
ANNUAL REPORT

JULY 2019 - JUNE 2020

OFFICE OF GOVERNMENTAL RELATIONS



UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS SYSTEM

Altogether Extraordinary™

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INTRODUCTION

The following report covers work conducted by the University of Illinois System's Office of Governmental Relations (OGR) from July 1, 2019–June 30, 2020.

OGR's Mission

OGR oversees the U of I System's strategic engagement with federal, state and local governments, officials and staff. Reporting U of I System President Tim Killeen, OGR works with the leadership, faculty and staff of the system universities to develop and advocate for the system's governmental agenda and interests.

OGR monitors issues and activities in Washington, D.C., and locally in Springfield, Chicago and the state of Illinois pertaining to higher education, including budget/appropriations, proposed and enacted legislation, and emerging policy debates. In addition, OGR works to develop and maintain strong and productive relationships with elected and appointed officials and their staff.

2020 OGR Goal Setting & Accomplishments

OGR made considerable progress on its goals to enhance advocacy on behalf of the system with a more unified and coordinated approach.

Goal 1: Build strong connections between our universities and the diverse communities across the state

Notable accomplishments:

- OGR works closely with members of the Illinois Legislative Black Caucus (ILBC) and the Illinois Legislative Latino Caucus (ILLC) to promote legislative initiatives that will better enable us to attract more diverse vendors through the state procurement process. We are leading an effort to promote positive change in this area.
- OGR hosted four engagement events with the ILBC and the ILLC throughout the year. Additionally, President Tim Killeen and UI Health leadership are participating in meetings with caucuses to inform them on the U of I System's initiatives and impact on COVID-19, acknowledge awareness of disparities in communities of color and share information on resources provided by the system.
- OGR consistently advocates for policies that protect our immigrant and undocumented student populations. In February 2020, the U of I System led a group of 28 universities across Illinois in a

letter to the state’s congressional delegation expressing concerns about changes in immigration policy and procedures on behalf of international students and scholars.

- OGR has developed strong ties to the greater Chicago area. During this past year, OGR hosted an “Alumni in Government” event in Chicago and multiple in-district meetings with Chicago-area legislators. Additionally, OGR helped secure funding for the Discovery Partners Institute and Illinois Innovation Network, developed a Chicago Community Building Plan, and built relationships with the Office of the Mayor of Chicago and multiple local leaders.
- A position was created within OGR that would provide strategic support in building strong relationships and partnerships with key external groups, organizations and individuals, with a special emphasis in Chicago and Illinois government.

Goal 2: Support our students by partnering in system advocacy and civic engagement efforts

Notable accomplishments:

- The OGR staff is committed to helping students across the U of I System with their career goals. Our staff regularly discusses goals and makes connections for our student fellows, student workers, student advocates from the Student Advocacy Coalition, and other students we interact with at each university. When we hear of opportunities for students interested in government or government relations, we connect our students with those opportunities.
- OGR’s staff speaks to different student groups and programs each year offering advice on career paths and information on lobbying. OGR also serves as a resource throughout each students’ time in Chicago, Springfield and Washington, D.C.
- In September 2019, OGR hosted the first-ever “U of I System Day” in D.C., during which student leaders from each university attended and, along with university leadership, met with Illinois congressional delegation members. Through the Student Advocacy Coalition chapters at each university, students also engage with elected officials, community leaders and alumni-in-government as speakers at their meetings.
- OGR hired two student fellows to represent the student voice at large as OGR develops, strategizes and executes plans on issues.

Goal 3: Exhibit the system as a builder of innovative solutions to better public policy and the public good for the state of Illinois and beyond

Notable accomplishments:

- OGR regularly brings Illinois Caucus members together to discuss how the system’s legislative agenda can and will benefit the entire state of Illinois.
- OGR developed a new state legislative agenda that makes higher education the solution to many of the challenges facing the state. This agenda will push the boundaries of higher education and encourage new innovation and economic growth in Illinois.
- OGR is a trusted source for members of our Illinois congressional delegation and Illinois General Assembly, who rely heavily on the information OGR provides in advance of any relevant hearings. As a result, our members — including several who serve in leadership roles — often

cite the university and its strengths and invite faculty and staff to testify at briefings and hearings. In 2019, two U of I System experts provided Congressional testimony during committee hearings.

- Professors in the U of I System created and presented COVID-19 epidemiological models during Gov. J.B. Pritzker’s daily news conference. Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, system experts have worked with the governor’s office providing expertise and modeling, and have helped boost testing capabilities.
- OGR and Illinois Connection both maintain active social media accounts on Facebook and Twitter, promoting university research and recognizing the legislators that champion the U of I System.

Goal 4: Ensure the system’s place as a major stakeholder and partner in all policy decisions related to higher education and beyond

Notable accomplishments:

- OGR continues to send an external e-newsletter for congressional staff as well as state legislators and their staff in order to establish a regular platform to directly communicate our activities and updates. These e-newsletters feature system updates, individual university highlights, and, most recently, a “Research Spotlight” section, which includes a summary of government-funded research at one of the three universities. We have received positive feedback from recipients.
- Illinois Connection regularly travels to district offices to build relationships and discuss solutions throughout the entire state.
- Continued to grow our grassroots and grass-tops advocacy efforts by reaching out to university groups and boards to speak on our behalf.
- The U of I System also participated in two White House Summits and had two experts from the system provide congressional testimony during committee hearings. OGR also contributed to community advocacy efforts that resulted in significant funding boosts for federal agencies that support research, including a \$2.6 billion increase for the National Institutes of Health.



