we braved rainy fall days and snowy Chicago sidewalks to engage with students in person (masked and socially distanced, of course).

As a result, we grew in ways that will serve us for years to come. We launched a new partnership with the national Civic Dinners organization, which brought small groups of students together over video chat for in-depth discussions on topics of the day. We also launched Spectrum, a student-led leadership group focused on LGBTQ+ issues and public service.

Students are at the heart of our program, and they deserve tremendous credit for how they navigated remote learning. They showed resilience and adapted to build community in a virtual, socially distanced format. Their work may have looked different than in years past, but they left an indelible impact on their peers and communities. They exceeded our expectations by bringing new ideas, ingenuity, and a lot of heart to their work.



## Program Updates

### CHICAGO BOUND

Chicago Bound is a pre-orientation program, co-sponsored by the University Community Service Center. The program aims to give students a foundation to become well-informed, active members of the city. Typically, this initiative serves a cohort of 40 students for an immersive week-long experience before college orientation. Through the transition to online programming, we expanded the number of students we were able to serve.

#### Highlights

- In the pivot to a virtual format, we were able to expand community engagement to a broader portion of the incoming class than in other years. In September 2020, we engaged 123 incoming first-year students
- During the week before orientation, student leaders coordinated an intensive virtual programming experience which included shared projects and group discussions. This cohort of 54 students was larger than our usual in-person capacity allows

### THE GATE

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

#### Highlights

- Students created a new Junior Writers program during the Fall Quarter. The program engaged 40-plus students each week through writing workshops and ended with each participant submitting a written piece for publication.
- The Gate hosted 16 workshops with journalists including Noah Weiland, a New York Times health reporter; Alfredo Corchado, Mexico-Border Correspondent with the Dallas Morning News and former IOP Pritzker Fellow; Grace Del Vecchio and Alejandra Cancino of the Better Government Association; and James Bennet, an IOP Pritzker Fellow, former editor of The New York Times Editorial Page, and the former editor-in-chief of The Atlantic;
- The Gate published more than 60 articles throughout the 2020-2021 academic year



Physical copies of The Gate magazine displayed at the IOP House, Spring Quarter 2021



Leaders of Color students take part in outdoor workshop, Spring Quarter 2021



Leaders of Color post on the IOP steps, Spring Quarter 2021

## LEADERS OF COLOR

Leaders of Color (LoC) is a student-run leadership development program for first- and second-year students of color. Through cohort-based trainings, workshops, virtual tours, and speakers, this initiative prepares students of color for leadership positions across campus and in the public sector.

### Highlights

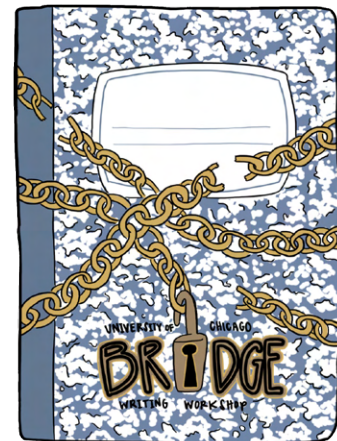
- LoC accepted 18 students of color into this year's cohort, and coordinated weekly professional development sessions focused on leadership development, racial justice, and public service
- LoC recruited 30 mentors, which exceeded our initial goals and allowed for a more personalized mentorship experience for each student

## BRIDGE WRITING WORKSHOP

Bridge Writing Workshop, in partnership with the Cook County Jail, utilizes creative writing as an outlet for self-expression in workshops with incarcerated youth and adults. The program fosters relationships amongst folks who interact with the legal system and the UChicago community, with the goal of building solidarity between students and incarcerated participants.

### Highlights

- Pivoted from in-person weekly workshops to a written correspondence-based format and developed new lessons to include in the curriculum. The students engaged two dozen participants across the fall and winter quarters.
- Created a new partnership with the Illinois Youth Center through 52 virtual video workshops to engage with incarcerated adolescents.
- Partnered with the Pozen Center for Human Rights and the University Community Service Center for a virtual MLK week program to organize a letter-writing event, during which UChicago students built relationships and connections with incarcerated individuals.
- Published a print magazine featuring workshop participants and student facilitators.





## SPECTRUM

Spectrum aims to connect and empower LGBTQ+ students with opportunities to expand their leadership skills and passion for public service. Through service opportunities, workshops, and events, Spectrum aims to heighten the visibility, acceptance, and leadership aptitude of UChicago's LGBTQ+ community.



### Highlights

- Spectrum holds the unique distinction of organizing their group and getting their start in a completely remote, virtual, and socially distanced environment.
- Spectrum recruited an organizing committee of nearly 10 students who created a cohort of 24 undergraduate students. The cohort met weekly during Spring Quarter for community building, leadership development, and engagement with partnering organizations in Chicago.

## TECH TEAM

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.



### Highlights

- Clients this year included Cook County, Love Fridge, Chicago Tool Library, OneGoal, Sue Duncan Children's Center, Musical Arts Institute, Public Media Institute's Experimental Sound Studio, and Creative Chicago Reuse Exchange
- Tech team had 155 total unique applicants this year for projects, including 58 first-year students, 34 second-year students, 21 third-year students, 13 fourth-year students, and 29 graduate students from across the university. 132 students were selected to join project teams
- Tech team ran its first hackathon, the Ideathon, which engaged 35 student participants
- Launched the first TechTeam mentoring program to help build community during a remote year. The program facilitated 26 mentor-mentee pairings
- Tech team held weekly programming workshops in Python and R for UChicago students in the Fall Quarter.



Members of W+ pose in front of the IOP, Spring Quarter 2021

## W+

W+ works to create with female, nonbinary, and trans students to explore and cultivate their passion 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.



## Highlights

- Trained and guided six planning teams throughout the Fall Quarter to create an interactive curriculum focused on public service
- Engaged nearly 50 students through its annual Winter Institute
- Facilitated a direct service component called W+ Engage, where 15 participants volunteered with three immigration- and refugee-focused nonprofit organizations in Chicago
- Fostered community through campus-wide events including discussions on gender, film screenings, and showcases for the work of senior members





## In Their Own Words: Civic Engagement



**AJ  
Thomas**

Economics &  
Ancient History

AB '21

Geneva,  
Switzerland

Over the past year, I have been on the board of TechTeam at the IOP as the Outreach Co-chair. I applied for the opportunity last summer before my fourth year as I became interested in government and technology and wanted to contribute to the effort. I primarily focused on publicizing our events – including scheduled coding class and larger events like Ideathon – through texting and writing articles and spreading the word in the campus community.

In the past few months, I have been working on the Ideathon, our student-led hackathon event where we seek to tackle the intersection of technology and society. The idea came from some of our members who had participated in other hackathons, and everyone on the team decided to turn it into an event. Essentially, we sought to present a virtual opportunity for students to come together and conceptualize new paradigms for technology as a driver of social good.

We received over 50 signups and had five project teams who made it to the end. We kept it small and highly engaged to be genuine so that students got to meet with a lot of good speakers and good mentors. In the future, we hope that Ideathon can become a stable event and serve as a platform for the engineers on campus to connect with the more humanities-focused students who are naturally more involved in the IOP. We believe that many great tech organizations are built on people who have those two ways of thinking, so we want to pursue that combination.

Being involved in the Tech Team has opened my eyes to a passion for technology and not just “technology that’s assisted” – the phrase is stolen from Kara Swisher. So I’m very grateful to have had the opportunity to join and receive the support from the IOP, and I think approaching technology from a civic tech lens has helped ignite that passion for me. My hope is to instill that culture so that future TechTeam board members can keep that energy for a real contrarian type of technological progress.

# CAREER DEVELOPMENT

*Providing paid opportunities for students to pursue substantive, career-oriented internships in politics, policymaking, and other public service fields*

Inspiring students to pursue careers in the public sector is the central tenet of the Career Development program, providing students with practical experience, workforce training, career advising, and access to a far-reaching professional network. In particular, the IOP's Internship Program grants students financial support and gives them access to opportunities regardless of economic status.

## OUT STORY

Each year, before the academic year begins, dozens of student emails flood the two-person Career Development team's inboxes. Fall 2020 was no different. Following a summer where internships were more scarce because of the pandemic, our students eagerly sought more opportunities for hands-on public service experiences. Many said that the pandemic, coupled with the 2020 elections, inspired them to want to help people and be more involved in their communities.

