Chancellor's Committee on the Status of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Queer People

02/21/2023

Dear RFP Committee,

As representing bodies of the LGBTQ+ community at UIC, the Chancellor's Committee on the Status of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Queer People's (CCSLGBTQP) and the Gender & Sexuality Center (GSC) are opposed to the renewal of Chick-fil-A's (CfA) lease and strongly supports their removal from our campus.

CfA is widely known for donating millions of dollars to anti-LGBTQ+ groups through its WinShape Organization. Their former CEO, who stepped last November, has made multiple hostile comments over marriage equality and continues to fund anti-LGBTQ+ organizations, specifically the National Christian Foundation (NCF). The NCF gives money to groups like the Alliance Defending Freedom, a conservative lobby group that authored many of the state-level bills discriminating against transgender youth. Although Dan Cathy stepped down as CEO in November of 2021, he is still Chairman of the Board and there's usually no separating the family-business from the owner. Below are two articles outlining how he recently helped bankroll an effort to kill the Equality Act:

- Chick-fil-A's Owner Dan Cathy Is Connected to Anti-LGBTQ Equality Act Donations
- Chick-fil-A Ties to Anti-Equality Act effort

In 2019, the current CfA President and COO, who is very involved with Focus on the Family, said that "No organization will be excluded from future consideration—faith-based or non-faith-based," and did not outright say that CfA will no longer donate to organizations that oppose LGBTQ+ rights.

The CCSLGBTQP and GSC believes that CfA's practices are not in alignment with UIC's mission and values, and by keeping them on our campus, goes against the Office of Access and Equity's reaffirmation of UIC's commitment to create an inclusive environment. It also runs contrary to the University's recent recognition as one of 2022's Best of the Best 40 Colleges and Universities for LGBTQ+ students in the United States. Lastly, having CfA on campus goes against the very core of UIC's *Through the Lens of Diversity* and the values essential to reaching a truly diverse university as described in the report (page 14)*:*

- ***Accountable Leadership****: UIC has a responsibility to assure that those in positions of decision-making and power actively advance positive institutional transformation.*
- ***Trust****: UIC has a responsibility to promote and foster a climate of trust based on respect for individual identities, shared values, and our shared vision of the university.*

From these two core values alone, having CfA at UIC goes against the fabric of our university and goals for diversity.

Many college campuses have chosen not to conduct business with CfA. Back in 2012, students and staff at University of Illinois Springfield were opposed to having a CfA on their campus. In 2013, Emory University removed Chick-fil-A from Cox Hall. In 2015, Johns Hopkins voted to ban Chick-fil-A from campus. In 2018, Rider University in New Jersey removed Chick-fil-A as an option for on-campus dining based on the company's opposition to the LGBTQ+ community. Last spring, New York University also cut ties with the restaurant for similar reasons. We hope UIC follows suit and does not renew their contract with CfA.

For years, national news has documented CfA's actions and the harm it has had towards LGBTQ+ people. That is why, back in 2016, our own LGBTQ+ students voiced concerns to the former executive director who oversaw the contract and buildout. From what we have gathered, no LGBTQ+ organization on campus was consulted or informed about the contract until it was already underway. We know for a fact that our Committee Co-Chairs at the time were not included in any discussions, and it is unclear if the Office of Diversity was ever consulted. When opposition arose after the announcement and during initial buildout, the concerns from UIC's LGBTQ+ community were not addressed in any meaningful way. Overall, no consultation nor discussions were had with LGBTQ+ individuals who would be impacted by having this business on campus. Knowing UIC's mission and values, we are amazed that Dining Services would invite CfA onto campus in the first place. Would UIC allow another business that exhibits prejudice towards marginalized groups to conduct business on campus? We certainly hope not.

The ACLU is currently tracking 321 anti-LGBTQ bills in the U.S. These bills attempt to undermine and weaken nondiscrimination laws by allowing employers, businesses, and even hospitals to turn away LGBTQ people or refuse them equal treatment. Therefore, UIC must do its part to protect our LGBTQ+ community in any way we can.

In closing, the CCSLGBTQP, GSC, and those undersigned ask that the RFP committee not agree to renew a contract that includes Chick-fil-A as a vendor.

Sincerely,

James Flamm, College of Medicine (Co-Chair)
Marchello Johnson, School of Law (Co-Chair)
Dr. Amelia 'Mimi' Arquilla, Department of Family Medicine, UI Health
Adam Basak, Office of the Vice Chancellor for Health Affairs
Jess Brito, Graduate College
Deepakshi Choudhary, Graduate College
Emilia Ann Chico, College of Education
Alanis Rodriguez Colon, College of Pharmacy
Christine Fernandez, College of Medicine
Dr. Evelyn Figueroa, Department of Family and Community Medicine, UI Health
Amanda Friedlande, School of Law
Gabriel Garcia-Lopez, Graduate College
Kimberly Germain, Office of the Vice Provost for Undergraduate Affairs
Stuart (Essie) Ghafoor, College of Medicine

Emily Gilbert, University Library
Walter Gomez, Jane Addams College of Social Work
Jesse DeWayne Herron, UIH/Patient Care Services
Billy Huff, Gender and Sexuality Center
Curtis Kimberlin, College of Liberal Arts and Sciences
Chuck La Chance, Counseling Center
Roni Lee, College of Architecture, Design, and the Arts
John Lynch, College of Business
Joey Maman, College of Business
Mark Martell, Asian American Resource and Cultural Center
Bonnie Metzgar, School of Theatre and Music
Marc Mobley, Student Development Services
Timothy Nemec, College of Business
Charlie Peterson, Department of Medicine
Kim Ricardo Perez, School of Law
Therese Quinn, College of Architecture, Design, and the Arts
Alexa Richmond, College of Medicine
Leeloo Rose, College of Architecture, Design, and the Arts
Dr. Surya Sabhapathy, Department of Psychiatry, UI Health
Bernard Santarsiero, Office of Diversity, Equity & Engagement
Timothy Sullivan, College of Medicine
Yasmine “Yaz” Tadross, Gender & Sexuality Center
Hugo Trevino, Disability Resource Center
Nic Weststrate, College of Education
Allen Womble, Center for Student Development
Moises Villada, Gender and Sexuality Center