



Spring 2021, Volume 7



Editors: Melissa Yang, Zaid Soomro, Naomi Donadio, Tanvi Visal, Swati Mohapatra, Kate Wall

SIC Annual Deans' Dinner

The Deans' Dinner on April 27th, 2021 was the final SIC event of the year. Deans and faculty members from across UTHealth campus were in attendance to celebrate the accomplishments made by Student InterCouncil. Hosted in the atrium of the state of the art Institute of Molecular Medicine, members presented the accomplishments from the 2020-2021 school year. Over the course of the eventful year, SIC converted funds provisioned for student events and received matching funds from Auxiliary Enterprises and The President's Office. The combined funds provided over \$194,000 in student scholarships, administered through SIC and its advisors, Eric Solberg, Vice President for Academic and Research Affairs, Charlie Figari, Vice President and Chief Axillary Enterprise Officer, Tanedra Booker, Senior Program Manager, and Yuliana Nunez, Senior Executive Assistant.

Despite limitations, SIC remained active in the community. In fact, with over 200 participants, SIC experienced record-breaking attendance to virtual Wellness Week, which took place in lieu of Sports Day. SIC administered student perception surveys on diversity, equity, and COVID response. SIC also conducted outreach events to Ronald McDonald House, Star of Hope, Books Between Kids, MD Anderson Children's Cancer Hospital, Houston Science and Engineering Fair, and Houston Food Bank. Despite virtual environments, events such as Wellness Week/Sports Day and Salutation were successful!

In addition to community involvement, current students were recognized. SIC presented the TF Burks Award to member Nour Alia. An MS student in the School for Biomedical In-

formatics, Nour was recognized for her hard work and dedication to the organization. SIC also celebrated recent awardees. Lea Sacca, MPH, PhD student in Health Promotion Behavioral Sciences, was awarded the SIC Academic Scholarship. Isaiah Zoschke, MS, PhD student in Health Promotion and Health Education, was awarded the Toshi Nikaidoh Service Award. Jeffrey Woods, medical student in McGovern Medical School, was awarded the Shohrae Hajibashi Memorial Leadership Award. Graduating SIC members Rachel Buckley, Rohail Momin, Brittany Trinh, Naomi Donadio, Anna Robb, Alison Kiley, and Ankita Podichetty were congratulated. At the conclusion of Deans' Dinner, current President Rachel Pham, passed the gavel to incoming Vice President, Sonia Patel, who stood in for incoming President, Niharika Neela. SIC announced incoming Treasurer Kate Wall and Historian Nour Alia and Secretary, position pending fulfillment. In summary, it was socially distanced celebration to conclude to the year!

-Kate Wall, Member at Large and SPH



Wellness Week

SIC did not drop its Sports Day tradition even in current COVID-19 times! We organized a fully virtual Wellness Week with an intent to provide a much needed break along with some fun competitions and prizes. SIC's mission is always to promote overall well-being, health and provide an opportunity to learn new skills. To contribute towards this mission; we organized a virtual 5K walk/run competition where students were encouraged to share their picture while on walk/run wearing UTH apparel as well as use the hashtag #SICWellnessRun to win exciting prizes. Additionally, SIC challenged students, faculty and staff to create a colorful power bowl

through "Let's Get Cooking Instagram Challenge". This was SIC's way to help people unwind and show their creativity in the kitchen besides lab and work. It was a successful event with lots of enthusiastic participants. Last but certainly not least, SIC organized virtual workout classes which included Yoga, Zumba and HIIT Fusion Bootcamp. The response was overwhelming with lots of students as well as faculty who tuned in to sweat off some calories. SIC's main intent is to ensure a happy and healthy surrounding despite current situation where the pandemic has

taken over people's minds. This year's event turn out was the largest in history, a historic win for SIC. We were excited that many students from satellite UTHHealth campuses were able to join in on the fun this year. Wellness week is SIC's special feature and we are glad it is well appreciated by everyone. We are waiting to come back next year with even more exciting activities!