By spring 2020 Career Development team was quickly learning just how much havoc COVID-19 would wreak on students' lives. We heard stories in our one-on-one advising sessions of students or their family members contracting the virus, and of students needing to find work because parents lost their jobs.

These stories meant our mission for the 2020-21 academic year had become even more critical. It was imperative that we provide as many paid opportunities as possible, even if it meant arranging them in the final months of this academic year – a divergence from the norm. While our students are resilient and adapted well to attending classes via Zoom, we were particularly inspired by the stories they told us about internship experiences that gave them hope and sparked their passion for public service.



From our paid internships to our alumni panels and workshops where students learn from practitioners doing the work they aspire to, we've become resident hope dealers.

Looking back on this academic year, our team is most proud of the customized advising we've provided to more than 230 students, and the 326 academic-year and summer public service internships we've arranged and supported at organizations around the world. We've made meaningful connections with first-year students who have never met IOP staff in person and guided graduating students through hiring processes for full-time jobs. In comparison to high school, one first-year student noted of IOP staff that it was a "culture shock that everyone wants to help here."

Beyond just helping, we want to have fun and celebrate every student victory. In these times, we've traded high-fives for virtual chats and emails. And after each round of good news we hear from students who've landed their dream internship, we will continue to send the link to Kool & the Gang's "Celebration."

And to our students: until we can meet again in person...We're gonna celebrate your party with you.



## In Their Own Words: Career Development



**Hamza  
Jilani**

Economics &  
Political Science

AB '24

Washington,  
D.C.

This year, I have worked as an Activism and Community Engagement (ACE) intern at the Chicago hub of Sunrise Movement, a youth-led political movement that advocates for political action in climate change. Before coming to college, Sunrise was a movement that I always admired, and I wanted to go into community organizing as a career, so I applied for it.

I conducted policy research with the policy team and helped with the planning efforts of the action team. Once I had gotten acquainted with the various teams, I started to take on more leadership roles in some of the projects. With the action team, where I helped plan an action entirely. On the policy team, I started with some legislation research efforts. Another big part of my internship has been working on a series with the Brushwood Center in Northern Illinois. Some representatives from Sunrise and I worked together with them to build a curriculum focused on anti-racism and the environment.

Doing this internship was really important for me since it allowed me to learn many skills. Particularly, interacting with the rest of the ACE interns at an event and talking to the coordinator really solidified my experience, because I am a first-year and I didn't have any internship experience and didn't know how to approach them. But being involved in this from the start of college has been really good for my plans and for the rest of my career decisions within the College. It was a really good first internship experience because it was so guided, and it was so supported by the University and the IOP.

Besides ACE, I was also part of the Leaders of Color (LOC) cohort. The most memorable parts of LOC were the internal dialogues. For example, we reflected upon some of the seminars within our cohort. I think that the facilitators did a really good job getting us to really reflect and think about those. They have opened up my mind because I had some conceptions before, but I didn't know the full picture.

## Internship List

### Urban Policy and Research Program

Chicago Public Schools Office of Equity  
Chicago Public Schools Office of Network Support  
Chicago Public Schools Office of the Chief Portfolio Officer  
Chicago State University  
City Colleges of Chicago  
City of Chicago Department of Family and Support Services  
City of Chicago Planning Office; Office of Sustainable Development  
City of Chicago Treasurer's Office  
Cook County Medical Examiner's Office  
Cook County Sheriff's Office  
Cook County State's Attorney's Office  
Illinois Department of Human Services  
Office of Illinois Lt. Governor Juliana Stratton  
U.S. Environmental Protection Agency

### Activism and Community Engagement Program

ADA25  
Asian Americans Advancing Justice  
BlackRoots Alliance  
Call to Action  
Chicago Votes  
I Grow Chicago  
Illinois Farm Bureau  
Illinois Justice Project  
Illinois Policy Institute  
Latino Policy Forum  
LiftUp Enterprises  
National Immigrant Justice Center  
Partnership for College Completion  
People's Action Institute  
Shriver Center on Poverty Law  
Sunrise Movement  
Sweet Water Foundation  
The Exoneration Project  
Young Invincibles

BY THE NUMBERS

**179**  
**SUMMER**  
**INTERNSHIPS**

**85**  
**SUMMER**  
**STIPENDS**

**62**  
**ACADEMIC YEAR**  
**INTERNSHIPS**

**326**  
**TOTAL**

“The Career Development program has been central to my college experience and has given me opportunities beyond my wildest dreams. My time as the policy intern in Illinois’ Lieutenant Governor Julianna Stratton’s office.... And the support and learning that I have gained through this job have been amazing, especially during a year where so much felt like it was on hold, and I am so grateful to the IOP and the Career Development team for their investment in my growth.”

– Isabella Hurtado, AB ‘21



## **Summer Internships**

### **Advocacy and Service**

A Better Chicago  
ADA25  
Advance Illinois  
African Community Fund for Education  
All In Together  
Alliance for Peacebuilding  
Asian Americans Advancing Justice  
BlackRoots Alliance  
Braven  
CARE Nepal  
Chicago Abortion Fund  
Chicago Appleseed Center for Fair Courts  
Chicago Community Trust\*  
Chicago Justice Project  
Chicago United for Equity  
Chicago Votes  
Civic Projects  
Coalition for Integrity  
Community Organizing and Family Issues  
Delta Health Alliance  
Electrification Coalition  
Environmental Law & Policy Center  
Fahe  
Fair Vote  
Fundación S4V  
Genesis Youth Foundation  
GirlForward  
GLAAD  
Global Livingston Institute  
Hazleton Integration Project  
Healthy Communities Foundation  
Heartland Human Care Services - Refugee and Immigrant Community Services (RICS)  
Housing Assistance Council  
Human Rights First  
Illinois Business Immigration Coalition  
Illinois Farm Bureau  
Illinois Justicecorps  
Illinois Justice Project  
Illinois Policy Institute  
Institute for Justice Clinic on Entrepreneurship  
Justice is Global  
Kids in Need of Defense  
Latino Policy Forum  
Legal Services Corporation  
LIFT, Inc.  
LiftUp Enterprises  
Louisiana Fair Housing Action Center

Metropolitan Planning Council  
Millennial Action Project  
Muslim Public Affairs Council  
One Country Project  
One Million Degrees  
Partnership for College Completion  
People's Action Institute  
Precision for Agriculture Development  
Rai Govind Shyam Trust  
Resilient Cities Network  
Results for America  
Secure America's Future Energy  
Shriver Center on Poverty Law  
Smithsonian Institution  
Social Finance  
Southern Illinois University School of Medicine  
Population Science and Policy Department  
Strong Future Maryland  
Sweet Water Foundation  
The Education Trust  
The Exoneration Project  
The Federal Defender Program  
The Field Foundation  
UNICEF  
United Way Metro Chicago  
Young Invincibles

### **Civic Technology**

Civic Action Labs  
EdTech Evidence Exchange  
JusticeText  
The LegalTech Fund

### **Elected Officials**

Connecticut Attorney General William Tong  
Former U.S. Senator Mark Kirk (Kirk Global Advisors)  
Governor Andrew M. Cuomo (NY)  
Governor JB Pritzker (IL)  
Governor Tony Evers (WI)  
Manhattan Borough President Gale Brewer (NY)  
Mayor Lori Lightfoot (Chicago, IL)  
Mayor Randall Woodfin (Birmingham, AL)  
Mayor Sylvester Turner (Houston, TX)  
State Representative Kelly Cassidy (IL)  
State Representative Lamont Robinson (IL)  
U.S. Representative Adam Kinzinger (IL)  
U.S. Representative Andy Kim (NJ)  
U.S. Representative Joaquin Castro (TX)  
U.S. Senator Tammy Duckworth (IL)

### **Government Agencies**

Chicago Public Schools Chief Executive Office  
Chicago Public Schools Office of Equity  
Chicago Public Schools Office of Network Support  
City of Chicago Department of Family & Support Services  
City of Chicago's Department of Housing  
City of Chicago Treasurer's Office  
Colombia Ministry of Finance  
Cook County Office of the President Toni Preckwinkle  
Embassy of Mexico to the U.S.  
Illinois Criminal Justice Information Authority  
Illinois Department of Human Services  
Investment Promotion Office of Jing'an Municipal Government (China)  
U.S. Department of Agriculture  
U.S. Department of Defense  
U.S. Department of Energy  
U.S. Department of Health and Human Services - Health Resources & Services Administration  
U.S. Department of Justice  
U.S. Department of Labor  
U.S. Department of State  
U.S. Department of the Interior  
U.S. Department of the Treasury  
U.S. Department of Transportation  
U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission  
White House

