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## Student InterCouncil's Mental Health Initiative

Graduate students face the constant pressure of keeping up with the pace of their respective schools, assignment submissions, working part-time jobs, maintaining social relationships, and exercise. Most students do not recognize their limitations, unable to acknowledge if the stress level is beyond their own manageable threshold. This is where we aim to step up and find a way to aid the student body in coping with mental health issues. SIC is championing the mental health initiative as its main focus for the 2018-2019 academic year to work toward improving awareness and access to mental health resources.

Several of our SIC representatives have spoken about the unique challenges that their respective schools face. For instance, representatives from the McGovern Medical School and UTHealth School of Dentistry expressed their concern about lack of a system for excused absences in clinics, which may hinder regular counseling sessions. Graduate School of Biomedical Sciences representatives expressed concerns about burnout, a phenomenon which affects us all. Nevertheless, several schools within UTHealth have begun taking steps toward improving the student mental health experience by offering mental resilience seminars and dog therapy during exam times, encouraging student leadership to seek creative ways to combat the stresses each graduate student faces. *(cont'd on pg.3)*

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## Student InterCouncil Salutation 2018

Beginning a new chapter in one's life, such as moving to Houston and starting school at UTHealth, can pose challenges that are both professional and personal in nature. Whether it is your first month in Houston and you are trying to navigate the city for the first time while managing new classes or you have a few semesters under your belt, the beginning of each academic year offers students a fresh start that can be both exciting, and sometimes intimidating.

Students attending UTHealth are lucky enough to have an administration and student governance organization who understand the stresses of beginning a new academic year and host an event focused on orienting students, as well as celebrate new beginnings.

On Wednesday, Oct. 3, 2018, the Student InterCouncil (SIC) and the Office of the President hosted Salutation. Salutation is an event held annually to welcome students to the new academic year and introduce them to various offices and services offered by the university, and affiliates, that can enhance student life on campus. Salutation took place from 5:30 to 7:30 p.m. at the Denton A. Cooley, M.D. and Ralph C. Cooley, D.D.S. University Life Center.

Upon arriving, students were welcomed by members of SIC and invited to participate in activities that made them eligible for many fun and exciting door prizes, including Beats by Dre, a Beats Pill and Portable Speaker, and Kindle Fire! A large buffet of delicious food was also served during the evening, and gave students the chance to eat and mingle with other students from across each of the six UTHealth schools. Faculty and administrators from the various schools were also in attendance, and available to talk with students and answer questions. *(cont'd on pg. 3)*

## Star of Hope Turkey Drive

Every year to help celebrate Thanksgiving, the UTHealth Student InterCouncil (SIC) partners with the Star of Hope to provide a warm Thanksgiving meal to those in need. The Turkey Drive is an opportunity for the SIC Community Outreach Committee to purchase turkeys which are donated to the Star of Hope's Cornerstone Community.

The Star of Hope is a non-profit mission organization in Houston that aims to provide support and services to the homeless population.

This year SIC had the privilege of donating 40 turkeys! This donation helped the Star of Hope make a traditional Thanks-

giving meal that was given to others who might not have had this warm holiday meal otherwise. Doing something nice to help others always elicits a warm and gracious feeling within, especially during this holiday season. Hopefully seeing this act of kindness lights a spark in you to go out and perform an act of kindness of your own.

Elise Gonzalez  
SIC Representative  
Nursing Student  
Cizik School of Nursing



## Nature Career Expo

Career development is one of the most important aspects for all students throughout the Texas Medical Center. Students from across UTHealth helped coordinate and run the first NatureJobs Career Expo in Texas on Saturday, Oct. 27, 2018 at the TMCx Accelerator. This event provided a great opportunity for students and postdocs to network, prepare for job searches, and learn about new job openings in the Houston area.

Students were given the opportunity to attend exclusive seminars by Lauren Celano, M.B.A., CEO and Founder of Propel Careers in Boston, and Jean-Luc Doumont, Ph.D., founding partner of Principiae in Belgium. Both speakers covered topics including developing leadership skills and building transferable and career relevant skills. Four students also attended lunch with Lauren Celano, during which they discussed some of the career choices in biomedical sciences.

Many students participated in the one-on-one CV, resume, or LinkedIn review and found it helpful in tailoring their job application material to appeal to the specific positions they are interested in. Additionally, students used the professional headshot service provided at the event, and participated in the speed-

networking event to network with people across fifteen different career themes. Our hope is that events like this will continue to flourish, helping students prepare for the next step after graduation.

Jie (Jessica) Chen  
SIC International Representative  
PhD Candidate  
The University of Texas MD Anderson  
Cancer UTHealth Graduate School of  
Biomedical Sciences



Image courtesy of Dwight Andrews

## Mental Health (cont'd)

(cont'd from pg.1)

SIC will be collaborating with Sudhakar Selvaraj, MD, PhD, director of the UTHealth Student Counseling Center, director of the Depression Research Program and assistant professor in the Department of Psychiatry and Behavioral Sciences at McGovern Medical School, to help reach out to the student body and communicate student needs to help improve the UTHealth Student Counseling Center.