-Tanvi Visal, *Int.'l Student Rep and GSBS*



Out For Health



The 8th Annual Out for Health Conference was hosted by McGovern Medical School on January 23. The conference was organized by students across Texas Medical Schools to address needs of the LGBTQIA+ population. SIC was proud to financially sponsor the event and promote its goals. The theme of the conference was "intersectionality." The conference created a space for participants to discuss challenges faced by LGBTQIA+ patients and goals to care for them. Ultimately the event united health care professionals to provide more inclusive health care for these individuals and fight systemic discrimination on all levels.

Melissa Yang, *Historian and MMS*

SIC Community Service Events

Books Between Kids

SIC's Community Outreach Committee donated books to the organization Books Between Kids, a local Houston non-profit that provides books for at-risk elementary school students. The children are able to take donated books home to build their own personal libraries. Unfortunately, around 85% of Houston ISD's elementary-aged children live at or below the poverty line. SIC picked a variety of children's books and is proud to support an organization that helps these Houston children and their families



Brittany Trinh, *SOD*

Houston Science Fair

This February, the SIC Community Outreach Committee participated as virtual volunteer judges for the Science and Engineering Science Fair of Houston (SEFH). SEFH is an event held for 6-12 grade students in the greater Houston area. Despite COVID, SIC members were able to serve as judges and evaluators of science projects. We had a fun time helping make a direct impact on the local STEM community and encourage future budding scientists.

Melissa Yang, *MMS*

Houston Food Bank

SIC Community Outreach hosted our annual spring volunteering event at Houston Food Bank. SIC has a great partnership with Houston Food Bank, as this is the 2nd year in a row we have volunteered. During this event, members of SIC volunteered in cleaning and organizing items donated to the Houston Food Bank by different sources. Houston Food Bank provides foods and goods to the underserved population in Houston, TX and nearby areas. SIC looks forward to conducting more such events in future in retrospect of helping our community and collaborating with Houston Food Bank.



Swati Mohapatra, *GSBS*

MD Anderson Toy Donation

In March, the SIC Community Outreach Committee donated \$500 worth of toys, arts and crafts, and games to the MD Anderson Children's Hospital. The SIC hand picked the toys and supplies to give to children staying at MDACC. This was a great event to support children on their path to recovery. Children and staff at the hospital were very elated to use our SIC donation right away!



Sonia Patel, *GSBS*

Apply for SIC Funding next Fall

- Are you interested in receiving funding from SIC? Each year SIC helps make student-driven ideas come to life.
- SIC provides up to \$500 of funding available for inter-professional ideas at UTHHealth.
- Selected projects must benefit the student body and should be educational in nature. Projects should aim to enhance students' knowledge, educational experience and/or promote cultural exchange.



Link to the application here:



2020-2021 SIC Officers



President:
Rachel Pham,
McGovern Medical
School



Secretary:
Ankita Podichetty,
School of Public Health



Treasurer:
Niharika Neela,
McGovern Medical
School



Vice President:
Rachel Buckley,
School of Dentistry



Historian:
Melissa Yang,
McGovern Medical
School

Follow us!



@Student InterCouncil at UTHHealth
<https://www.facebook.com/UTHealth.SIC>



@uthealthsic



@uthealthsic



UTHealth Vaccination Drive: Here for Houston

Last year proved to be a historic and unprecedented year with the start of the COVID-19 pandemic. During these difficult times, the U.S Food and Drug Administration (FDA) news of emergency use authorization (EUA) for multiple COVID-19 vaccines came as much needed sign of hope for people in the United States and the world. The development, testing, and mass production of these vaccines in record-breaking time is a modern scientific miracle.