### **Intergovernmental Organizations**

Apolitical  
World Bank

### **Media**

ABC News  
Ballotpedia  
Injustice Watch  
The Axe Files  
The Bulwark  
The Cook Political Report  
Washington Monthly

### **Political Consulting and Strategy**

270 Strategies  
BallotReady  
Common Cause  
Echelon Insights  
Emerging Markets Political Risk Analysis  
High Cotton Consulting  
Higher Ground Labs  
IDEIA USA LLC  
Kivvit  
KJD Strategies  
LGBTQ Victory Fund  
Morning Consult  
New Heights Communications  
New Politics  
Precision Strategies  
Red Wine & Blue  
Reform for Illinois  
Seven Letter  
SpeakEasy Political  
Undaunted Ventures  
Unite America

### **Think Tank**

Aspen Institute  
Carnegie Endowment for International Peace  
Center for American Progress\*  
Center for European Policy Analysis  
Chicago Council on Global Affairs  
Chicago Project on Security and Threats  
Civic, LLC  
East-West Center  
Economic Policy Institute  
Hoover Institution  
Hudson Institute  
Indus Action  
New America  
The Soufan Center  
Wilson Center  
World Resources Institute

### **University of Chicago**

Office of Federal Relations/Charles H. Percy  
Summer in Washington Program



In one of the most consequential elections in U.S. history, the IOP's ambitious, nonpartisan get-out-the-vote drive redoubled its efforts to reach all corners of campus.

Student leaders took to a challenge that began in 2018 when the IOP first created UChiVotes to establish the University of Chicago as a national leader in voter registration and turnout following disappointing campuswide showings in prior years.

Following disappointing campus voter turnout, the IOP first launched UChiVoters in 2018, with the goal of establishing the University of Chicago as a national leader in voter registration and turnout. That fall, UChiVotes made a quick but effective push to increase voter turnout in the November midterm elections. Across campus, 41% of all eligible students voted, more than doubling the 19% who voted in the 2014 midterms. Over 2019 and 2020, students worked to dramatically boost turnout even further with the goal of increasing 2016's 50% turnout rate to 65% or better. For the 2020 campaign, student leaders adopted the mantra of "We Can Do Better."

Using Twitter, Instagram, Facebook, Slack, and other digital tools, students and staff recruited, trained and equipped student voting ambassadors for campuswide voter outreach. Their messaging emphasized mail-in voting and in-person voting at one of the early voting sites located near campus.

The UChiVotes team placed particular emphasis on encouraging first-year students quarantined in their dorm rooms to register and vote for the first time. In September, the IOP assembled 2,000-plus welcome bags for students with voter registration information and stamped envelopes inside making it easier for students to register and mail in their ballots.

In a late on-campus push in the run-up to the November elections, voting ambassadors set up information tables across campus for socially-distanced, one-on-one outreach as part of the "Push to the Polls" event to mobilize student voters.

Ultimately, UChicago recorded the top campus participation in the country on TurboVote, the voter registration platform most used by U.S. colleges. Complete campus-by-campus registration and turnout data will be available this fall, and we are optimistic we'll see significant gains!

We owe many thanks to the University's Communication's Office, Campus and Student Life, The College, Housing and Residence Life, the Harris School of Public Policy, the Pritzker School of Medicine, UChicagoGrad, and other campus partners for their help with the 2020 UChiVotes campaign.

"I'm proud that I was able to help a couple dozen students get registered to vote, with many of them being first-time voters... Working with the UChiVotes team to make campus-wide decisions on how to best provide students with the resources that they needed to vote truly made a difference in the high youth voter turnout last year. Overall, getting directly involved in the democratic process with UChiVotes was a great experience, and I can't wait to see what our team will accomplish next."

- Giuseppe Di Cera, AB '24





“It’s easier to start change and start thinking about reaching across the aisle and including others on an individual and local level, rather than looking [only] at broad national politics.”

– Beth Wang, AB ‘24

Since 2018, the IOP’s Bridging the Divide (BTD) public service leadership program has brought urban and rural students together to listen and learn from each other. Each year, our cohort of first- and second-year students from the University of Chicago, Eureka College, and Arrupe College breaks down ideological and geographical barriers by having tough (but productive) conversations that challenge their preconceived ideas of voters across America.

In 2021, we were unable to convene in person, but we were determined to preserve the cohort experience and find new ways to bridge divides across social isolation. Placing the local, state, and federal responses to COVID-19 at the center of our conversations, our students hoped to see how the pandemic affected communities across Illinois and how those effects shaped voters’ decisions last November.

To that end, pollster David Binder coordinated two virtual focus groups – one with Chicago voters and one with voters from central Illinois – wherein students could observe conversations between voters calling in from their own homes. Here, the virtual format

became an asset, as students were able to share their reactions in real time via a BTD Slack workspace. Staff were able to join the conversations too, and many students remarked that those real-time chats with David Axelrod and their peers were their favorite part of the BTD experience.

Across both Winter Quarter weekends, through the focus groups and cohort conversations, students grappled with distrust between conservatives and liberals, effects of media silos, perceptions of President Biden’s American Rescue Plan, and attitudes about race and immigration. They were challenged to listen actively to each other and not to react based on their personal opinions.

BTD concluded with a third weekend in Spring Quarter, in which our students were able to talk with the newly elected Illinois House Speaker Chris Welch, along with elected officials from both parties. These discussions reinforced a central idea of Bridging the Divide: that we all benefit when we listen to one another, especially to those with whom we disagree. In times of crisis, as this last year has shown, these consensus-building skills are even more vital to the health and survival of our democracy.

We are looking forward to being able to host an in-person gathering for this cohort of students when it is safe to do so. Until then, we and our students continue to reflect on how we might work to de-escalate the tension and polarization we see in our country.



# CIVIC DINNERS

As the Civic Engagement team approached planning for a primarily virtual academic year, we grappled with how we would help students connect with each other during a polarized political environment and a tense election cycle. Our goal was to help students dig into the tough and necessary conversations around the challenges facing our country in a way that helps our community members learn from each other. Normally, we would see these kinds of conversations take place in our living room, behind our front desk, and around the coffee area on the third floor.

To address this need, we partnered with Civic Dinners, a national nonprofit organization dedicated to creating positive social change through conversations. In all, we hosted 38 dinners and saw 250 students participate in these virtual, small group conversations while eating “together” and discussing voting rights, climate change, political polarization, and how to reckon with racial injustice.

“I thought our discussion about voting was both informative and meaningful, and I really enjoyed the chance to connect with people on a deeper level than is usually possible in virtual settings.”

– Survey Respondent

Civic Dinners has primarily worked with nonprofits, municipal governments, and corporate stakeholders. The IOP was proud to become its first university partner. Partnering with them allowed us to build connections in a way that reflected the values of the Institute of Politics.

“You can make unimaginable agreements just through respectful conversation. It is such a powerful tool to look at the world through each other’s perspective.”

– Survey Respondent

Through Civic Dinners, students were able to meet new people, share their stories, and build connections on- and off-campus during an eventful year when the pandemic, a presidential election, and issues around social justice and equity were demanding the nation’s attention.

Our students reported that they felt heard, and they appreciated the opportunity to express opinions, share concerns, and brainstorm opportunities to work toward more inclusive communities. They also expressed an overwhelming interest in further educating themselves and others about current political divides, as well as being more open-minded to different perspectives. We are hopeful we can continue our partnership with Civic Dinners next year and beyond.

“Practicing radical compassion and being open to different viewpoints is what can move America forward.”

– Survey Respondent

## 2021 Winter Policy Summit

In February 2021 the IOP partnered with the American Enterprise Institute's (AEI) Academic Programs for a two-day virtual policy summit. The goal of the conference was to explore some of the looming policy challenges facing America and the Biden administration – including polarization, America's role in the world, and economic inequality. More than 200 students from universities across the country attended.