OGR's state agenda focused on positioning higher education as the solution to many of the problems Illinois faces. OGR strove to highlight the innovation and academic success happening across all three universities. The U of I System has a massive impact on the state. From our students, faculty and staff to our alumni, our footprint touches every corner of this state. We have a strong message to share with the state, and, as an original land-grant university and our state's flagship institution, we have an obligation and mission to partner with the state. This year we focused on how our impact was shared throughout the state.

GREW AWARENESS OF U OF I SYSTEM IMPACT

The U of I System plays a crucial role in the future of Illinois and its educational and economic well-being. Across our three universities, we enroll more than half of all students attending Illinois public universities. We produce more than 22,000 graduates each year, of which well over half stay in Illinois after graduation to become part of Illinois' workforce and taxpayer base. A study estimated the U of I System's economic impact at nearly \$17 billion a year. Our faculty are engaged, our graduation rates are high, and our alumni are loyal contributors to their communities. In short, the U of I System is an important player in ensuring that the state of Illinois thrives, and all of this is at stake without a stable state appropriation.

Our 66-member U of I Caucus was very helpful in passing policies that supported the U of I System and higher education. This caucus was organized in 2015, and consists of alumni legislators, legislators representing one of our universities, and legislators who have had a child attend a system university. We have called upon them to speak on our behalf both on the chamber floors and behind closed doors.

CRAFTED AND SUPPORTED LEGISLATION FOR U OF I SYSTEM PRIORITIES

OPERATING FUNDING, [SB264](#)

The state's FY21 budget reflects a continued commitment to higher education by providing the U of I System and its three universities flat funding that matches FY20. The state has recognized the importance in investing in higher education by maintaining funding despite revenue shortfalls stemming from the COVID-19 crisis. The budget was approved during a shortened session before the May 31 deadline. The bill passed the Illinois House of Representatives 64-44 and was concurred by the Senate 37-19.

The budget will provide \$622 million for general operations at our three universities. This includes:

- \$40.4 million for the University of Illinois Hospital and Health Sciences System.
- \$14.8 million for the Prairie Research Institute at Urbana-Champaign.
- \$1 million for the Institute for Policy and Civic Engagement at UIC.
- \$850,800 for Labor and Employment Relations certificate programs.
- \$654,400 for Labor and Employment Relations degree programs.
- \$673,800 for the Hispanic Center for Excellence at UIC.
- \$500,000 for Illinois Heart Rescue at UIC, a project aimed at improving cardiac arrest survival rates and reducing health disparities using data and focused training.
- \$294,800 for Dentistry at UIC.
- \$276,600 for Dixon Springs at Urbana-Champaign.

Other state appropriated funds:

- The UIC College of Pharmacy at Rockford will receive \$500,000 from the General Professions Dedicated Fund.
- The University of Illinois Fire Service Institute in Champaign will receive \$4.4 million for operations and the Cornerstone Program, which provides training for firefighters across the state.
- The State University Retirement System pension funding proposal for fiscal 2021 is \$2 billion, an increase of \$141.1 million, or 7.6 percent, from fiscal 2020. This is the required statutory funding level.

CAPITAL BILL APPROPRIATION, [HB64](#)

- Re-appropriation of \$500 million for planning and construction of the Discovery Partners Institute - a new research center in downtown Chicago - and 15 research hubs across the state, including one at each of our universities and regional campuses as part of the Illinois Innovation Network.
- Re-appropriation of \$808 million for capital improvements at all three universities. This includes:
 - \$121 million from older appropriations, including the Advanced Chemical Technology Building at UIC, a public safety building at UIS and an integrated bioresearch laboratory in Urbana-Champaign.
 - \$98 million for a computer design research and learning center for UIC's College of Engineering.
 - \$100 million for renovation of Altgeld Hall for a math, statistics and data science collaboration center at Urbana-Champaign.
 - \$100 million for an initiative involving quantum information sciences and technology that Urbana-Champaign is developing in partnership with University of Chicago, Argonne and FermiLab.
 - \$35 million for a new facility at UIS that will replace the existing library, including new spaces for teaching and academic support.

- \$195.2 million for Urbana-Champaign, \$146.4 million for UIC and \$11.6 million for UIS to fund miscellaneous capital improvement projects.
- Re-appropriation of \$150 million statewide for higher education projects such as deferred maintenance, escalation of costs and other capital improvements.
- Appropriation of \$7 million in new capital funding to relocate Urbana’s Swine Research Center.
- Appropriation of \$935,000 to UIC to pay back the Independent Colleges Capital Program awarded to John Marshall Law School before it merged with UIC.

STATE GOVERNMENT EMERGENCY RESPONSE ADMINISTRATION, SB2135

The Illinois General Assembly passed a large omnibus package to allow the state to adequately address the COVID-19 pandemic. It included many different measures, but those impacting U of I included:

- A one-year exemption from procurement law for investment services set to expire in June of 2020 until July 1 of 2021.
- Providing greater flexibility for public bodies to conduct business remotely when meeting in person is not feasible due to a disaster.

AIM HIGH FIX, SB1569

The AIM High Pilot Program, which began in 2019, was designed to encourage the top academically achieving students to stay in state by awarding grants to top-performing students in a specific income range. Under the original pilot program language, when some students’ family income increased, they were no longer eligible for their AIM High scholarship. This measure contained language to clarify that students will be eligible for their AIM High scholarships for the entire four-year duration as an undergraduate student.

