SIC’s 11th Annual Crawfish Boil

There is nothing that celebrates summer right around the corner quite like a crawfish boil. Each year, Auxiliary Enterprises and the Student Inter-Council (SIC) host a university-wide crawfish boil for students and their guests across all six UTHealth schools. For the past two years, the event was on hiatus due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Fortunately, the SIC was proud to hold our 11th Annual Crawfish Boil on April 1st, 2022. We had 726 people attend, comprised of 568 students and 158 guests. These numbers do not account for faculty or staff, but many were present to help eat the 3,000 pounds of crawfish and 1,600 hotdogs that were boiled for the amazing event.

The crawfish boil was held outside in the Cooley Center Courtyard. Many attendees had the opportunity to reunite with friends while meeting other students across UTHealth all while enjoying their time peeling crawfish. Attendees also enjoyed music with a DJ, free beverages, koozies, bookstore gift card raffles, and validation for parking.

Additionally, a booth hosted by representatives from alumni engagement was at the event to familiarize current students with alumni services.

This was our first in-person event of the year, and we were very happy to see the comradery and fellowship that ensued.

The SIC especially thanks Charlie Figari and the Auxiliary Enterprises Team, the Student Activities Committee, and the SIC Advisors and SIC Members for helping make this event happen. We also want to thank each person who was in attendance, as this celebration could not have been possible without you. We hope to see you all next year for our 12th Annual SIC Crawfish Boil!

Mehgan Orsak,
Cizik School of Nursing
In the Fall of 2021, the SIC Outreach Committee took part in the UTPD Toy Drive and partnered with Casa De Esperanza. With the new year, the committee came back rejuvenated and ready to do more in our community.

The first of these events was the Science and Engineering Science Fair of Houston (SEFH). SEFH is an event held for students in grades 6-12 in the greater Houston area, and this year, the event went back to being a live event held at the George R Brown Center. Information about the event was shared with all SIC members and others at UTHealth. Several took part as judges for the event. This is an annual event, and we look forward to SIC’s continued support for the next generation of scientists and scholars.

Continuing the theme of supporting the next generation of thinkers and scholars, the outreach committee coordinated donation to Books Between Kids, Inc., a Houston non-profit that provides books for at-risk elementary school students. SIC members took the time to pick out a number of books with STEM and DEI focus. The team at Books Between Kids took note of the quality of genre and content donated by the SIC. The next event the Outreach Committee coordinated was a weekend afternoon volunteering event at the Houston Food Bank. The Houston Food Bank is a central hub that provides food and goods to the underserved population in Houston, TX and nearby areas through various pantries, schools, and other modes.

A small but mighty group came together to clean items, sort and put together food boxes.

The last but not least impactful event coordinated by the SIC Outreach Committee for the year was an opportunity for students and staff to shed their old electronics and ensure they are recycled properly during the SIC Outreach - Go Green Earth! collection days took place May 8-10 at the end of the school year. This and all Outreach Committee events are not possible without the entire SIC support and with administrative and coordination help from the Auxiliary Enterprises team.

Sharmily Roy, School of Public Health
SIC’s Speaker Series

With new student leadership and the demand for interdisciplinary conversations for all UTHealth students and their professional schools, three of our members: Sonia Patel (GSBS), Jayanta Mondal (GSBS), and Sharmeen Hamid (SBMI) took initiative and established the SIC Speaker Series. This series, which was in its brainstorming stage during the Fall 2021 semester, held its inaugural conversation on January 26, 2022, with Dr. Pierre Azzam, Clinical Associate Professor of Psychiatry at the University of Pittsburgh School of Medicine.

Dr. Azzam’s talk, “Seven Tips for Maximizing Mental Wellness Through Graduate Health Education” provided tips to attendees on how to promote mental wellness with a busy student schedule and had an insightful Q&A session that discussed wellness, dealing with the aftermath of quarantine, and how to improve the conversation of mental health in academic settings.

The second conversation held by this committee took place on March 29, 2022, with Dustin Peterson, who is the founder and lead at Proof Leadership, an author, and a career trainer and coach.

