



**January 16, 2018**

**Vice President Sophie Chang's State of the University Address**

First, I want to say thank you to all the faculty leaders, administration, staff, students, and all our other partners at Ohio State for being here tonight. I am grateful for your continued support of USG and of the student voice. I'd also like to thank our entire senior staff, all our directors, deputy directors, senators, and committee representatives for their support, and more specifically my Senior Counselor Tony Buss for always being there to support me.

As I sat down to think about what I wanted to say tonight, I was overcome with nostalgia and wonder. It truly is hard to believe that we have come to this point in the academic year already. Andrew and I have had the extraordinary pleasure of representing the undergraduate student population for nine months, and I can say with absolute sincerity that it has been a great honor.

In my inaugural address, I spoke about the idea of home and how Ohio State has been the first place I truly felt at home. In case you missed that speech, I have moved 24 times in my 21 years on this Earth, and home has usually been a transient feeling. But Ohio State is my home now. Because of USG, I have been given the incredible opportunity to help make a lasting mark on my first true home.

Andrew and I have had a busy nine months, working with our whole organization to honor the promises we made as candidates, and the promises we've made during our term. I am so proud of how much our team has been able to accomplish, and excited to see how much we're able to achieve before our term ends.

One of our branches of USG is the Judicial Panel, which is comprised of a Chief Justice and a team of Associate Justices and Clerks of Court. Much of their work is done behind the scenes, but is pivotal to our success. We have the highest number of new justices on our Judicial Panel in recent years, with three of the nine appointed just last spring. We had a record number of amazing applicants, passionate about making their mark on the USG elections process, which made our search even more difficult. Connor Greenwood, in his

second year as Chief Justice, has led a highly successful transition process so the Judicial Panel will be poised for success for years to come.

As part of my role as VP, I serve as the Speaker of the General Assembly. GA is the legislative body of USG, comprised of 42 elected students and 6 Cabinet directors. All undergraduates are represented by senators from their respective colleges and living areas. The resolutions passed by the GA serve as statements that carry the weight of all 52,517 undergraduates here at Ohio State, so these senators are charged with a very important task.

First, I'd like to thank the GA Steering Committee, whose role is to vet incoming legislation and confirm the agenda for each Wednesday's meeting. Steering is comprised of our Secretary Amraha Nadeem, Parliamentarian Michael Swaggerty, Senators Maria Humayun, Chris Weller, and Chase Barnett, and Student Affairs Director Erin Donnelly. We often meet in person on Sunday afternoons, or virtually, and I appreciate the extra work they do each week.

The Allocations Committee assists student organizations across Ohio State by allocating more than \$55,000 thus far in the year to programming funds and organizational development grants. Our GA Deputy Directors Maria Humayun, Chase Barnett, Julia Dennen, Ben Kanas, Chris Weller, and Savannah Sockwell serve on Allocations. It was led last semester by our former Deputy Chief Financial Officer, Averi Townsend, who is currently participating in the Washington Academic Internship Program. This semester, Jacob Catron has transitioned into his new role as Deputy Chief Financial Officer and head of Allocations. Each week, Jacob and his team gather to listen to proposals by student organization leaders and allocate funding back to students. Thank you to everyone on Allocations for your work to help students.

Members of the GA hold a critical responsibility to draft, debate, and vote on pieces of legislation that aim to advance policies to enhance the student experience. Each that I discuss tonight is an example of how our amazing senators and directors have identified student needs, consulted with constituents, and attempted to help solve the issue.

This year, my team in GA has passed 50-R-10: A Resolution to Canvass for the Creation of a Standardized Absence Policy. The main sponsor was Business Senator Chase Barnett, along with Academic Affairs Director Kate Greer, Diversity and Inclusion Director Farhan Quadri, and Senators Becky Slavik and Amraha Nadeem. They identified a need for a standardized absence policy to be applied across the university's colleges, and advocated

for the definition of excused absences to be expanded to include events such as religious observances, serious illnesses, and compelling circumstances beyond students' control.

Commuter Senator Amraha Nadeem authored 50-R-14: A Resolution to Make STEP More Accessible to Commuter and Transfer Students, along with Kate Greer, Chase Barnett, Jordan Malpass, and Shukri Ahmed as co-sponsors. This resolution supports the automatic enrollment of commuter and transfer students into the Second-Year Transformational Experience Program.

Responding to calls from the student body, Senator and newly elected Deputy Director for Diversity and Inclusion Savannah Sockwell authored 50-R-24: A Resolution to Remove Investments from Top 200 Fossil Fuel Corporations, Energy Transfer Partners, and Duke Energy to advocate for the university to divest from fossil fuel corporations. Co-sponsors included Sustainability Director Vikas Munjal, Farhan Quadri, Senators Kinza Sami, Nate Smith, Safiyo Mohamud, Emma Meersman, Shukri Ahmed, Halima Mohamed, and Alexis McKenzie.