Other Legislation *(see full report on page 15)*

ENHANCED ALUMNI AND STUDENT ENGAGEMENT

With all of the demands facing them today, it is easy for legislators to overlook the U of I System if they do not represent one of our universities. Our alumni can and do remind their local legislators that they should care. That their voters care. We have made it a priority to proactively get in front of legislators through district visits and local events with legislators.

This third-party validation helps our office to share the stories about the impact the U of I System has on Illinois citizens. In addition to alumni, we need more businesses, communities, and thought leaders to step up and speak on the importance of higher education to the state and society as a whole.

To carry our message and engage in these important conversations, we have continually called upon our Illinois Connection program. With approximately 21,000 members, Illinois Connection carries our

message and illustrates that we are a critical statewide entity and that all legislators should care about us.

This year, Illinois Connection created the U of I System Advocacy Committee - a group of more than 25 alumni and supporters with strong connections to government. The group met for the first time in February 2020, during which they were briefed on the U of I System's legislative agenda and had an informal discussion with President Tim Killeen and OGR about the system's state and federal governmental relations strategy. Since the inaugural meeting, the Advocacy Committee has met on a monthly basis to discuss current initiatives and legislative updates.

Notable accomplishments over the past year:

- Four alumni and student lobby days in the state capitol.
- Five large, in-district legislative receptions to which alumni were invited.
- 50 smaller, in-district meetings across the state.
- Multiple "Alumni in Government" events in Chicago and Springfield.
- A federal advocacy campaign, during which 3,572 people sent over 10,700 emails to 65 percent of Congress. This call-to-action asked for federal emergency relief funding in reference to the COVID-19 pandemic.
- The annual U of I System Day at the Capitol, bringing together 200 alumni and students from all three universities to advocate on behalf of the system in the state Capitol.

COMMUNITY EFFORTS

In June 2020, Angelica Alfaro volunteered with the Illinois Black Caucus Foundation in preparing PPE packages for Illinois Black Caucus member districts and with the Chicago Latino Caucus Foundation in food distribution on the northwest side of Chicago. Angelica also attended the Illinois and Chicago Legislative Black and Latino Caucuses in a Black and Brown unity presser on the west side of Chicago, hosted by Alderman Emma Mitts.

OGR also participated in the onboarding of five inaugural Illini Science Policy Fellowships in partnership with the ILBC and the ILLC.

OGR is continually working to increase our collaboration and connections locally within the Chicago and Chicagoland community.

COVID-19 RESPONSE

- Before COVID-19 struck, the U of I System:
 - Increased enrollment for the seventh straight year.
 - Provided \$239 million in institutional aid for students to help keep costs affordable.
 - Served more than 710,000 patients at the system's hospitals and clinics.
 - Secured \$992 million in research funding in FY19 alone.

- Continued leading the efforts to create the Illinois Innovation Network, which connects Illinois' public universities, community leaders and innovation-driven enterprises together to drive economic development across the state.
 - Contributed \$17.5 billion to the state's economy through spending by universities, faculty, staff, students and the increased earning power of alumni.
 - Supported more than 171,000 jobs in Illinois.
 - Comprised 2.2 percent of the Gross State Product (GSP).
- As the COVID-19 pandemic unfolded, U of I System faculty and staff assisted the state by:
 - Helping create epidemiological models that Gov. J.B. Pritzker cited in stay-at-home orders that have been credited with saving thousands of lives.
 - Working in conjunction with the governor's office and the Illinois Department of Public Health to roll out COVID-19 testing across the state.
 - Developing a working prototype of an emergency ventilator called the Illinois RapidVent in less than a week.
 - Manufacturing hand-sanitizer and personal protective equipment for healthcare professionals.
 - Treating patients that have tested positive for COVID-19 at the University of Illinois Hospital and clinics.
 - Participating in NIH clinical antiviral agent trials to find effective treatments.
 - Graduated 192 medical students early to meet the growing demand for healthcare workers.
 - Developed a scalable, saliva-based testing plan.
- Once the COVID-19 pandemic has passed, we look forward to continuing to serve the state of Illinois by:
 - Building on our record enrollment and serving an even more diverse group of students than ever before.
 - Continuing to increase our institutional financial aid.
 - Transforming the Illinois economy through the Discovery Partners Institute and the Illinois Innovation Network, which are predicted to generate a \$19 billion economic impact in the first 10 years and create 48,000 new jobs.
 - Attracting top-tier faculty and researchers that will continue to serve the state in good times and bad.

However, none of this will be possible without continued partnership from the state.

INTERNAL ACTION

- Angelica Alfaro was hired in February 2020 as the Associate Director of Local and State Relations to increase the profile of the U of I System in Chicago via the *Chicago Community Building Plan*.
- Theresa Thomas was hired in January 2020 as an Visiting Advocacy Specialist.

- OGR proudly welcomed Illinois Connection, the advocacy network for the U of I System, from the UIAA this past year. OGR, through Illinois Connection, has led the advocacy agenda for the U of I System, by engaging alumni across the state and nationally with the system’s legislative goals. The program has grown to over 21,000 members and allows for a more efficient advocacy effort within the office. Illinois Connection has strong ties to the U of I alumni network and strives to engage alumni.

NEXT STEPS

In the upcoming year, OGR will continue to promote higher education to Illinois lawmakers. We will strengthen our partnerships and coalitions to encourage collaboration across the state of Illinois. Most importantly, OGR will continue to work to show the impact the U of I System has on the state.