The summit opened with a panel titled Healing our Republic: Partisanship & Polarization in America, featuring IOP Pritzker Fellows former Senator Heidi Heitkamp, (D-ND) and former U.S Representative Will Hurd, (R-TX). Day two featured three keynote conversations and four breakout sessions:

### International Relations in the Biden Era and Beyond

The panel explored the movement from a unipolar to a multipolar world and other key differences in the world order during the Obama, Trump, and now Biden Administrations.

John Mearsheimer, University of Chicago; Kori Schake, American Enterprise Institute; Moderator: Hal Brands, American Enterprise Institute

### Expanding Economic Opportunity: Inequality, Labor, and Wages

Panelists discussed unemployment throughout the Covid-19 pandemic, the role of stimulus payments, and longer-term economic issues that the USA will be facing as a result of current actions.

Damon Jones, University of Chicago; Aparna Mathur, Council of Economic Advisers; Ameya Pawar, former IOP Pritzker Fellow; Scott Winship, American Enterprise Institute; Moderator: Annie Lowrey, *The Atlantic*.

### Rebuilding a Common Civic Culture

This conversation explored the following questions: What are the unique values of American democracy? What does unity really look like? How can we advance differing ideas of the good, together?

Featuring Melody Barnes, University of Virginia; Yuval Levin, American Enterprise Institute; Moderator: James Bennet, former IOP Pritzker Fellow & former *New York Times* Opinion Editor

### Big Tech and Democracy in America

James Pethokoukis, American Enterprise Institute; Kara Swisher, IOP Pritzker Fellow & Editor-At-Large at *New York Magazine*

### COVID-19's Impact on Low-income Citizens

Bruce Meyer, University of Chicago; Angela Rachidi, American Enterprise Institute

### US-Russia Strategic Competition

Leon Aron, American Enterprise Institute

### The Future of the Left & Right

Tim Alberta, IOP Pritzker Fellow & Chief Political Correspondent for *POLITICO*; Ramesh Ponnuru, American Enterprise Institute

“Partnering with AEI speaks volumes to the IOP’s commitment to a diversity of perspectives and free expression, which I have always known to be the case... Despite pandemic-related restrictions, I am grateful to the IOP for making my final year at UChicago all the more memorable so far.”

– Rodrigo Estrada, AB ‘21





# MARGIN of ERROR

## LESSONS FROM 2020 POLLING

In February 2021 IOP and The Cook Political Report co-produced the Margin of Error: Lessons from 2020 Polling virtual conference for reporters and pollsters covering U.S. elections. The idea developed from conversations between David Axelrod and David Wasserman on the efficacy of polling after two turbulent election cycles. Both the IOP and Cook saw a dearth of deep exploration on what went wrong and right in polling, as well as how to help better equip journalists and students to analyze polls.

The conference was divided into two days and featured six panel discussions. We welcomed over 800 attendees, with backgrounds ranging from government employees to campaign operatives to reporters to students. These sessions have garnered over 2,000 views on YouTube. Additionally, nearly 10 paid summer internships were secured for students with speakers' and attendees' organizations.

### What Did Polls Get Right & Wrong in 2020?

Panelists explored the following questions: Were the polls more accurate than expected this cycle? Why was there a foregone conclusion that they would be "wrong again?" In retrospect, did campaign methodology accurately capture how the voting public felt about the candidates, the economy, the pandemic, and lockdowns?

John Anzalone, ALG Research; Tony Fabrizio, Fabrizio, Lee, & Associates; and Amy Walter, *Cook Political Report* (moderator)

### Predictive or Just Addictive? Public Polling at a Crossroads

The goal of this conversation was to explore the relationship between the media and polling and whether "horse race" journalism is obscuring our ability to understand voters' concerns.

Dan Balz, *The Washington Post*; David Chalian, CNN; Claudia Deane, Pew Research Center; Bill McInturff, Public Opinion Strategies; and David Axelrod, UChicago Institute of Politics (moderator)

### Methodology and the Media: Building a Better Data-Informed Public

Cornell Belcher, brilliant corners; Nate Cohn, *The New York Times*; Ashley Kirzinger, Kaiser Family Foundation; David Shor, OpenLabs; David Wasserman, *Cook Political Report* (moderator)

### Down-Ballot Polling: Lessons for the Next Cycle and Beyond

Panelists in the sessions explored the following questions: Did private polling for candidates and parties detect underlying conditions any better than public polling? Is there a danger of mid-term overcorrection? And how will the business model for campaign polling change, if at all, in future cycles?

Brenda Gianiny, Axis Research; Brian Stryker, ALG Research; Jessica Taylor, *Cook Political Report* (moderator)

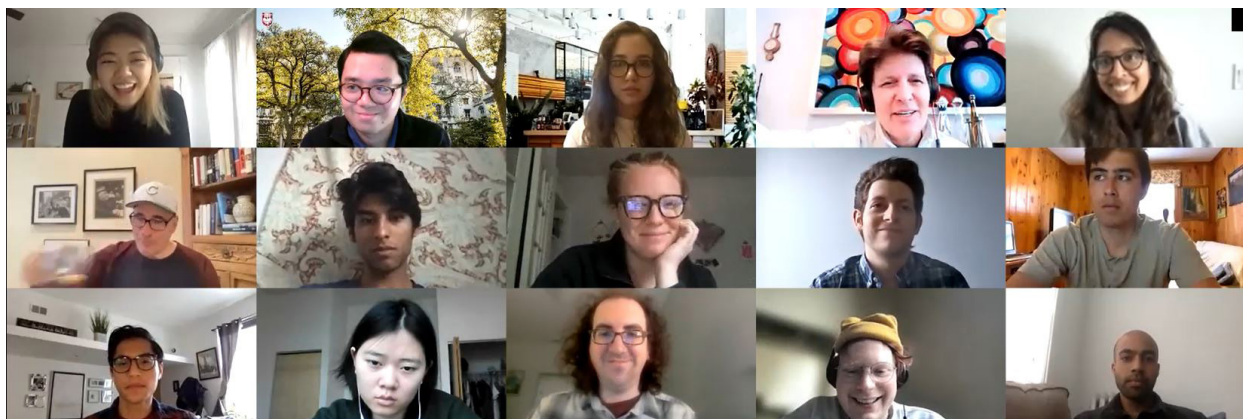
### Race, Demographics, and the z Future Electorate

This session looked at voting blocs of color including Hispanic/Latino, African-American, and AAPI communities. Panelists explored how accurately existing polling models capture the concerns and values of minority demographic groups.

Fernand Amandi, Bendixen & Amandi International; Matt Barreto, LD Insights; Cathy Cohen, The University of Chicago; Terrance Woodbury, HIT Strategies; Juana Summers, NPR (moderator)

### Conversation with J. Ann Selzer

J. Ann Selzer, Selzer & Company and Charlie Cook, *Cook Political Report* (moderator)



IOP Pritzker Fellow and New York Times opinion writer Kara Swisher, (top row second from right) kicks off the IOP's Ideathon "hackathon" event Spring 2021

## Ideathon

Ideathon was a student-led event hosted by TechTeam in April 2021. Ideathon aimed to bring students together to address the most pressing issues at the intersection of technology and society. Over two days, they aimed to generate a broad range of tech solutions, such as new software, a startup idea, a social enterprise, or even a government policy. Students formed teams and were encouraged to use the multi-day event to think outside of the box and conceptualize new ideas.

Themes for civic tech solutions included Technology & Democracy, Algorithmic Bias, Environmental Sustainability, Digital Communities, Data Privacy, and Education and Accessibility. Before the event, students were encouraged to deepen their reading on each theme through a curated reading list.

IOP Pritzker Fellow Kara Swisher, editor-at-large at New York Magazine and host of the "Sway" and "Pivot" podcasts, provided a keynote to kickstart the program. Ideathon concluded with a fireside chat with IOP alum Devshi Mehotra, AB '19, the cofounder of JusticeText, a software platform seeking to help public defenders perform their job more efficiently.

Throughout the weekend, IOP alumni and partners in civic tech hosted mentoring sessions to provide students with feedback. Mentors included Sofia Gross, AB '17 head of Policy Partnerships and Social Impact at Snapchat; Alex Niemczewski, AB '09 CEO and Co-founder of BallotReady; and Nico Marchio, Lead Data Scientist at Mansueto Institute for Urban Innovation.

