



January 16, 2018

Chief of Staff Samer Abusway's State of the University Address

Hi everyone, I first want to thank the amazing staff who helped make this event possible. Can we give a round of applause to our great Union Catering and Events team?

Good evening everyone. For those of you who may not know me, my name is Samer Abusway, and I have the pleasure of serving as Chief of Staff for our Undergraduate Student Government here at The Ohio State University. On behalf of USG, I would like to thank everyone for taking the time to be here with us as we reflect on the year we've had, the challenges we've faced, the successes we've achieved, and the work that remains ahead of us. I especially would like to thank our administrators, faculty leaders, and student leaders for being with us tonight. Every day in USG, we count our blessings that this university's leadership cares so deeply about the student voice. We appreciate your dedication to giving us a seat at the table when it comes to the future of the Ohio State student experience.

I want to give a huge thank you to our advisor, Matt Couch, who is also here. Matt was recently named the Associate Dean of Students and we couldn't be happier for him on this well-deserved promotion. It must be difficult to deal with our never-ending needs and questions, but your advice, kind words, and calming spirit are invaluable to the success of our team in not only USG efforts, but also in life. Thank you, Matt, for your constant guidance and support.

And of course, I can't forget to thank my bosses and close friends: Andrew and Sophie, our president and vice president; Shamina Merchant, our Deputy Chief of Staff and my right-hand woman; Zawwar Khan, who I can always count on to make cabinet a fun time and put a smile on everyone's face; and all of the other USG Leadership and members who make the work and time put into this organization worth it. Tonight, I'm going to talk a lot about the progress we have made as an organization, but I'm just the messenger. The credit belongs with our passionate Directors, my dedicated senior staff, and every single deputy director, vice chair, liaison, senator, coordinator, and committee representative in USG who puts in

the time and effort and drives us forward. You all are the real heroes, and I'm honored to report these things on your behalf. Let's give them a round of applause.

When Andrew and Sophie asked me to be their Chief of Staff, I knew I wanted to focus on the people that make our organization so strong. Our organizational culture was at the forefront of my mind as we began this year, and an intentional focus on defining our culture guided us this year in USG. We defined our mission statement as "being the undergraduate voice dedicated to the betterment of higher education and student life." Everything we do in USG works toward this mission, and I'd like to thank our amazing directors and their committees for representing the interests of 52,517 undergraduate students every day in their work.

When we think of how to best accomplish our mission, the notion of "One University. One USG" prevailed as our theme for the year. "One University" highlights how we are working with the administration and faculty to accomplish our goals. Our goals ARE the University's goals. When we work proactively with administration to provide the best experience for students across all of our issues areas, we achieve our mission of being the undergraduate voice dedicated to the betterment of higher education and student life. Back to theme "One University. One USG." One USG is multi-faceted. When administration, faculty, and our fellow students look at USG, they do NOT see the silos into which we have placed ourselves. They do not see different committees, they don't see the distinction between Senior Staff and Committee Representative. What they see is the student group dedicated to advocating for students. This year, our goal was to be that group, the collective group. For us this year, that meant inter-committee collaboration becoming the norm. Teamwork, positivity, and productivity within our organization became the focus of every conversation related to internal procedure and culture.

Our mission as a student organization of now over 300 individuals has always been to make the Buckeye Experience the best it possibly can be for Buckeyes of today and Buckeyes of the future. We do this by remembering to reach out, reach up, and reach forward and we do this by remembering to #MakeYourMark. I want to highlight a few accomplishments of our amazing operations committees this year and talk about the success it has brought us today and for the future of USG.

The only way we can be the undergraduate voice is listening to the undergraduate students that we represent, and letting them know what we've been up to. Our Outreach committee this year, led by Brooklyn McDaniels, was revamped so that we could better represent the interests of our constituents. Our ground game coordinators Zach Kauffman and Natalie

Pavlick held 6 tabling events around campus to promote the purpose and mission of USG. Through these efforts, the outreach committee was able to increase our external newsletter listserv from 60 undergraduate students to over 2,000. In the name of transparency, our forum coordinator Patricia Penlington hosts monthly public forums and sends out those external newsletters bi-weekly so students can learn about our progress on projects spanning our issues committees. We moved Liaisons into the outreach committee this year and created the position of Liaison Coordinator because the liaison position is best suited with the outreach agenda, and allows the entire outreach team to access how well USG is doing at external visibility on campus from a variety of different perspectives. This semester, our outreach committee will be spearheading the Presidents' Dinner and contributing to the Police Dinner Dialogue so be on the lookout for that.

Sticking with the spirit of connecting to our constituents, our communications committee, led first semester by Emily Clark and now by Haley Reedy, has done a great job leveraging social media as a medium to connect with the student body. By developing an internal structure that touches each of the issues committees and effectively delegating tasks within the small group, our communications team has become a well-oiled-machine that pumps out great content. Our communications team is also responsible for the press releases that USG occasionally delivers to inform the students about our stance on an issue. At the beginning of this academic year, the White House administration issued a statement announcing the end of the Deferred Action for Childhood arrivals, or DACA, program, leaving the futures of many students uncertain. Our communications committee released a statement demonstrating USG's position that we stand with our fellow Buckeyes, regardless of immigration status. Our communications committee this semester will be tackling the enhancement of the USG website and continuing to connect with the student body on a wide range of social media platforms.

Coming back to the culture of USG, we wanted to prioritize making this organization a welcoming environment for all of our new members and old members alike. For my fellow "old members," we had the greatest amount of returning members in the organization when we began this year which shows our heightened devotion to retention rates and unity in the organization. We had our second annual fall retreat where we welcomed our new members and centered ourselves around our mission as USG. This year's fall recruitment class was one of our biggest and surely one of our best. The passion of the new members has shined through in all the work they have already done. For those new members who participate in USG's interns program, it has been great to see the interns directors are doing so well creating bonds between interns and shaping them to be leaders

inside and outside USG. More recently, we just accepted our largest spring recruit class in USG history, an initiative we began just last year, and I can't wait to see all the awesome work the 48 newest committee representatives will be undertaking this semester and in the future.

Initiatives like our fall retreat, our interns program, and spring recruitment show our commitment as an organization and as a USG administration to our legacy. Our legacy is in creating leaders of the future so they can carry our flame. Our legacy is all about planting seeds in a garden that we'll never get to see. When we seniors graduate in a few short months, we know we'll be leaving USG in good hands.

But we're not there yet! We still have a whole semester of work to do, memories to make, and Google Slides to spend too much time on. Thank you all so much to those who have contributed to USG's success thus far. I look forward to all that is to come. There's a million things we haven't done. Just you wait!