- Establishing a coordinated communications campaign that will work with all units at each of our three universities and system.
- Continuing to build both our grassroots and grass-tops advocacy to connect our alumni and their constituents. We will reach out to additional university groups and boards to ask for more volunteers and empower our volunteers to speak on our behalf at all times.
- We will build on the relationships with our advocates and lawmakers.
- We plan to further strengthen and empower the U of I Caucus and create a U of I Caucus in Chicago with the city council and city clerk.
- Increasing engagement with businesses and ask them to speak on behalf of higher education.
- Finally, we are building on our student organizations, and working to collaborate with faculty members on how to be more involved in advocacy at all levels.

2020 ADVOCACY IN ACTION

The 2020 Illinois Spring Legislative Session was unique this year, with work in Springfield ending in early March due to the impacts of COVID-19. Despite the shortened session, OGR and Illinois Connection completed a wide range of activities, including federal and state campaigns to advocate for higher ed in the federal COVID-19 aid package and the state budget. A full rundown of events is below:

JANUARY

January 29 – Illinois Connection hosted its annual spring training for members of the Student Advocacy Coalition (SAC) in Springfield. The spring advocacy training brings together SAC members from each university for a one-day crash course on advocacy in the state Capitol, including a tour where students learn how to navigate the Capitol so they are familiar with the building for the U of I System Day at the Capitol.

FEBRUARY

February 6 – Illinois Connection joined SAC to present a story-building workshop to train students at Urbana-Champaign to effectively tell their story to lawmakers.

February 11 – Illinois Connection and OGR hosted state higher ed staffers in Urbana-Champaign for a campus tour followed by an Illini basketball game. The tour included a visit to the National Center for Supercomputing Applications and a dinner with OGR staff and our consultants at a local restaurant before the game.

February 18 – Illinois Connection hosted its first small-group lobby day of the session with students and faculty and staff from the UIC School of Public Health. The group of nearly 30 students met for a lunch briefing at Innovate Springfield and then headed to the Capitol for meetings with their state legislators.

February 18 – Illinois Connection hosted its annual legislative game watch party in Springfield. The U of I Legislative Caucus, legislative staffers, and Illinois Connection advocates and alumni from the Springfield area were invited to attend. The event was a great way for our staff to engage and interact with legislators, legislative staff, our advocates and local alumni and to build relationships. Nearly 100 people attended the event in total.

February 19 – Illinois Connection hosted a small-group lobby day with student entrepreneurs from the iVenture program. Students met with their state legislators and members of the U of I Caucus to discuss the innovation ecosystem at the U of I System and advocate for continued support by the state for DPI, IIN and the U of I System, which has helped them create their businesses.

February 21 – In collaboration with the UIC Institute for Policy and Civic Engagement, Illinois Connection hosted advocacy training for students at UIC, teaching them how to lobby legislators and familiarize them with effective strategies for advocacy. The 90-minute training brought together nearly 30 students for the lunch-and-learn session.

February 26 – Illinois Connection hosted the annual U of I System Day at the Capitol, bringing together 200 alumni and students from all three universities to advocate on behalf of the system in the state Capitol. The day began with a luncheon briefing in Springfield, where President Killeen presented Deputy Gov. Jesse Ruiz with the first-ever U of I System Award for Advocacy. Advocates were also briefed on the U of I System legislative agenda and split into their meeting groups. Once in the Capitol, advocates attended a higher education rally in the Capitol Rotunda where about 10 state legislators and Treasurer Michael Frerichs addressed the crowd on the importance of the U of I System to the state and the role that advocates play in supporting the system.

February 26 – Illinois Connection hosted the first in-person meeting of the U of I System Advocacy Committee, a group of more than 25 alumni and supporters with strong connections to government. The group was briefed on the U of I System's legislative agenda and had an informal discussion with President Killeen and OGR about the system's state and federal governmental relations strategy.

February 26 – In collaboration with the Illinois' other public universities, Illinois Connection hosted a higher education legislative reception at the Governor's Mansion in Springfield. The evening reception brought more than 200 alumni leaders and lawmakers together and included a program featuring remarks by President Killeen, Northern Illinois University President Lisa Freeman, Deputy Gov. Jesse Ruiz and Lt. Gov. Julianna Stratton.

MARCH

March 3 – Illinois Connection planned a small-group lobby day for the UI Health School of Pediatrics. The small group was led by the UI Health government relations team.

March 4 – In partnership with UI Health, Illinois Connection hosted a legislator breakfast featuring President Killeen and UIC Vice Chancellor for Health Affairs Robert Barish, who addressed the work UI Health is doing in the state and discussed ways the state can better support UI Health.

MAY

May 18 – In collaboration with OGR, Illinois Connection sent all alumni, faculty, staff, student and Illinois Connection advocates in Illinois a call-to-action, asking them to email their state legislators in support of the U of I System’s FY21 budget request. More than 2,700 advocates sent nearly 5,500 emails to state legislators, including at least one email to 176 of 177 total state legislators.

May 20 – A second email related to the campaign was sent by Illinois Connection, asking advocates to call their state legislators. The campaign generated more than 100 calls to state legislators, seeking their support for the U of I System’s budget appropriation.

Events Cancelled because of COVID-19

As noted, OGR and Illinois Connection had an extensive action plan set for the spring session before the COVID-19 crisis began. Future events that were cancelled because of the pandemic include:

- 14 additional small-group lobby days
- A Prairie Research Institute dinner with the U of I Caucus
- An Illinois Innovation Network breakfast with the U of I Caucus and IIN hub leaders
- Illinois congressional district director visit to UIC
- A U of I System dinner with the Black Caucus
- A U of I System dinner with the Latino Caucus

Illinois Connection kicked off a “Thank You” campaign in July, recognizing the state legislators that championed the U of I System during the budget process. Those “Thank You” meetings will continue into the summer.