In all, 35 students participated and five pitches were submitted to a committee of judges. Three pitches were singled out for recognition:

- Harris Tech (Nick Gondek, Adam Leader-Smith, and Marc Richardson) proposed Data for the People. This project focused on closing the information gap between researchers and tech platforms.
- Team Depo (Julian Savelski & Andrew Zeller) envisioned creating a Clubhouse-inspired app to facilitate conversations about politics with people on opposing sides of a political issue.
- Frontpage (Isabella Declue & Ibrahim Mohamed) imagined creating a web and mobile app designed to promote the meaningful exchange of ideas rather than exacerbating echo chambers.

## Jukebox Ballot: The Patriotism Issue

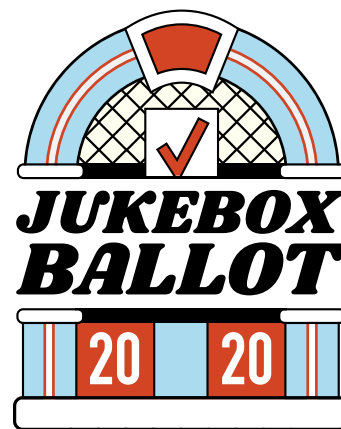
In winter of 2019-20 before COVID-19, we asked UChicago students to tell us about songs that shaped their civic outlook or soundtracked significant political moments in their lives. We published the initial 23 pieces (22 students plus David Axelrod) as the Jukebox Ballot – and we knew almost immediately we wanted to do more.

Inspired by a conversation from our May 2020 Board of Advisors meeting, we invited our community to reflect on songs they consider patriotic, whatever that word might mean to them. For many people, patriotism took on a different meaning in 2020 than it had before – not only because of the pandemic, but also because of the summer of protests and the unprecedented election cycle. Our students were no exception.

In the end, we published 12 original essays from UChicago students reflecting on music through which they explored what it means to love a country. Some chose to reflect on a song that captured the essence of their home country. Others described songs that have expressed or challenged their definition of patriotism. Bruce Springsteen, of course, made an appearance.

Despite the range of genres and perspectives, a common theme emerged: patriotism is a process. Not a declaration that we have already arrived, but a dedication to pursuing the ideals we claim to hold. A love and a hope that sustains us when that work is difficult or overwhelming.

By reading through our students' reflections, we hope you will find your own preconceptions about patriotism challenged. You might find a few new favorite songs along the way.

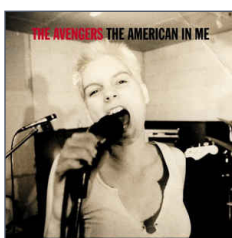


"This is patriotism. Not a blind, irrational loyalty, but an unconditional desire to fight for your aspired community. It requires work, and it requires transformation."

– Pascual Goldin (AB '24), on Moral Distraída's "Promesas"

"America was never something of which I could simply take myself off. And that's because I've learnt how badly the meaning of that name requires change, and that 'America' will never change unless we take its reconstruction as worthy of our efforts."

– Mason Geller (AB '24), on LCD Soundsystem's "New York, I Love You But You're Bringing Me Down"



"Patriotism is not always about how we can express our love of nation through selfless action, it's also about questioning why we are engaging in this selflessness.... If the American populace loses its skepticism, their needs become buried and everyone but those in power gets hurt in the process."

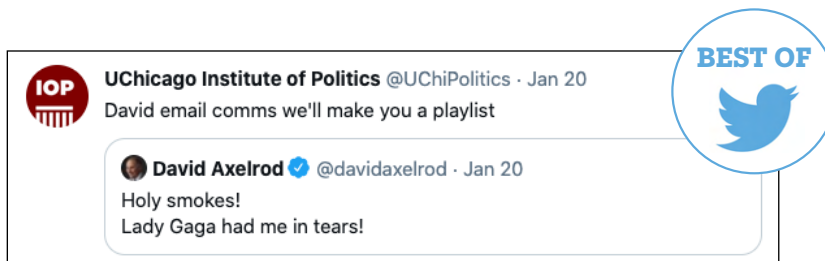
– Jaylen Briece Moulton (AB '22), on The Avengers' "The American in Me"



# COMMUNICATIONS

*Helping to tell the story of the IOP to campus, Chicago, and beyond*

The beauty of working in communications at the Institute of Politics is that the IOP's story largely tells itself through the great work done by its four program areas.



In one day, a student can stop by the IOP house to help plan a voter registration drive, sit with a former U.S. Senator for a one-on-one conversation, meet with staff for career advice, and then attend an evening event with a Nobel laureate.

The story of the IOP is in the experiences and opportunities we provide to our students.

But how do we tell that story to an incoming first-year student quarantined in their dorm room? And once we tell that story, how can we convince that student to sit through another Zoom webinar?

The COVID-19 pandemic meant everyone had to adjust. The Speaker Series and Pritzker Fellows programs cast a wider net, hosting guests and Fellows from far-off places that otherwise might not have come to campus. The Career Development program offered workshops where current students could gain insight from former students already navigating the workplace. And the Civic Engagement program found new ways to bring students together, most notably through Civic Dinners where students held virtual conversations on the issues of the day over a meal.

The communications team played a complementary role. We cleaned up and streamlined our current website and started the process of building a new site completely from scratch; we revamped our weekly newsletter and overhauled our social media presence.

We also leaned on our students – our greatest resource. Throughout the year, they shared their stories about their experiences engaging with the IOP, and we broadcast those stories to the larger campus community. We enlisted them to interview our Pritzker Fellows on social media, which opened us up to new audiences.

Throughout the year, we used the tools available to us to tell and re-tell the IOP story: whether in person or remote, the IOP is a place of ideas, a place for problem solvers and critical thinkers, and a place where you can always find community.

BY THE NUMBERS

**3518**  
**INSTAGRAM**  
**FOLLOWERS** (UP 25%)

**14.3k**  
**TWITTER**  
**FOLLOWERS** (UP 13%)

**130+**  
**EMAIL CAMPAIGNS**

# ALUMNI

*Continuing the mission of the IOP by nurturing a community of civically engaged alumni*

The goal of the Alumni Engagement Program is to stay connected with UChicago alumni – some of whom pre-date the IOP – who have an interest in politics and public service. Through those connections, we can build a network of people our current students can learn from, while also creating a community where alumni engage with one another and IOP staff.

## OUR STORY

This year has certainly been challenging, which is why we are grateful for our diverse, and dynamic community of alumni who embody the IOP's mission. We say the best measure of our success is in the meaningful opportunities our graduates go on to seize in public life. We couldn't be more proud of the countless paths they have chosen to serve their communities.

One of the highlights which we are most proud of this year is our academic-year mentorship program, which gives nearly 40 graduating fourth-years and graduate students opportunities to connect with an alumni mentor and establish a supportive relationship as they begin job hunting. We hope these connections will be a meaningful source of support for students as they enter a turbulent job market. We're so grateful to the alums who took this opportunity to pay it forward to current UChicago students!

Our alums also stay engaged through our Virtual Alumni Career Panels. These panels help students navigate different career pathways and seek advice from alums who are out there doing the work! Some alums who have participated in this year's panels are engaging with the university for the first time since graduating. More than 70 individual students have taken advantage of panels covering topics including Applying for Jobs during COVID-19; Running for Office; Careers in Civic Tech; Careers in Journalism, and Careers in Climate and Environmental Advocacy.

Our Alumni Association's Book Club has also been a popular draw. Among the titles featured this year have been *Caste* by Isabel Wilkerson and *A Promised Land* by former President Barack Obama. During the discussion of President Obama's memoir, the book club was joined by Meredith Bohen (AB '15), who drew from her experience as Research Director for the Office of Barack and Michelle Obama to share her insight on researching and fact-checking the book.



**Yangyang Cheng** @yangyang\_cheng · Jan 19

Seven and a half years ago then-VP Biden visited @UChiPolitics and asked each of us when we'd graduate. I said I was doing a PhD in physics and had no idea "please ask my advisor."

Two years after, advisor: "Tell Joe Biden you've graduated!" 🎓

BEST OF



## Alumni Spotlights



### **Megha Bhattacharya, AB '19**

Megha is a Communications Assistant for the Office of the Second Gentleman in the White House. Since graduating, Megha has worked on the Elizabeth Warren Campaign, the Democratic National Convention, the Biden-Harris Campaign, and most recently, the Jon Ossoff for Senate Campaign.