Peterson’s talk “Authentic Leadership: Leading from the Inside Out” focused on tips on how to be an effective leader as graduate students and after in career setting. Prizes, including bookstore gift cards, UberEats gift cards, and an iPad were door prizes to attendees and a prize was also allocated for the school that had the largest number of participants attending each event. Sonia Patel, one of the Co-Chairs of the SIC Speaker Series, stated that “[our] committee was elated that over 200 students attended either of the past 2 events, and the committee looks forward to planning future speaker series events from a variety of science and healthcare experts.”

Jayanta Mondal, the second Co-Chair of this Committee, stated that “in the future, we intend to organize speaker series events that shall focus on professionally developing UTHealth students towards transitioning to a successful career in either academia/industry and shall aid in their job search once they graduate through guiding them towards writing an effective cover letter/resume, etc.”

Lastly, Sharmeen Hamid, the third Co-Chair for this committee stated that “The speaker series was intended to address important topics that would prove knowledgeable for students from different backgrounds at UTHealth and our first two events did exactly that. I personally enjoyed our first speaker Dr. Pierre Azzam as he discussed mental health tailored for graduate students concisely with seven tips. As we continue to include student suggestions and curate our future events, I am excited and extremely hopeful for this new committee and believe it will address a wide range of topics that will engage all students at UTHealth.”

Mary Fuentes, Graduate School of Biomedical Sciences
Deans’ Dinner

In this bluebonnet blooming Spring season, the 2021-22 SIC Deans’ Dinner was held on the evening of April 27th. The honorable Deans attending were Dr. John Valenza, the Dean of the School of Dentistry, Dr. Michael Blackburn, the Dean of the Graduate School of Biomedical Sciences, Dr. Latanya Love, the Dean of Education of McGovern Medical School, Dr. Amy Franklin, the Associate Dean of the School of Biomedical Informatics, Dr. Susan Ruppert, the Associate Dean of the Cizik School of Nursing, and Dr. Mary Smith, the Assistant Dean of the School of Public Health in this annual event. The SIC representatives had a delightful and informative conversation and exchange with the UTHealth Deans.

The dinner was co-hosted by Mr. Eric Solberg, the SVP of the Academic & Research Affairs, and Niharika Neela, the SIC President. During the dinner, SIC representatives reviewed the accomplishments in the past year, such as the SIC 24th Annual Salutation, the 11th Annual Crawfish Boil, the Inaugural Speaker Series, and the Week of Conversations on Diversity and Diversi-Tea Party. In his remarks, Mr. Solberg expressed his gratitude to all the SIC representatives for their dedication, hard work, and contributions to these achievements.

Several students were formally awarded SIC scholarships: Ileana Corsi (Graduate school of Biomedical Sciences) and Sonia Patel (Graduate School of Biomedical Sciences) were awarded the SIC Academic Achievement Scholarships. Sydney Pham (School of Dentistry) and Eleonore Saliba (School of Public Health) were awarded the Toshi Ni-

kaidoh Service Award. Nour Alia (School of Biomedical Informatics) and Megan Jiao (McGovern Medical School) were awarded the Shohrae Hajibashi Memorial Leadership Award. In addition, Sharmeen Hamid (School of Biomedical Informatics) was awarded the 2021-22 Thomas F. Burks Outstanding Leadership and Service Award.

The 2022-2023 SIC officers were also formally announced at the event. The team includes Kate Wall (President), Jayanta Mondal (Vice President), Melissa Liu (Secretary), Cem Dede (Treasurer), and Amber Chen (Historian).

As a result of the continuous tremendous support provided by UTHealth, SIC continues to not only endure but prosper during the current pandemic. Envisioning the future, we are looking forward to more achievements and another exciting year to serve our student body. As Leonard Sweet said, “The future is something we create.”

Xiao “Lilac” Li,
School of Public Health
The SIC recently hosted their annual Deans’ Dinner on Wednesday, April 27th at the Molecular Medicine building. At the event, the winners of the SIC’s three prestigious scholarships were awarded to multiple hardworking UTHealth students who demonstrate high achievement, service, and leadership. Each of the recipients were awarded $1,000 for the academic year in which they applied and received recognition for their incredible applications and attributes. The three scholarship awards and the respective selected recipients are listed below along with the criteria for selection.