Illinois Connection also worked with two Student Advocacy Coalition presidents from the University of Illinois at Chicago and the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign to publish supporting the U of I System. They were published in the [Chicago Tribune](#), [Crain’s Chicago Business](#) and the [Pantagraph](#).

U of I Initiated

Bill Number	Initiative	Overview	Chief Sponsor	Status	U of I Position
HB5312	U of I General Appropriations	Appropriates \$637,390,500 from the Education Assistance Fund, together with other stated amounts from various funds, to the Board of Trustees of the University of Illinois for its operational and other expenses. Effective July 1, 2020.	AMMONS	Referred to House Rules	Support
SB3157	TREASURY INVESTMENT PROCUREMENT	Exempts U of I investments from procurement regulations.	BENNETT	Senate Assignments	Support
SB3845	GATA-HIGHER ED AWARDS	Amends the Grant Accountability and Transparency Act. Provides that for public institutions of higher education, specified provisions of the Act apply only to awards funded by federal pass-through awards from a State agency to public institutions of higher education (currently, also applies to awards funded by State appropriations). Provides that the Act shall recognize specified provisions of the Code of Federal Regulations as applicable to public institutions of higher education. Effective immediately.	MCGUIRE	Referred to Senate Assignments	Support
HB5262	FUNDING FOR EMERGENCY GRANTS	Requires the Illinois Student Assistance Commission to implement and administer a program, beginning with the 2021-2022 academic year, to award College Promise grants to Illinois residents seeking an associate degree from a public community college.	SMITH, NICK	House Higher Ed Appropriations	Support
SB3715	Procurement reforms to attract minority vendors	Provides that for proposed purchasing activity under the specified small purchase threshold, there shall be no policy or rule infringing a State agency or public institution of higher education's ability to award directly, without competition, to a Business Enterprise Program certified business.	HARRIS, NAPOLEON	Senate Assignments	Support



The following section provides an overview of OGR's federal achievements and milestones from July 2019 - June 2020.

GREW U OF I SYSTEM IMPACT — IN WASHINGTON AND ILLINOIS

OGR made the most out of the time that Congress was in session by getting system and university leaders and faculty in front of Illinois delegation offices to advance our legislative priorities and interests. OGR planned several U of I System events in Washington, D.C. and arranged for our experts to participate in opportunities to showcase the system's strengths and assets. During both regular and extended district work periods, OGR seized opportunities to bring legislators to campus, maximize requested visits, and proactively coordinate in-district or campus events.

DC ACTIVITIES/MEETINGS

U of I System Day in D.C.

- In September 2019, OGR held the first-ever [U of I System Day in D.C.](#), to raise our profile and advocate for our federal priorities (financial aid, research funding, innovation agenda). Nearly 50 participants—including President Killeen, all three chancellors, and Board of Trustees Chairman Don Edwards—took part in a full day of meetings with more than 20 members of Congress. We also held a reception that evening with area alums in which U.S. Representatives Danny Davis and Rodney Davis served as honorary co-hosts.

President's Executive Leadership Program D.C. Seminar

- OGR hosted a 3-day seminar in DC for the 2019-2020 fellows in the [President's Executive Leadership Program](#). The fellows, joined by President Tim Killeen and Executive Vice President Barb Wilson, had meetings at the [White House](#), the [Department of Education](#) and the [National Science Foundation](#); met with [Senator Dick Durbin](#) and congressional staff; and heard from associations and advocates. They also attended the presentation of IGPA's 2019 [Paul H. Douglas Award for Ethics in Government](#).

Demonstrated U of I System Leadership in the Nation's Capital

- The U of I System had representatives participate in two White House Summits: one on Artificial Intelligence and another on Bioeconomy.
- In 2019, two U of I System experts provided congressional testimony during committee hearings.

- In June 2019, Dr. Robert Cohen from UIC's School of Public Health testified at a House Education & Labor subcommittee hearing to share his expertise on the resurgence of black lung disease.
- In September 2019, Susan Hughes, Co-Director of UIC's Center For Research On Health And Aging, [testified before the Senate Aging Committee](#) at a hearing on "[Promoting Healthy Aging](#)."

Supported the 'Fly-Ins' of Various U of I Stakeholders

- In 2019, various faculty members visited D.C. to participate in advocacy days for their professional associations and societies.
- While many fly-in days and association events in D.C. were ultimately cancelled in the spring of 2020, a few administrators and faculty were able to advocate in person prior to travel restrictions, including leadership from Extension, College of ACES, College of VetMed, UIC's financial aid office, and Illinois-Indiana Sea Grant leaders.
- Several faculty members participated in panel discussions or spoke at briefings, including:
 - Nancy Amato, head of Urbana's Department of Computer Science, participated in a roundtable discussion in DC focused on the future of artificial intelligence, R&D, and regulation. The event was hosted by the Bipartisan Policy Center and Reps. Robin Kelly and Will Hurd (TX) as part of an effort to develop a national strategy on AI.
 - Urbana professors Don Wuebbles and Ashish Sharma gave [briefings](#) to U.S. Senators and congressional staff in July 2019 on the [impacts of climate change in the Great Lakes region](#).