### **Kennedy Breanne Green, BA '18, MA '18**

Kennedy is a project manager at the American Bar Association Judicial Division. Since graduation, Kennedy has managed the Chicago Volunteer Program of the Young Center for Immigrant Children's Rights, where she assigned advocates to work one-on-one with federally detained immigrant children across Illinois and the United States. Currently, Kennedy manages a criminal justice reform project that teaches judges to implement treatment courts for drug offenders and evidence-based sentencing practices that reduce criminal recidivism.



### **Yangyang Cheng, Ph.D. '15**

Yangyang is a postdoctoral fellow at Yale Law School's Paul Tsai China Center and a frequent columnist on Chinese politics and U.S.-China relations. Before joining Yale, she worked on the Large Hadron Collider (LHC) and was a postdoctoral research associate at Cornell University and an LHC Physics Center Distinguished Researcher at Fermi National Accelerator Laboratory. Her essays have appeared in *The New York Times*, *The Guardian*, *Los Angeles Review of Books*, *Foreign Policy*, and many other publications. At Yale, her research focuses on the ethics and governance of science in China and their global implications.



### **Hannah Goss, AB '20, MA '20**

After graduation, Hannah moved to Phoenix to serve as the Communications Director on the competitive AZ-06 Congressional race. She is currently the Rapid Response Director for the Arizona Democratic Party, where she drives messaging on President Biden's agenda and the importance of his administration's work in the state.



### **Mara Heneghan, AB '16, MA '22**

Mara is Director of Policy in the Office of Cook County Board President Toni Preckwinkle, where she manages the implementation of Cook County's strategic policy goals and initiatives. In addition to these long-term priorities, Mara is supporting programs in response to the coronavirus pandemic including the launch of the County's first resident cash assistance program and a program to provide legal aid and resources to residents at risk of eviction, foreclosure, or consumer debt cases.



### **Erin Simpson, AB '15**

Erin is the Associate Director of Technology Policy at the Center for American Progress. Since graduating, she has advocated for improved internet platform regulation in the US, UK, and EU. Erin's work synthesizes a path forward on the economic, democratic, and consumer protection issues faced by Americans online.

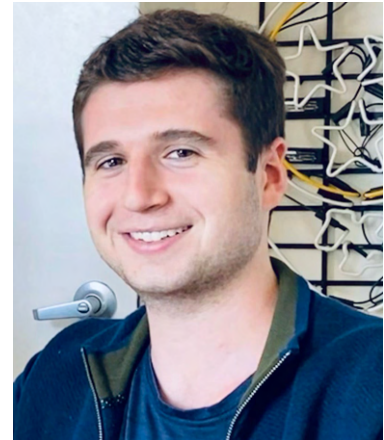


### **Baxter Stein, AB '18**

Baxter is a Senior Product Analyst at FiscalNote, a DC-based tech company that provides policy-related data, news, and workflow tools to people and organizations around the world. He has combined his background in the mechanics of policy-making with skills in data analytics and strategy to help organizations manage government-related and issues areas.



## Alumni Testimonials



### Adam Biesman, AB '18

When I started at the IOP, I took the time to make it my own experience. As a first-year, I started by working on the Chicago Style student committee, where we brought together influencers and cultural and political leaders in Chicago. From there, I joined the Student Advisory Board, where I served as Events Chair during my second year and then Fellows Chair during third year. I enjoyed when I was able to introduce speakers at Speaker Series events, including Gov. Jon Huntsman Jr. and Gov. Gary Johnson. The best student events I could remember were election watch parties at the IOP living room. It was a very fun and warm environment to be able to just chat with people.

On the SAB, it was a great experience to work with other members of the board, who have all kinds of diverse backgrounds and thoughts. We often talked about how the IOP could continue to be involved on campus – what events were missing, how to operate in a free speech environment, what types of stances we took as a group and as individuals, etc. It was powerful to get a chance to sit down and hear all different thoughts. We disagreed on a lot of things, but I think it really made us a strong group and able to voice our concerns, too. I think that's what makes the IOP special. It's not just about trying to deliver IOP events, but really thinking beyond just the layer of service and reflecting on the mission of IOP.

In the summer of 2015, I joined the Iowa Project, which was a transformative experience for me. During that time, I worked on the Jeb Bush campaign. One of my best friends and to this day is someone who was on the Hillary team, and we bonded over the fact that while we had some policy differences, we still respected where the other was coming from. Now I am the head of the data team on the IOP Alumni Committee. This year, we worked on a survey to collect data to understand where people are and what was the best way to engage, making sure that we maintain a strong alumni database. As far as we've seen, there have been some pretty good return rates. I think people really do care about trying to stay in touch.

While I am not working in politics or public service now, I think it's important to always be politically engaged. I read up on a lot of issues because I think that it's my duty as a citizen. I wouldn't rule out a return to politics, whether in the form of volunteer experience, or even running for office someday. Although that's not in the near future, I do think that the IOP has influenced my desire to be a part of my communities and be able to contribute. The work I've done at the IOP makes it easier for me to work with people who think differently, and it allows me to empathize and become a better person.



## Shaliya Dehipawala, AB '20

I have been interested in public service since before coming to Booth. After graduating from college, I served in the Army as a Field Artillery Officer for four years, and I decided that I wanted to leave the military so that I could try to help bring better technology to folks who serve. During my time at UChicago, I was one of the grad co-chairs on the Student Advisory Board and worked with the communications team. I also brought UChiVotes to Booth, where I helped my classmates to get registered to vote. I spent most of my career working for the government in the executive branch, and I think public service is amazing. The fact that there is this place on campus that I can encourage folks to get involved really got me excited.

At the SAB, we planned events and thought about ways for those events to interest graduate students. While there were fewer graduate students who came to the IOP than undergraduates, we tried to keep up a virtuous cycle where we encouraged our friends to get involved. We also presented the IOP as an opportunity to do some extracurricular activities for those students.

UChiVotes is a straightforward way to make someone else's life a little bit easier, because you bring everything they need to register to vote, and it's in a place that they could access.

Once, Rep. Will Hurd spoke at an IOP event – he is one of my favorite politicians – and I ended up working for him after I graduated. That was during a seven-month free time between my graduation and my full-time job, so I reached out to folks at the IOP and let them know that I wanted to pursue a job in D.C. during that time. I had already known a lot of people there, and they knew my interest in national security and technology, so they connected me with other people, and I ended up working for Rep. Hurd, whom I believed was a leading figure in that field. I started off as an intern and moved on to be a technology advisor, where I worked on AI, cybersecurity, and federal IT issues. One major legislation we worked on was H.Res.1250, the principles for a national AI strategy, and it was passed unanimously in the House.

I think it's amazing that IOP brings people who are truly the experts in their field, in a way that the students get to deeply dive into how these experts actually do their job, especially for students who are not from a background with any exposure to people in the government.



## Leslie Jones-Dove, AB '19

The idea of JusticeText, our new civic tech startup, started when my classmate Devshi Mehrotra and I took a class at UChicago about entrepreneurship and technology. We wanted to do something that could impact our immediate surrounding community, and we found the public defenders crisis. Public defenders have too many clients to handle, meaning people spend more time in jail and their outcomes are often worse since their attorneys don't have enough time.

We thought that we could build software to help organize video evidence and interviews for the Cook County Public Defender's Office. As we finished our product, Cook County was pretty receptive. We reached out to Purvi Patel at the IOP, and then we pitched to David Axelrod, who supported us with a small grant. That grant covered some early costs for the software, helping us get off the ground. The process was also transparent and not difficult on our end. It's just a matter of reaching out and asking.

As we spoke to more public defenders, it was clear that there was a greater need that wasn't being met, and we could fulfill that need with the software. It made us think that we could take this further, so we convinced some investors and made a few key hires. We are still growing, but in the past year, we were able to increase our scale and make the product as best as it can be for our users.

As a result of their work Leslie and fellow IOP alum, Devshi Mehrotra were named to the *Forbes* 30 Under 30 for Social Impact.