The SIC Academic Achievement Award is awarded to two students who excelled in academics and not only participate and perform well in the classroom, but are also active in mentorship and research. The two winners selected are:

Sonia Patel — PhD Candidate in Cancer Biology in the UTHealth Graduate School of Biomedical Sciences (GSBS). Sonia is a 4th year PhD student who has received much recognition in her field in cancer biology research. She has held many positions at UTHealth including but not limited to SIC Vice President, UTSAC, MD Anderson Graduate Education Committee and GSBS Cancer Biology Program Steering Committee.

Ileana Corsi — PhD Candidate in Microbiology and Infectious Diseases in the UTHealth Graduate School of Biomedical Sciences (GSBS). Apart from her research accolades and achievements, Ileana has been an active mentor in her department and has served in many leadership positions for various organizations including the TMC Chapter of American Society for Microbiology, Association Minority Biomedical Researchers, GSBS Graduate Student Association, and helped organize the Young Biologist Program.

Sydney Pham — DS2 at UTHealth School of Dentistry. Sydney is one of the Albert Schweitzer Fellows and has co-planned and implemented a project at TIRR Memorial Hermann to provide oral health care education to spinal cord injury patients. She also serves as the Volunteer Coordinator for her school’s American Student Dental Association, planning fundraisers and volunteer events within the community.

The Toshi Nikaidoh Service Award is given to individuals who demonstrate qualities of love, passion, drive, selflessness and love for humanity. The students selected are ones who have served their community diligently and selflessly, and exude honorable characteristics. The two winners selected are:

Sydney Pham — DS2 at UTHealth School of Dentistry. Sydney is one of the Albert Schweitzer Fellows and has co-planned and implemented a project at TIRR Memorial Hermann to provide oral health care education to spinal cord injury patients. She also serves as the Volunteer Coordinator for her school’s American Student Dental Association, planning fundraisers and volunteer events within the community.
SIC Scholarship Winners

Eleonore Nabil Saliba — Student in UTHealth School of Public Health. Eleonore served as Co-Director for UT Austin’s Camp Kesem Chapter, a non-profit for children affected by a guardian’s cancer and helped plan and organize fundraisers and events to ensure the execution of the summer camp was a success. She also is involved in Partners Against Child Trafficking (PACT).

The Shohrae Hajibashi Memorial Leadership Award is awarded to students who embody strong leadership skills and exude selflessness, compassion, and passion for the UTHealth community. The two students selected for this years award are:

Nour Alia — Registered Dietitian (RD) and MS student at UTHealth School of Biomedical Informatics (SBMI). Nour boasts many leadership positions within her school and for the UTHealth institution. Some of her main leadership positions include President of the SBMI Student Governance Organization, Historian and SBMI Representative for UTHealth Student Inter-Council, and Director for the Healthcare Innovation Collaborative. She was also selected as a UTHealthLeads fellow, a program that promotes development of leaders in healthcare by offering networking opportunities with executives in the TMC and throughout Texas.

Megan Jiao — MS2 at McGovern Medical School. Megan is the Co-President for the Asian Pacific American Medical Student Association, Vice President for the Academic Medicine Student Organization, and volunteers at the Houston Outreach Medicine Education and Social Services Clinic. She is a passionate advocate for the AAPI community and works hard to promote awareness of the disparities and issues related to it.

Visit our Scholarship Page to learn more about criteria and how to apply for the SIC scholarships in the upcoming school year.

Melissa Liu,
School of Dentistry
SIC’s International Student Committee

International students, trainees, faculty, staff, and visitors are a vital part of the community at all six schools of The University of Texas Health Science Center at Houston (UTHealth). It is no secret that many of our friends and colleagues at UTHealth from around the world play an essential part in advancing the mission and vision of UTHealth. They also reflect and are integral to fostering diversity, equity, and inclusion culture at UTHealth. The impact of the international community can be gauged by the fact that an estimated 50,000 UTHealth alumni are making a difference around the world. Currently, 11% of the total student population of 5,758 students enrolled in the six schools of UTHealth Houston are international students.