Affordability has remained a focus for the General Assembly as well. Public Affairs Senator Julia Dennen introduced 50-R-16: A Resolution to Support Textbook Affordability by Encouraging a State and Local Sales Tax Exemption for Post-Secondary Textbooks, along with Celeste Morris, Kate Greer, and Chase Barnett. Kate and Julia then presented this idea to the Ohio House Ways and Means Committee.

This weekend, some members of USG attended the Association of Big Ten Students winter conference at Michigan State University. During discussions with representatives from other Big Ten student governments, we were reminded that our shared governance model and our capacity for change is unmatched by our peer institutions. Our representation in Ohio State's shared governance model is no exception -- we hold 41 seats in University Senate, a body of 137 members representing faculty, administrators, and students. As Vice President, I have the privilege of appointing our undergraduate representatives on University Senate and on university-level committees. Mario, Andrew and I have worked together to appoint dedicated undergraduates who take their roles very seriously. We truly appreciate the opportunity to connect with dedicated faculty and administrators on issues that impact all of us, and have made a firm commitment to utilize our representation in shared governance as a catalyst for positive change at Ohio State.

We started this year in USG with the theme: One USG, One University. Nothing embodies this idea better than our work with Shared Governance and University-Level Committees.

I'd like to extend a special thank you to our Chair of the Undergraduate Caucus, Mario Belfiglio, and his team of Vice Chairs (Michael Frank, Rebecca Gutterman, Kurt Shaffer, and Lauren Fectel) for leading our Shared Governance efforts, and to all of our University Senators and committee representatives. Mario works tirelessly to lead our caucus to ensure the undergraduate voice is heard in the highest levels of our University. This year they have worked on a myriad of affordability issues such as tax-exempt textbooks and allowing students to increase their credit hours from eighteen to twenty-one without furthering their financial burden.

We strive to Make our Mark not just during our time at Ohio State, but for generations of future Buckeyes. A great example of such collaboration is our work with administration on general education reform. Samer, Mario, and Kate serve on the General Education Review Committee and regularly dialogue with faculty and administrative leaders to devise the best solution for undergraduates. We're delighted that USG has had a say in the future of Ohio State's general education curriculum, and we're looking ahead to the adoption of forward-thinking GEs for future Buckeyes.

Academic Affairs Director Kate Greer also introduced an idea last year to include a "Seal of Biliteracy" on the diplomas of students proficient in more than one language. This would serve to market language skills and recognize the accomplishments of our multilingual students. Kate started this movement in her first year in USG and has made incredible strides to make it a reality.

As Mario said last week in Cabinet, some of the best ideas that USG has worked on and helped implement have come from first-year members. Nobody should be afraid to have ideas or to voice them. This year, we have several exciting projects in the works created by first-year USG members which all have the potential to become reality because of not only their vision, but their hard work in the weeks and months to come.

Chris Funk of Health and Safety has developed the idea of adding the phone numbers of important student resources, such as CCS and OSU PD, to the back of BuckIDs so help is never too far away. Student Affairs CR, Raychel Edelsberg, introduced the idea of a revamped roommate pairing process so future Buckeyes are more likely to have a better match, giving them less to worry about when moving into a residence hall for the first time. Caleb Hineman from Academic Affairs saw a need for better textbook accessibility for students with disabilities. No Buckeye should be hindered in their ability to learn because of their ability status.

I am so proud of the many accomplishments our team has worked on this year. Our long-awaited goal to increase the accessibility of tampons and pads in Ohio State facilities is finally coming to fruition with the formation of a pilot program in the Union and RPAC, beginning this semester. Abi McGowan and Julia Dennen brought Columbus City Councilwoman Elizabeth Brown to have a dialogue with us on the importance of this access. Lei Guo created #EmbraceTheDifference, a campaign which consists of hugging those who share different identities from ourselves, because once we get to know one another, it really is true that we aren't all that different.

In the continued spirit of One USG, One University, our team formed new relationships across campus that have grown the USG family. Office of the Chief Information Officer, Mike Hofherr and his team helped us work to create a scholarship registry so students can find these opportunities in one place. We are also excited to work with them on the Digital Flagship Initiative to increase accessibility of open educational resources. We reconnected with University Libraries and their team to increase awareness of textbook options. The Registrar's office became a USG partner this year when they worked with us on the rapid release of a message to DACA students on BuckeyeLink.

This year has been a whirlwind of activity that could never have been done without the continual support of faculty leaders, administrators, staff, and our amazing advisor Matt Couch for endless patience and guidance through our 9 months in office. We can never thank them enough. Andrew and I ran for USG President and VP because we wanted to give back to the place that has given so much to us. Our team has embodied that spirit with pride and diligence, never missing an opportunity to make meaningful change. We are so proud of them for dedicating their spare time to bettering the lives of people they may never meet. I cannot wait to see what they do next.

Thank you for being here this evening and never forget that we are #HereWithYou.