CAMPUS/IN-DISTRICT ACTIVITIES

OGR arranged and prepared key events and visits between U of I System leadership and Washington representatives in their districts or at our universities on important issues:

- Facilitated **campus visits by members of Congress** throughout the year, including:
 - Sen. Durbin [visited](#) the Mile Square South Shore satellite location in May 2020 to observe the testing site. He highlighted the funds that the HEROES Act would provide for more testing and contact tracing.
 - OGR worked with the UIC Alumni Association to [honor](#) Rep. Jesus "Chuy" García, a double UIC alum, as an official Torchbearer in a special February 2020 ceremony prior to the start of a men's basketball game.
 - In January 2020, Rep. Sean Casten [visited](#) UIC for the first time. He met with Chancellor Michael Amiridis, received a demo at the Electronic Visualization Lab, and spoke with engineering students about tackling climate change.
 - In November 2019, Sen. Durbin [visited](#) UIS to tour its Child Protection Training Academy's Residential Simulation Lab. He learned about the simulation training that they conduct and the Child Advocacy Studies program.

- Sen. Dick Durbin visited Urbana-Champaign in November 2019. He hosted a press conference on the need for investment in scientific research and met with Chancellor Robert Jones and Provost Andreas Cangellaris.
 - Rep. Bustos [visited](#) the UIC College of Nursing-Quad Cities campus in June 2019 to discuss educating advanced practice nurses and the College's efforts to increase healthcare access in rural communities.
 - Rep. Bill Foster [visited DPI](#) in October 2019, where he received a full briefing by DPI and IIN leadership.
 - Sen. Durbin [visited UIC](#) in October 2019 to learn more about its Transplant Program and see the Robotics Lab.
 - Sen. Tammy Duckworth participated in a panel discussion on disparities in infant and maternal mortality in Chicagoland at UIC. The next day, she visited Urbana-Champaign to see the [Chez Veterans Center](#) and the [Illinois Fire Service Institute](#).
 - Rep. Rodney Davis [toured](#) the Indoor Climate Research & Training Center in October 2019, part of the Applied Research Institute at Urbana.
- Facilitated **congressional staff campus visits** throughout the year:
 - Prior to the pandemic, OGR had been planning the first-ever "UIC Day for Illinois Delegation Staff" for April 2020. It would have consisted of a half-day program to showcase UIC, including privately-led tours and briefings of our unique facilities on both the east and medical campuses.
 - U.S. Senate Armed Services Committee staff visited Urbana-Champaign to meet with DOD-funded researchers and learn about campus collaborations with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Construction Engineering Research Laboratory (CERL) in Champaign.
 - In October 2019, a staffer from Sen. Durbin's office toured the Indoor Climate Research & Training Center at Urbana and met with home energy professionals and weatherization trainers.
 - UI Health led a tour of UI Hospital and Mile Square for a Sen. Duckworth staffer.
 - Staff from the offices of Reps. Mike Bost and Rodney Davis attended an event in September 2019 at Urbana celebrating the 20th anniversary of farmdoc, one of the nation's leading platforms for farm management research.
- Supported **campus visits by federal agency officials**:
 - OGR helps facilitate visits by senior federal officials to the three universities. Scott Angle, the director of the National Institute of Food and Agriculture within USDA, was scheduled to visit Urbana in April 2020 to engage directly with faculty on USDA-funded projects.
- Helped secure **participation in delegation events**:
 - UIC Vice Chancellor for Health Affairs Robert Barish attended a roundtable discussion hosted by Sen. Durbin on the response to the coronavirus. Participants included officials from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the Chicago Department of Public Health, and the Illinois Medical District.

- Judy Rubenacker, Associate Director of the McKinley Health Center at Urbana, participated in a listening session on the coronavirus hosted by Rep. Rodney Davis with local medical and public health leaders.
 - In March 2020, Ron Hershov, an infectious disease expert and physician from UIC, presented during a tele-town hall hosted by Rep. Bustos on COVID-19.
 - On April 3, Rep. Chuy Garcia convened a [Zoom call](#) with college students living in/around the 4th congressional district to listen to their needs and concerns relating to the COVID-19 pandemic. Students from UIC and Urbana participated.
 - On May 5, Dr. Anna Guevarra, Founding Director and Associate Professor of the Global Asian Studies Program at UIC, participated as a panelist in a [virtual event](#) hosted by Rep. Sean Casten that focused on recent COVID-19-related xenophobia.
 - On May 16, two Urbana faculty members, Dr. David Kranz and Dr. Chris Brooke, will participate in a [“Science Saturday” event](#) on May 16 with Rep. Bill Foster to discuss efforts to develop a vaccine, antibody testing, and other COVID-19 topics.
 - Faculty from Urbana and UIC schools of social work participated in a virtual panel discussion on mental health hosted by Rep. Sean Casten.
- U of I Extension helped facilitate visits by Rep. Lauren Underwood to the Lake County Fair, the Kendall County Fair, and McHenry County Fair, where they underscored the importance of Extension and 4-H work along with agriculture in those counties.

Other Activities

- Improving/Advancing Legislation
 - OGR worked closely with Rep. Lipinski’s office in suggesting improvements to the Advanced Geothermal R&D Act in advance of the bill’s markup in the House Science Committee in February 2020.
 - OGR collaborated extensively with Rep. Krishnamoorthi’s office on the topic of foreign influence and immigration. The Congressman ultimately introduced the [Homeland Security Higher Education Advisory Council Act](#), which would establish an advisory council at DHS consisting of university and association leaders to advise on foreign influence, immigration and other areas of mutual interest. He also led a [bipartisan letter](#) signed by 50 colleagues urging DHS to engage with universities on issues including visa processing and protecting against foreign influence.
- OGR works with delegation offices to provide quotes for press releases regarding bills we support as well as for releases that highlight major grant awards that our campuses receive. Examples include:
 - In a [press release](#), Rep. Rodney Davis touted Coronavirus Rapid Response Research grants that Urbana faculty recently received from the National Science Foundation. Vice Chancellor for Research and Innovation Susan Martinis provided a quote.
 - EVP Barb Wilson provided a supportive quote for a [press release by Rep. Sean Casten](#) touting new legislation to eliminate time restrictions on student loans.