The primary purpose of the Student InterCouncil is to improve the quality of student life at UTHealth. All students’ values, voices, and feedback, including international students, have been invaluable to the SIC. Typically, the international students at UTHealth have been represented by three International Student Representatives elected each year from all six schools at UTHealth. During the past 2021-2022 academic year, the International Student Representatives in the SIC were Sharmeen Hamid (SBMI), Cem Dede (GSBS), and Jayanta Mondal (GSBS).

Living through the historic and unprecedented two years of the COVID-19 pandemic, we all experienced significant disruption and challenges. There was a sharp decline in international students studying in the United States during the last two academic years. It was also exceptionally challenging for the international community at UTHealth because international students had considerable uncertainty due to border closings, flight cancellations, and other challenges related to international travel brought upon by the COVID-19 pandemic. During this time, the UTHealth Office of International Affairs played an even more critical role in facilitating the needs of the international community at UTHealth.

If you are an international student at UTHealth, we would love to hear your input and feedback on how we can improve your experience at UTHealth. Please reach out to us and consider joining the SIC as an International Student Representative!

Zaid Soomro,
School of Biomedical Informatics
The SIC Alumni Association

The SIC is an opportunity to for student representatives across all UTHealth Houston schools to collaborate, relay feedback, and enhance the student experience. The network and change created as a result of having a governance structure such as the SIC is invaluable. Vice President, Sonia Patel, as well as the SIC Operations Committee Chair, sought an opportunity to maintain the relationships built through involvement in the SIC. The committee presented the idea of creating an SIC Alumni Association to maintain the relationships and network among UTHealth SIC members and alumni by leveraging an alumni database. Additionally, the database would enable an understanding of how the leadership experience garnered as a student could be transferred when beginning professional careers in the workforce.

Ultimately, it was decided by the SIC to move forward with creating the SIC Alumni Network by creating an exclusive group on LinkedIn with the goal of posting relevant student career development opportunities as well as job posts.

At this time, there are 49 students and alumni who have joined the SIC Alumni Network group on LinkedIn with numerous posts shared to disseminate information on symposiums, job opportunities, as well as workshops.

Nour Alia,
School of Biomedical Informatics

UTHealth Houston SIC Alumni Network

About this group

Welcome! UTHealth’s Student Intercouncil (SIC) would like the UTHealth SIC Alumni Network to serve as a resource for students to interact with UTHealth SIC alumni across a variety of different health-related fields and to help expand their professional networks.
**Apply for SIC Project Funding!**

- 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 UTHealth.
- 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](#)

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**2021-2022 SIC Officers**

**President**  
Niharika Neela, McGovern Medical School

**Vice President**  
Sonia Patel, Graduate School of Biomedical Sciences

**Secretary**  
Jayanta Mondal  
Graduate School of Biomedical Sciences

**Treasurer**  
Katherine Wall,  
School of Public Health

**Historian**  
Nour Alia,  
School of Biomedical Informatics

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https://www.facebook.com/UTHealth.SIC  
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@uthealthsic
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.

## 2021-2022 SIC Representatives

### 2021-2022 Officers:

- McGovern Medical School:
  - Niharika Neela (President)
  - Sonia Patel (Vice President)
  - Jayanta Mondal (Secretary)
  - Kate Wall (Treasurer)
  - Nour Alia (Historian)

- School of Dentistry:
  - Clayton Culp
  - Niharika Neela
  - Jordan Swan

### Members at Large Representatives:

- Graduate School of Biomedical Sciences:
  - Mary Fuentes
  - Swati Mohapatra
  - Sonia Patel

- International Student Representatives:
  - Cem Dede
  - Sharmeen Hamid
  - Jayanta Mondal

- School of Public Health:
  - Xiao "Lilac" Li
  - Ruchika Mahala
  - Sharmily Roy

- School of Biomedical Informatics:
  - Nour Alia
  - Angela Hayes
  - Zaid Soomro

- School of Nursing:
  - Elia Macha
  - Lia Olim
  - Mehgan Orsak