As one of the leading healthcare institutions in the nation that serves a diverse community of over 4.7 million residents in Harris County, The University of Texas Health Science Center at Houston (UTHealth) was named by the Texas State Department of Health Services as a Vaccine Hub for the county on January 16th, 2021. The UTHealth Vaccine Hub is located in the Denton A. Cooley, M.D. and Ralph C. Cooley, D.D.S. University Life Center is located on Cambridge Street at the UTHealth Texas Medical Center campus. It continues to operate and provide vaccinations to people through the combined efforts of vaccination teams and volunteers (which include students from different schools at UTHealth) under the leadership of Medical Director - Olasunkanmi Adeyinka, MD (Clinical Assistant Professor in the Department of Family and Community Medicine at McGovern Medical School at UTHealth).

Prior to the vaccine becoming available, a team of UTHealth experts prepared for the vaccine rollout by collaborating and creating a comprehensive plan to overcome and preemptively solve the predictable challenges of vaccination efforts. This plan was also designed to ensure a safe and efficient vaccination process at the UTHealth Vaccine Hub for patients and the vaccination team. The success of this planning was reflected by UTHealth Vaccine Hub's ability to vaccinate 600 members of the UTHealth community per day from the start of vaccination efforts. Initially, UTHealth strongly encouraged and offered its front-line healthcare workers and vulnerable populations in the university community (including faculty, students, trainees, and staff) to receive the vaccine. As the supply of vaccines made available increased over time, UTHealth expanded efforts to provide vaccinations to members of the larger community based on Federal and State guidelines.

The UTHealth Vaccine Hub celebrated the achievement of a significant milestone on April 9th, 2021, recognizing the administration of 100,000 doses of the COVID-19 vaccine. COVID-19 vaccination at UTHealth Vaccine Hub is now available to all those interested who are ages 16 and up through self-scheduling. UTHealth continues to advise all community members, including those who have received the vaccination, to stay vigilant and adhere to best practices such as wearing face masks, maintaining social distancing, and staying home when feeling sick to prevent the spread of the virus in our community.

A few noteworthy examples of efforts of UTHealth's vaccination efforts include community outreach events, providing access to information, resources and facilitating vaccination for the most under-resourced and vulnerable communities susceptible to severe disease by COVID-19. These include the elderly, racial minorities, pregnant women, and patients with severe disabilities.

The continued success of UTHealth Vaccine Hub reflects UTHealth's leadership, commitment, and dedication to ensuring the health, safety, and well-being of people in our communities during this historic health crisis.



Zaid Soomro, *SBMI*

What is the Student InterCouncil?

The Student InterCouncil (SIC) is the official UTHealth student governance organization. It is a recognized forum of student opinion and the primary vehicle for student participation in the governance of UTHealth. The organization is comprised of three representatives from each of the six UTHealth schools, three representatives from underrepresented student groups, and three representatives from international student constituencies.

The SIC contributes to student life at UTHealth by participating in developing and implementing policies and procedures affecting students. SIC also provides funds to support other UTHealth registered student organizations' special projects and represent student interests on external and internal committees. The SIC promotes communication and collaboration among the UTHealth schools by the publication of the official SIC newsletter- *Student Pulse*, facilitating planning, and implementing activities that encompass all students across UTHealth.

We are here to be your voice, so feel free to contact us anytime at sicgov@uth.tmc.edu.

2020-2021 SIC Representatives

McGovern Medical School:

Niharika Neela
Rachel Pham
Melissa Yang

School of Dentistry:

Rachel Buckley
Rohail Momin
Brittany Trinh

Members at Large Representatives:

Mariaelena Boyle
Omid Hadj
Katherine Wall

Graduate School of Biomedical Science:

Medina Colic
Swati Mohapatra
Sonia Patel

International Student Representatives:

Cem Dede
Jayanta Mondal
Tanvi Visal

School of Public Health:

Alison Kiley
Ankita Podichetty
Sharmily Roy

School of Biomedical Informatics:

Nour Alia
Angela Hayes
Zaid Soomro

School of Nursing:

Naomi Donadio
Paul Emeonyi
Anna Robb