Recently, UTHealth launched Therapy Assistance Online (TAO), which addresses common concerns such as stress, sadness, living with pain, drug/alcohol use, and relationship/communication issues with students.

This web based, self-guided program is available for any student with a UTHealth email address, 24/7. More information on TAO is available on the Student Health and Counseling services website at: [www.uth.edu/studenthealth/](http://www.uth.edu/studenthealth/)  
In the coming year, SIC hopes to work to address student mental health issues across all six UTHealth schools, and welcomes your suggestions. After all, mental health plays a vital role in our overall health!

Sehej Kaur Hara  
SIC Representative  
BDS, MPH Student  
UTHealth School of Public Health



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## Salutation (cont'd)

(continued from pg. 1)

A total of 281 students signed in to the event. Salutation is set up in many ways like an orientation fair, there are multiple booths set up around the perimeter of the event center for students to move through. Students had the opportunity to meet with Auxiliary Enterprises, which runs student housing, UTHealth shuttle buses, the recreation center, and campus printing, to name a few services. Also in attendance were representatives from the Bookstore, METRO, Texas Medical Center Library, Office of International Affairs, Student Health and Counseling Services, UT Dentists, Office of the Registrar, Bursar, and Student Financial Services, UT Police at Houston, Information Technology, Environmental Health and Safety, and Public Affairs. These offices and services were invited to orient students to UTHealth and the Texas Medical Center campus to help new the year run smoothly with students having the knowledge about which services were readily available to them throughout the semester.

There was even a voter registration station for students to learn how to regis-

ter to vote, as even this civic activity can be a challenge to students who now live in a new city, or are just becoming eligible to vote.

SIC looks forward to hosting this event again in the future!

If you missed Salutation and would like more information about the services offered to students,

please visit the Central Student Portal website at:

[www.uth.edu/student](http://www.uth.edu/student)

Brennan Welch  
SIC Representative  
Dental Student  
UTHealth School of Dentistry



## Upcoming SIC Events

**SIC Sports Day!**  
 Saturday, Feb. 2, 2019  
 10 a.m.-2 p.m.  
 Be sure to sign up!  
 Bring your ID to play



**Annual SIC Crawfish Boil**  
 Friday, April 5, 2019  
 The Denton A. Cooley, MD and  
 Ralph C. Cooley, DDS  
 University Life Center, courtyard

One guest per student welcome

## Toy Drive

In the spirit of the holiday season, SIC has teamed up with the UT Police at Houston for their Annual Children's Gift Drive. Donations will be collected through Friday, Dec. 14, at donation boxes placed throughout the Texas Medical Center.

UT Police at Houston has brought joy to children and families at Harris Health Lyndon B. Johnson Hospital, CE Odom Pediatric and Adolescent Health Center, and UTHealth Harris County Psychiatric Center through the annual children's gift drive for several years.

The gift drive is not just about the toys the children receive – it is about the hope and happiness a thoughtful gift brings. Police will be collecting toys for a range of age groups. All donations must be unwrapped and placed in boxes throughout the TMC.

As said by UT Police, "We are once again excited by this effort. We rely on the generosity of the people of this university to bring smiles to children in need this holiday season. Many thanks to all supporters!"

We are honored to team up for such a great group of people at UTHealth and wish these kids and the generous police department a great holiday season!

Alexandra Alvarenga  
 SIC Representative  
 Student  
 UTHealth School of Public Health

### Follow us!

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<https://www.facebook.com/UTHealth.SIC>



**Instagram: studentinter\_councilUTH**



**Twitter: @UTHSIC**



# What is the Student InterCouncil?

The Student InterCouncil (SIC) is the official UTHealth student governance organization and is the 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 and three from underrepresented student groups and three international student constituencies.

The SIC contributes to the quality of student life at UTHealth by participating in the development and implementation of policies and procedures affecting students; providing funds to support special projects of other UTHealth registered student organizations; representing student interests on external and internal committees; improving communication among the schools through the publication of an SIC newsletter- *Student Pulse*, and planning and implementing activities that encompass all students across UTHealth.

Remember that we are here to be your voice, so contact us anytime at [sicgov@uth.tmc.edu](mailto:sicgov@uth.tmc.edu).

## 2018-2019 SIC Representatives

### Graduate School of Biomedical Sciences

- Alem Belachew, President
- Jeffrey Ackroyd, Secretary
- Tristen Tellman, Historian

### School of Nursing

- Elise Gonzalez
- Emily Keller
- Dawn Modic

### McGovern Medical School

- Alejandro Chapa
- Austin Miller
- Crystal Nwannunu

### School of Biomedical Informatics

- Ankita Misra
- Danilo Pena
- Stephen Simington, Treasurer

### School of Dentistry

- Megan Short
- Brennan Welch

### School of Public Health

- Alexandra Alvarenga
- Kimberly D'Souza, Vice President
- Evit John

### International Student Representatives

- Jie (Jessica) Chen, GSBS
- Sehej Hara, SPH
- Liang Wu, SPH

### Underrepresented Student Representatives

- Krystal English, GSBS
- Micaela Sandoval, SPH

## The 2018-2019 Student InterCouncil