## Chase Woods, AB '17

I did a little bit of everything at the IOP. All of those things were very helpful for shaping my thinking about what was going on in Chicago, and what was going on in the immediate political landscape. But I think what I've grown to appreciate most, now being a few years removed, is that a lot of those seemingly disparate experiences really laid a foundation and helped shape my thinking for a lot of things that are going on right now. I draw upon them in my thinking about criminal justice reform and police reform. And I draw upon them a lot now that I'm in law school ... The IOP helps me have a foundation for a lot of the things that I'm doing now and helped shape and frame my thinking in really powerful ways.







## Angela Seeger, AB '20

Before college, I wasn't interested in politics at all. And then as the 2016 presidential election was ramping up, I started school at UChicago. When I was visiting the school, David Axelrod had an event with Ben Rhodes from the Obama Administration. I had recently watched a documentary with Ben Rhodes in it about American forces in Iraq and Afghanistan, and now he's right in front of me talking about foreign policy and speechwriting and his time in the White House. It was incredible.

After that, I was sort of hooked on the IOP and I knew I wanted to get involved because it was great to see politics at the national level and the state level become a lot closer to me. When I came to campus, I gravitated toward the IOP because I could learn from the incredible guests that come through the doors. I saw Gary Johnson. I saw John Brennan. I saw Jennifer Granholm and learning from those people exposed me to different ways to get involved in politics. You don't have to be a staffer, you don't have to run for office, you can work in nonprofits – you can work in a think tank, and you can be an organizer, and all of these different career choices I had no idea about.

Through the IOP, I was a volunteer leader and we did citizenship workshops for new immigrants from Latin America and we would help them apply for citizenship. We would take groups of students to the Institute of Latino Progress in Pilsen and quiz them on the questions that they would be asked, and we would help translate immigration documents for them. It was a very rewarding experience. I also served as an Events Ambassador, helping run events with Jake and Christine. Then in my fourth year, I was co-chair of the SAB and participated in UChiVotes.

All the things the IOP exposed me to are really the reasons why I decided when I graduated to go into organizing. Now I work for an elected official. Right now, I'm serving as a legislative budget and communications associate for Margaret Chin of the New York City Council. Before that, I was a field organizer for the Amy McGrath Senate campaign in rural Kentucky.

I completely credit the IOP with getting me into public service. I think that if I'd gone to another university, I might not have been on this same path.

# LEADERSHIP

## Staff

### David Axelrod, AB '76

Institute Director

David Axelrod is a preeminent American political strategist and commentator and the former chief strategist and senior advisor to President Barack Obama. Axelrod currently serves as the founding director of the University of Chicago's non-partisan Institute of Politics and as a senior political commentator for CNN. He is the host of "The Axe Files," a top-rated podcast featuring in-depth conversations with public figures across the political spectrum. A former political writer for the Chicago Tribune, Axelrod produced media strategy and advertising for 150 campaigns across the U.S., culminating in President Obama's historic elections. Axelrod is also the author of *The New York Times* best-selling memoir, *Believer: My Forty Years in Politics*.

### Gretchen Crosby Sims

Executive Director

Gretchen Crosby Sims has served in a variety of executive and strategy roles in the policy, politics, philanthropy, nonprofit, academic, and impact investing sectors. Most recently, she was a Director at London-based Social Finance UK, where she led policy efforts and the firm's education practice. Until 2014, Gretchen was chief program executive at The Joyce Foundation, a private foundation in Chicago with assets of \$900 million and \$40 million in annual grants. In that role, she oversaw seven programs: education, environment, employment, gun violence prevention, democracy, culture, and special opportunities. Gretchen has also worked at the Council on Foreign Relations, CNN, Harvard's Kennedy School of Government, and as a policy adviser to presidential candidate Bill Bradley. She holds Ph.D. and MA degrees in political science from Stanford University and a BA in government from Harvard University.

### Johnny Acevedo

Executive Assistant

Johnny previously worked as the Media Relations Representative and Spanish interpreter for the Chicago Cubs. Before moving to Chicago, Johnny served as a paralegal for Kids In Need of Defense, an immigration non-profit that works to secure pro-bono legal representation for unaccompanied minors from the Northern Triangle. After earning his B.A. in Communications (Journalism) and Spanish from Stephen F. Austin State University, Johnny joined Bill White's gubernatorial campaign in Texas in 2010 as the Spanish Media and Communications Director. Johnny is originally from Maracaibo, Venezuela.

### Koran Addo

Director, Communications

Koran oversees all of the IOP's communication strategies (media relations, social and digital, brand management, and outreach/marketing) and plays a key role in leading special pan-IOP projects. Prior to joining the IOP, Koran served as Director of Communications for St. Louis Mayor Lyda Krewson and as a reporter for the *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, covering City Hall and higher education. Before his time in St. Louis, he worked for six years at the *Capital City Press* in Baton Rouge, Louisiana, covering public and private colleges and universities and the Louisiana Legislature. Koran holds a Masters in Journalism from Indiana University Bloomington and a Bachelors in Sociology from the University of Minnesota-Twin Cities.

### Jake Huff

Content and Digital Communications Specialist

Jake Huff previously spent three years working with the Speaker Series to develop the overall content and focus of IOP events, conducting research for potential programs and booking a variety of guests. Around the IOP, he has expanded opportunities for student engagement through the Jukebox Ballot magazine, the IOP Book Club, and other original projects. Before finding his way to UChicago, Jake graduated with a B.A. in English from Indiana University. When he's not in Hyde Park, you can find him writing and performing comedy around the city.

**Christine Hurley**

Director, Production and Special Events

Christine has held several positions at the IOP, including Associate Producer and Director of the Speaker Series where she oversaw the content development and logistics execution for the nearly 100 Speaker Series events each year. Now Christine works as Director of Production and Special Events. Prior to joining the Institute, Christine was Associate Producer for “Chicago Tonight,” a nightly news magazine on Chicago’s PBS. During her time on the show, she was nominated for three Midwest Emmy Awards. Christine grew up in the southwest suburbs of Chicago and received her B.A. from Ohio Wesleyan University and M.A. from DePaul University.

**Ashlee Jordan**

Civic Engagement Program Coordinator

Ashlee Jordan previously worked as a Program Assistant at Northwestern University. In her spare time, she volunteers as a judge for Chicago Debates, mentoring and advising Chicagoland students on the fundamentals of policy debates and speech. She is also an instructor for The Girls in Politics Initiative, a Model UN-style program for girls ages 8-12 years old. Ashlee is passionate about mass incarceration, as well as women’s and worker’s rights. She holds a B.A. in Communications and Political Science from the University of Illinois at Chicago.

**Ashley Jorn**

Associate Director, Fellows Program

Ashley has worked in a variety of roles at the IOP, including as the Program Coordinator, working on logistics for the Fellows and Speaker Series teams. She now serves as the Assistant Director of the Fellows Program. In this role, Ashley manages all logistics for the program. She graduated from DePaul University with a B.A. in history. Prior to joining the IOP, Ashley worked in education as a teacher, tutor and coach.

**Jalen Larry**

Multimedia Specialist

Jalen is a former graduate of the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, he graduated with a B.A. in English and a minor in Social Work. As a Multimedia Specialist, Jalen has taken on a wide variety of roles in his career, from NFL Films, Gatorade Media Lab, and Nordstrom, while specializing in photography, videography, and graphic design. A true Chicagoan, Jalen takes pride in telling the untold stories of Chicago through photo and video.

**Katrina Mertens**

Director, Operations & Budget

As Director of Operations and Budget, Katrina manages the IOP’s overall budget, personnel matters, and facilities operations under the guidance of the IOP’s Director and Executive Director. Prior to joining the Institute, Katrina worked at the Illinois State Board of Education while completing an M.A. in counseling from Roosevelt University. After earning a B.S. in Criminal Justice and a certificate in Urban Studies from the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee in 2005, Katrina worked in the narcotics unit of the Baltimore City State’s Attorney’s Office before moving to Chicago in 2008 to pursue graduate studies.