- In advance of committee hearings, OGR regularly shares relevant information with delegation offices that will be participating, including:
 - Prior to a Ways & Means subcommittee hearing chaired by Rep. Danny Davis on “The Child Care Crisis and the Coronavirus Pandemic,” OGR flagged a recent [“Policy Spotlight”](#) from the Institute for Government & Public Affairs on how affordable child care is fundamental to our economic recovery. Rep. Davis mentioned the report and submitted it to the congressional record ([see 12:20](#)).
 - OGR provided questions to Rep. Lipinski’s office in advance of a House Science Committee [hearing](#) where OSTP Director Kelvin Droegemeier testified on the “Administration’s Federal Research and Development Budget Proposal for Fiscal Year 2021.” At the hearing, Rep. Lipinski mentioned the recent [letter](#) led by the U of I System in which 28 Illinois universities laid out the visa and other challenges facing international students and scholars.
- OGR worked with the office of Rep. Darin LaHood, a 1996 John Marshall Law School alum, to submit an Extension of Remarks in the Congressional Record recognizing the establishment of the UIC John Marshall Law School. The statement was co-signed by Rep. Danny Davis, who represents UIC. You can find the recognition [here](#) on page 83.

PROMOTED U OF I SYSTEM LEGISLATIVE PRIORITIES

There were a number of challenging federal issues in which the higher education community had to mobilize on, including appropriations, immigration and COVID-19 relief.

BUDGET/APPROPRIATIONS

In February 2020, the Trump Administration released its Fiscal Year (FY) 2021 budget request, which proposed a number of cuts to programs and accounts important to the research and higher ed communities. The request set the stage for an uphill FY2021 appropriations process, as our community had to vigorously defend the value of the agencies and programs that were targeted.

As part of the U of I System’s advocacy for the annual appropriations process, OGR submits “programmatic requests” to the Illinois Congressional delegation to articulate the university’s support for line items in the federal budget that support our missions. In late February/early March, OGR submitted the [U of I System’s FY 2021 programmatic requests](#), then conducted numerous meetings and conversations to further discuss the significance of having robust funding for these agency and programs.

Additionally, OGR encouraged members of the Illinois delegation to sign onto “Dear Colleague” letters supporting some of the top agencies that fund our campuses—the National Science Foundation, the National Institutes of Health, the Department of Energy Office of Science, and the Department of Agriculture’s National Institute of Food and Agriculture. The Illinois delegation demonstrated strong support for these agencies, as reflected in the following chart:

Federal Agency/Program	FY2021 “Dear Colleague” Letters
National Science Foundation (NSF)	<p><i>House</i> : Requested that NSF receive “at least \$9 billion” in funding 13 Total IL Signatories (of 178): Reps. Rodney Davis, Cheri Bustos, Sean Casten, Bill Foster, Chuy Garcia, Danny Davis, Robin Kelly, Adam Kinzinger, Raja Krishnamoorthi, Bobby Rush, Dan Lipinski, Jan Schakowsky, Brad Schneider</p> <p><i>Senate</i>: Requested \$9 billion 2 Total IL Signatories (of 39): Senators Dick Durbin, Tammy Duckworth</p>
National Institutes of Health (NIH)	<p><u><i>House</i></u>: Requested at least \$44.7 billion for NIH 14 Total IL Signatories: Sean Casten, Danny Davis, Bill Foster, Rodney Davis, Dan Lipinski, Mike Bost, Bobby Rush, Cheri Bustos, Brad Schneider, Darin LaHood, Raja Krishnamoorthi, Jan Schakowsky, Adam Kinzinger, Robin Kelly</p> <p><i>Senate</i>: 2 Total IL Signatories (of 64): Senators Dick Durbin, Tammy Duckworth</p>
Department of Energy (DOE) Office of Science	<p><i>House</i>: Led by Rep. Foster; Expressed “strong support for robust and sustained funding” for the DOE Office of Science 9 Total IL Signatures: Bill Foster, Bobby Rush, Danny Davis, Dan Lipinski, Jan Schakowsky, Lauren Underwood, Sean Casten, Raja Krishnamoorthi, Chuy Garcia</p> <p><i>Senate</i>: Led by Senators Durbin and Duckworth; requested “at least \$7.5 billion” 2 of 31: Senators Dick Durbin, Tammy Duckworth</p>
United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA), Agriculture and Food Research Initiative	<p><i>House</i>: Led by Rep. Rodney Davis; referenced the PBR of \$600 million for AFRI, an increase of \$175 million above enacted levels 11 Total IL Signatures: Rodney Davis, Cheri Bustos, Mike Bost, Danny Davis, Adam Kinzinger, Robin Kelly, Darin LaHood, Brad Schneider, Sean Casten, John Shimkus, Dan Lipinski</p>

Several Illinois members sent their own letters to appropriators expressing support for funding and report language.

