



UNIVERSITY  
OF ILLINOIS  
SYSTEM

ALTOGETHER EXTRAORDINARY

# Systemically Addressing the Grand Challenges of Our Community Post-Pandemic

University Senates Conference  
Presented by Christopher M. Span, UIUC

Board of Trustees - March 11, 2021



# The Pandemic has Exposed and Exacerbated the Deep Structural Inequities



This academic year, the **University Senate Conference (USC)** reviewed matters that:

- Affect the integrity and future of the University of Illinois system
- Empower each university to use its intellectual resources and innovations in collaboration to mitigate and address pressing social concerns





## Collaborative Innovations

- Developed a COVID-19 Response through SHIELD TEAM
- The Saliva-Base Test
- USC Elevated Racial Justice as a Permanent Priority
- Senates Modified Campus Policies and Responses to Protect the Well-Being and Educational Experiences of Students



# Post-Pandemic Opportunities

- How do we address the differential needs of faculty and students, including K-12, who have been harmed by the pandemic?
- How do we prepare the next generation of students on our campuses?
- What roles can our universities play in addressing the causes and effects of civil unrest and political divisiveness?
- What are our next opportunities for innovation?

# Continued Systemic and Universities Responses to the Pandemic

- Extend research and educational outreach to address COVID pandemic response and both economic and social recovery
- Better integrate on-line and in-house higher education that addresses diversity and opportunity in post-pandemic economy
- Improve the Illinois pipeline: collaboration and cooperation between the universities, the state and federal government, and business

# Preparing the Next Generation

COVID forced us to think critically about every facet of higher education, including:

- Enhanced Planning Responses
- Cumulative Impactful Learning
- Adaptive Strategies to Address Needs of Society

# Addressing the Causes and Effects of Civil Unrest & Political Divisiveness

COVID exacerbated longstanding social inequities, deepened political divisiveness, and stimulated protest and unrest. The deaths of African Americans at the hands of the police, systemic racism, disparities in health and health care, divisive partisan politics, the insurrection at the Capitol, disinformation, etc. have further polarized our nation and reduced national effectiveness in addressing social needs.

What role can our universities play in addressing these challenges?

- **Call to Address Systemic Racism (UIUC)**
- **Advancing Racial Equity Initiative (UIC)**
- **Anti-Racism and Social Justice (UIS)**





# Where do we go from here?

Innovation and engagement are needed to ensure we have prepared our students, faculty, alumni, and communities to live and work in society together and promote the common good.

- Establish Structural Engagement Opportunities?
- Create an “Illinois Network pipeline”?
- Utilize Different Modalities of Learning to Build Community?
- Learning from Our Emergency Experience?



**THANK YOU!**

**QUESTIONS?**

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