**Melissa Navas**

Director, Career Development

Melissa previously worked as deputy communications director for Multnomah County, Oregon’s most populous county. Before that, Melissa served as press secretary to current Oregon Governor Kate Brown and her predecessor John Kitzhaber. Melissa began her career as a journalist at The Oregonian writing about K-12 education and health. While at the newspaper, she investigated Oregon teachers’ sexual misconduct of students and the state’s backlog of educator discipline cases, which led to changes in state law. She has written for *The Arizona Republic*, *San Jose Mercury News*, *The Wenatchee World*, and *Contra Costa Times*. Melissa earned her Master of Public Policy from the University of Chicago Harris School of Public Policy and B.A. in Journalism from the University of Nevada-Reno. She is a proud graduate of Contra Costa College where her love of journalism began. While a UChicago student, Melissa served as Graduate Chair of the IOP Student Advisory Board, an IOP Fellows Ambassador, and UChiVotes leader.



**Purvi Patel**

Director, Civic and Campus Engagement

Purvi advises the IOP's Civic Engagement student leadership, builds relationships with community partners, and works on civic engagement program development and strategy. Previously, Purvi worked as an administrator in diversity and student life at Washington University in St. Louis, Loyola University Maryland, and Oberlin College. Purvi is from Dallas, Texas and graduated with a B.A. in History from Loyola University Chicago, and a M.A. in College Student Personnel from Bowling Green State University.

**Alicia Sams**

Director, Pritzker Fellows Program

Alicia has managed the Pritzker Fellows program since spring quarter 2017, and prior to that was Speaker Series director. Alicia Sams comes to the IOP with over 20 years of experience producing and directing award-winning documentaries and feature films for television and theatrical release. She has worked on films covering politics and public affairs, the arts, and cultural history for distributors including HBO, Amazon, IFC, PBS, AMC, Sony Pictures Classics, Sundance Channel, Kino-Lorber, and BBC. From 2006 to 2008, she chronicled the presidential campaign of then-Senator Barack Obama for HBO, a journey depicted in the Emmy Award-winning film "By the People: The Election of Barack Obama." A frequent panelist and lecturer at festivals, colleges and universities around the country, Alicia is a native of Washington, D.C. and holds a BA in English from Harvard University.

**Allyson Siegal**

Chief of Staff

Allyson works as the Chief of Staff to IOP Director David Axelrod. Prior to that, she was David Axelrod's Executive Assistant. As Chief of Staff, Allyson acts as an advisor to the Director and works closely with IOP leadership to help oversee and implement the Institute's various programming initiatives. She also co-produces "The Axe Files" and "Hacks on Tap" podcasts and manages all media and speaking requests for David Axelrod. Prior to joining the IOP, Allyson worked on Chicago Mayor Rahm Emanuel's reelection campaign. Allyson is a Chicago native and graduated from Colorado College with a BA in International Political Economy.

**Emily Stanitz**

Director, Speaker Series & Executive Producer of 'The Axe Files' and 'Hacks on Tap'

Emily Stanitz oversees the strategic direction and quarterly planning for 100+ Speaker Series events each year, as well as the production of David Axelrod's podcasts, "The Axe Files" and "Hacks on Tap." Prior to joining the Institute, Emily worked at ABC News as Coordinating Producer of Special Events, booking and producing breaking news Special Reports for the network, including presidential campaign debates, election night 2016 and 2018, the inauguration of President Trump, and the 2016 Emmy Award-winning breaking news coverage of the Orlando nightclub shooting. She has also worked as a producer for Good Morning America, Bloomberg Television, and Koppel on Discovery on the Discovery Channel. Emily was Ted Koppel's assistant for his last 3 years as anchor of Nightline at ABC. She holds a B.S. in Business Administration from Georgetown University.

## Student Advisory Board

The Student Advisory Board (SAB) provides a critical student voice in shaping the direction and operation of IOP programming. Its purpose is threefold:

- Advise IOP staff on all facets of IOP programming, providing a valuable voice in the development of new ideas and programs
- Organize and run student social events, from election watch parties to end-of-year celebrations
- Serve as the liaisons to the UChicago community engaging with a broad network of student groups and community stakeholders

In the midst of an exceedingly difficult year upended by the COVID-19 pandemic, we are hopeful that we have made strides to advance the IOP's mission. The early months of the pandemic corresponded with the eve of our terms as board members. Further, the Movement for Black Lives returned to the forefront following the police killing of George Floyd and other horrific tragedies, and we became ever more aware of our responsibility to help facilitate change where we can.

With these issues in mind, this year's SAB committed early on to three goals for the 2020-21 academic year:

- Building community
- Promoting racial equity
- Advancing stewardship

Throughout the year, we worked with IOP staff and our peers in the UChicago student body to move these goals forward. At the end of the year, as we reflect on our work, we believe that we have much to be proud of.

We were intentional in engaging with students – both incoming and current – in creative ways from office hours to workshops and election and debate watch parties. We worked to build bridges and make connections throughout campus with affinity groups, community organizations, and high schoolers.

We strategized and successfully executed a reading group centered on anti-racism, with the goal of facilitating conversations around each student's personal journey with race and prejudice. We collaborated with the W+ cohort to host a "Remembering RBG" event, which centered on education, empowerment, and connecting students with local service organizations through a virtual fair.

We maintained constant lines of communication with IOP staff on the issues affecting the student body, developing long-form memorandums on these issues to share with both staff and the different Pritzker Fellows cohorts. And we curated an "SAB Playbook" with our reflections to pass on to iterations of the board to come.

Lastly, we made it through this season together – which is not something that everyone can say. We are abundantly thankful for this, and we are ever thankful for the opportunity to serve the Institute of Politics.

“This year provided us with an opportunity to think outside the box and create sub-committees around issue areas we felt passionate about. The work that we did here – discussing political polarization, planning and implementing an anti-racist reading group, increasing the accessibility of IOP events, and centering the work of disability rights advocates – helped us take novel approaches to the IOP’s goal of empowering students to pursue careers in politics and public service. I am grateful to have had the chance to work, learn, and grow alongside my fellow board members during this challenging time....I am proud of what we accomplished.”

– Estrella Hernandez, AB’23

## 2020-21 Student Advisory Board Members



**Lucy Ritzmann, AB '21**  
Senior Chair



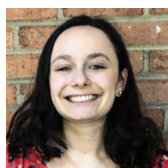
**Lena Diasti, AB '23**  
Fellows Chair



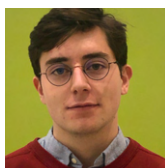
**Mylon Patton, AB '21**  
Junior Chair



**Claire Cappaert, AB '21**  
Speaker Series Co-Chair



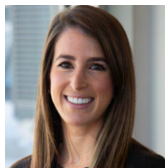
**Celia Hoffman, AB '21**  
Career Development Chair



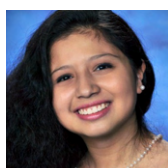
**Andrew Beau Simon, AB '22**  
Speaker Series Co-Chair



**Deblina Mukherjee, AB '21**  
Civic Engagement Chair



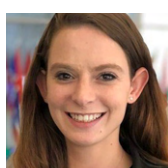
**Maddie Soskin, MPP '21**  
Graduate Chair (Harris)



**Estrella Hernandez, AB '23**  
Communications Chair



**Daniel Simon, JD '21**  
Graduate Chair



**Aliza Oppenheim, AB '21**  
Voter Engagement



**Stephen Puiszis, MBA '21**  
Graduate Chair (Booth)



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Former Deputy Campaign Manager for Barack Obama

### **Bob Dold**

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

### **Robert Gibbs**

Senior Counsel, Bully Pulpit Interactive  
Former White House Press Secretary

### **Ed Gillespie**

Senior Executive Vice President, AT&T  
Former RNC Chairman

### **Jennifer Granholm**

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Goldman School  
Former Governor of Michigan  
(stepped down December 2020)

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Founder, The Weekly Standard

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Former U.S. Secretary of Transportation

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Former Senior Advisor to President Barack Obama

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Former Senior Advisor to U.S. Presidential  
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### **Darren Reisberg**

Vice President for Programs and Strategy, the  
Joyce Foundation

### **Bakari Sellers**

Former South Carolina State Representative

### **Bret Stephens**

Op-Ed Columnist, New York Times

### **Neera Tanden**

President, Center for American Progress  
(stepped down May 2021)

### **Karen Tumulty**

Political Columnist, The Washington Post

### **Amy Walter**

National Editor, the Cook Political Report

### **Howard Wolfson**

Senior Advisor, Bloomberg Philanthropies

### Ex Oficio Member

### **Sofia Gross**

Global Public Policy Manager, Snap, Inc.





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