HIGHER EDUCATION ACT REAUTHORIZATION

In the fall of 2019, House Education & Workforce Committee Democrats [unveiled](#) the [College Affordability Act](#) (CAA), comprehensive legislation to reauthorize the Higher Education Act (HEA), the major federal law governing higher education policies and programs. As drafted, the bill, which was over 1,160 pages long, had significant implications for the U of I System and its students. The CAA contained a number provisions that the U of I System endorsed, some provisions that raised questions and concerns, and other provisions that necessitated additional information.

Given the considerable impact of the proposed legislation, federal relations consulted with a variety of stakeholders across the three universities to prepare a [letter](#) that Executive Vice President Wilson sent to the Illinois delegation offering input on the CAA.

IMMIGRATION

Similar to last year, there were several active and proposed immigration policy and programmatic changes that were concerning for the U of I System and the higher education community at large, which could harm the system's ability to recruit and retain high caliber international faculty and students.

OGR continued to advocate for congressional oversight of visa delays and rejections at the Department of State and U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services. We opposed efforts to restrict legal immigration through legal, legislative and regulatory means, including challenges to Optional Practical Training, which permits foreign students studying in the U.S. to apply for “practical training” with a U.S. employer in a job directly related to their major area of study. We also strongly advocated for support for legislation that, at a minimum, would codify the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) program, which protects from deportation certain undocumented individuals brought to this country as children.

Throughout the year, federal relations participated in regular immigration-focused calls and strategy sessions with our higher education associations (AAU, APLU) to stay informed and strategize on advocacy. OGR was in communication with our Illinois peer institutions about joint efforts, and worked with Illinois Congressional delegation offices to raise concerns. In February 2020, the U of I System led a group of 28 universities across Illinois in a [letter](#) to the state’s congressional delegation expressing concerns on behalf of international students and scholars. The letter noted increasing delays and denials in processing entry visas, processing delays for the Optional Practical Training program, and increasing delays and denials in processing H-1B visas.

COVID-19 RESPONSE

OGR advocated aggressively for COVID-19 relief for students and institutions of higher education, including:

- As Congress negotiated a third emergency bill in March, U of I System leadership sent a [letter](#) to the Illinois congressional delegation detailing the financial toll of the pandemic.

- In April, President Killeen led a [letter](#) from Illinois' public universities explaining that the CARES Act funding, while welcome, only covered a fraction of our costs.
- In addition to sending these letters, President Killeen, the chancellors and members of the Board of Trustees made calls and sent emails to members of Congress.
 - President Killeen personally completed calls with 12 Illinois delegation members, including one that the U of I System organized with Sen. Durbin and the presidents of the other Illinois public universities.
 - Our chancellors have completed calls with three Illinois delegation members.
- In response to the House Science Committee's call for ideas to be included in future legislation addressing and mitigating the impacts of the COVID-19 crisis, OGR submitted proposals relating to high performance computing and cyberinfrastructure.
- In April, Illinois Connection sent a [Call to Action](#) that encouraged alumni, students, faculty, and staff to ask federal legislators to support more funding for higher ed and students. More than 3,400 advocates responded, sending over 10,000 emails to members of Congress. Over 65 percent of all members of Congress received U of I System-generated emails.
- Reps. Daniel Lipinski (D-IL) and Susan Brooks (R-IN) sent a ["Dear Colleague" Letter](#) to House leadership supporting the inclusion of \$47 billion for students and institutions of higher education in COVID-19 relief legislation. OGR worked with Rep. Lipinski's office to gain support for the letter. More than 100 representatives signed on, including six from Illinois (Reps. Dan Lipinski, Bill Foster, Cheri Bustos, Lauren Underwood, Chuy Garcia, and Danny Davis).
- OGR encouraged IL delegation members to sign onto a ["Dear Colleague" letter](#) in support of including \$26 billion in supplemental research relief funding in the next COVID-19 package. Seven Illinois members signed on to the letter, which was consistent with the request made by the higher education associations.
- Ongoing communications with delegation and IL publics has paid dividends. Rep. Schneider and Sen. Durbin have been championing the tax credits for public universities, while Rep. Lipinski has been leading bipartisan efforts to boost funding for higher ed and prominently mentioned the U of I System in an [op-ed](#).
- OGR created a [handout](#) that provides a snapshot of the ways in which the U of I System is working to support students, employees, and communities during the pandemic. We've been sharing with the Illinois delegation as part of our broader advocacy efforts over recent weeks.

LEVERAGED MEMBERSHIP IN NATIONAL ASSOCIATIONS

In 2019, Paul Weinberger served as the International and Immigration Team Lead for the Association of Public and Land-grant Universities' (APLU) Council on Governmental Affairs (CGA). This position enabled him to lead on strategy discussions surrounding DACA and high-skilled immigration. Beginning in 2019, Paul began serving on the Executive Committee of APLU CGA. He has also been serving as co-chair of the Science Team Co-Lead for the APLU CGA.

Paul also continued serving as a member of the APLU-AAU science and security working group, which consists of select export control officers, VPRs and government relations officers, and is spearheading the higher ed community's response to concerns about foreign engagement.

INTERNAL AND ADMINISTRATIVE

Federal relations added a new member to its team by hiring Grace Hart as a Federal Relations Specialist for the D.C. office in April of 2020. Before stepping into the role, she worked as a legislative intern in both the U.S. House of Representatives and the Senate where she focused on education and healthcare issues.

To assist with internal collection processes surrounding federal lobbying disclosure, the federal relations team put together guidance and FAQs to provide administrators and faculty with more clarity regarding whether their activities need to be reported.

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