

Chandler Taul

On a Friday evening, March 29, the OLS Department sponsored an event for my capstone project for my master's program. The event was called The Power Game (also known as StarPower). The Power Game was a DEIB-focused simulation that encouraged students to explore themes of power, privilege, and social constructs.

Students were truly engaged throughout the experience, and the reflections that followed demonstrated how impactful the event was. All students had the opportunity to share their thoughts through pre- and post-assessments, which showed an increase in understanding of perspectives different from their own, demonstrating how powerful events can be for the campus community.

A very special thank you to the OLS department and Dr. Carol Clyde for making this event possible and making it a huge success! Thank you to Chris Niles for your guidance on the game and for being available for all my questions. And, finally, Coach Rose Howell, thank you for being flexible and ready for anything!

Thank you all for your support!



Denise Carrick Hedges

Serenbetz Chicago Summer Scholars

Partnering with non-profit agencies in Chicago, the Serenbetz Summer Scholar Program will offer three students a competitive 8-week paid internship opportunity that is not available in the rural Nevada, Missouri community. Specific effort was made to partner with organizations that align with the Serenbetz threads of women's leadership, social responsibility, and global awareness. These selected students will spend their summer making a difference for the non-profit community in Chicago.

2026 Students and Partner Agencies:



Kritika Dhungana, GirlForward

GirlForward aligns closely with my commitment to young women's empowerment, education, and social justice within displaced and marginalized communities. When I visited GirlForward last fall, I saw a journal written by a Nepali girl who was a client of GirlForward. That's when I realized GirlForward would be a great place for me. Looking ahead, I aspire to work in public service and policymaking. To do so responsibly, I believe it is essential to understand grassroots work, how trust is built, how programs operate, and how communities are engaged with dignity. I am honored to contribute to and learn from GirlForward's mission this summer in Chicago.



Pasnadge Matara, Lincoln Park Conservancy

My interest in the conservatory was first sparked when I visited it in person and experienced firsthand how educational, inspiring, and welcoming the space is. Walking through the conservatory, I was struck by how effectively it connects scientific knowledge with public engagement, making complex ideas about plant biology, conservation, and sustainability accessible to people of all ages and backgrounds. As a biochemistry major with a deep and growing interest in plant biology, animal science, and environmental stewardship, I am excited about the opportunity to learn within a living laboratory that integrates conservation, research, and public education. The Lincoln Park Conservatory's mission to preserve plant diversity while engaging the broader community closely aligns with both my academic goals and my personal values.



Cassidy Barker, Chicago Angels

I am particularly drawn to Chicago Angels because of its mission to build long-term, trusting relationships with children and youth through individualized support and engagement. I have a strong interest in youth development and child-focused work, including nannying and direct care, and I am passionate about creating safe, nurturing and empowering environments where children feel supported and valued. I am excited by the opportunity to support Chicago Angels' work with children and families across the Chicago area. I am also eager to learn more about trauma-informed care, mentorship, and consistent youth support while contributing my energy, compassion, and childcare experience.



Finn McAdams

In addition to our three Chicago Summer Scholars, we are thrilled to share that we have three additional students who will be participating in the Summer Scholars programs this semester!

Saya Kito and Riley Severance will spend the summer flexing their grant-writing muscles in Vernon County with I.M.P.A.C.T. Izzy Rutherford will be writing lab reports as our S.T.E.M. Scholar this summer with Dr. Ganga Fernando.

