



**January 16, 2018**

**President Andrew Jackson's State of the University Address**

The Ohio State University and the Undergraduate Student Government not only have shaped my experience as a Buckeye, but defined my college experience as well. Each day I am reminded why I decided to run for President as the Undergraduate Student government works tirelessly to make the lives of students at the Ohio State University better. To start, I want to thank some of the people that are here today. First, all of the administrators, staff, and faculty that came tonight, I am so thankful for you, not only because of the work that you do for students, but the guidance that you have given to our administration that has led us to have a very successful first semester. Second, my leadership team, especially Samer and Shamina, have worked tirelessly to ensure that our incredible organization runs efficiently. You two are always there to provide advice when it comes to matters that Sophie and I are not well-versed in, and we are forever appreciative, the hours you have given to USG do not go unnoticed. To my Senior Counselor, Sara Spain, you keep me sane and without you, my speeches would not be what they are today. To my amazing Vice-President, Sophie Chang, I would never have been able to get through campaigns, let alone, our first semester in these positions. Your decision-making, logic, and support have shaped my experience and it would not have been the same without you.

Today I am honored to highlight some of the issues we have been undertaking this past year, but I would first like to touch on our Operations team, led by, Zawwar Khan. Although Samer previously mentioned them, they are so crucial to our organization. Their efforts of recruiting and maintaining members, while simultaneously getting our message out to our students, should not be underestimated. Margo, Brooklyn, and Emily were an amazing Operations team, and I know that the addition of Haley will make it even more incredible.

Our Governmental Relations team, headed by Director Jake Dretzka, focuses on giving the buckeye community the opportunity to speak with different candidates at various levels of government. The Government Greets program gave students the chance to have conversations with local government officials through inviting Columbus City Council members, like Liz Brown, to discuss their ongoing projects. Governor Town Halls will be

before they go to vote in the primaries. The Governmental Relations team is also planning our annual trip to Washington DC for Legislator Education this semester. USG members will have the opportunity to travel to The Hill and talk with the amazing people who represent us there.

Our Director of Sustainability, Vikas Munjal has continued pushing the Sustain Train to new heights. The third annual Time for Change Week is currently being planned, the largest sustainability focused project that students have ever produced. Time for Change Week utilizes an entire week to highlight issues surrounding sustainability through a variety of events across campus. Other successes included Wasted! Movie screening in partnership with the InFACT Discovery Theme, a policy initiative working to eliminate plastic water bottle usage around the University and a resolution advocating for the creation an e-bike hub. Furthermore, the Sustainability committee received a \$50,000 dollar ENGIE-Axium gift, which will allow them to do more great work for students.

Academic affairs, led by the dynamic Kate Greer, has been working hard and delivering excellent results. After the textbook affordability resolutions were passed last year, an online guide was created to help incoming freshmen at orientation to understand how to save money on textbooks. They also worked with the Affordable Learning Exchange, or ALX, to allocate 19 full grants to help faculty transition their courses to open source learning material. These grants will save students an estimated 1 million dollars. Other successes for this committee included the passing of 3 resolutions, one calling for a standardized absence policy at Ohio State and the other 2 called for a review of the SEI questions that students answer each semester.

Our Student Affairs group is led by Erin Donnelly. This year the committee has achieved many feats that we are all proud of. They're work on the first annual resource fair, which helped connect over 200 Ohio State students to resources from 10 different departments around campus, was extremely impressive. They also worked to revitalize the Buckeye Block Watch program, by adding safety resources online, as well as implementing a Buckeye Block Watch Block Party, a collaborative safety event between USG, OUAB, Off Campus and Commuter Student Services, and Sustained Dialogue. Other successes included the implementation of the more Kosher dining options, and a revamping of the Block Out Hunger program through a new partnership with Pay It Forward.

Maria Vargo's Health and Safety team has worked tirelessly on tackling important health and safety issues within our buckeye community. Specifically, her team has focused on

mental health policy this year. The group created a mental health video to reduce stigma which included people from around the university. Some of our own USG members teaching First Year Experience sessions and implemented a suicide prevention seminar. The team also produced a pedal with the police event, which was created to promote bike safety at the university, in conjunction with Chief Stone and Deputy Chief Spears-McNatt's team. For the first time ever, we've had over 50 of our members complete REACH training, a suicide prevention workshop where attendees learn about the realities of suicide, how to recognize the warning signs, and how to help those in need. This training is not only beneficial, but necessary.

Farhan Quadri, the head of Diversity and Inclusion has been nothing short of passionate for the committee this year. The group has worked hard on projects like EndHate OSU, which included the planning of diversity discussions on topics of student refugees, white feminism, and veteran students. Buckeyetalk, a student broadcast that has students of different backgrounds discussing current issues to provide insight into other cultures on campus has also been planned in this committee. Impactful resolutions were also passed that included advocating for more transparency surrounding the international student fee and advocating for Indigenous People's Day to be recognized at OSU, a paramount resolution because it brought together the work of all three student governments, the Council of Graduate Students, the Inter-Professional Council, and the Undergraduate Student Government to advocate for diversity and inclusion on campus, which has never been done before.

I am so excited for what this semester will bring to USG. We are starting our access code survey to gather data on student usages of access codes, which will determine our next steps in advocating for lower usage of them by faculty as they are some of the most expensive fees that students incur while in college. We are also looking into diversity in enrollment here at Ohio State. We as a Land-Grant institution should be dedicated to ensuring that our student population mirrors that of our state, and because of this, USG is dedicated to researching and finding best practices from our Big Ten colleagues and other places of higher education to bring back here.

Since yesterday was MLK Day, I think it is only appropriate to use a quote from the man that is a role model, hero, and epitome of positive public service work. Martin Luther King Jr. once stated, "Life's most persistent and urgent question is, what are you doing for others?" As I stand up here today, I am so proud of the dedication and selflessness that all members of our organization have exhibited in order to make our campus a better place for all. Each one of you inspire me every day, and remind me why student government has

such a strong place in my heart. While I am honored that I got to interact with students that were so passionate about helping out the buckeye community, I am also overwhelmed with the feeling of melancholy as I will be graduating in May and leaving USG to future generations. But, I am excited to see what the future holds for the work here, and how the lives of students are positively affected as the Undergraduate Student Government continues to enact change. There is plenty more to be achieved before the school year ends, and I look forward to seeing all that is accomplished! Thank you all for making this year so amazing and Go Bucks!