

**TOGETHER, FOR
MICHIGAN.**

VOTE

**UNITED FOR
MICHIGAN
PLATFORM**

Liam Reaser and Abigail O'Connell for Central
Student Government President and Vice President.
Voting open March 27 & 28, 2024.

FIVE KEY INITIATIVES

How United for Michigan will achieve its vision of a CSG that is engaged with the average student on a day-to-day basis.

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FOREWORD

When was the last time CSG policy had a continuous, positive impact on your day-to-day life? For many students, the answer is too often never. Despite outreach and engagement being a primary goal of recent administrations, turnout in the last presidential election stood at 15.3%, even with a hotly contested five-way race. This represented the highest voter turnout levels in a presidential election since 2017.¹ For an institution that derives its legitimacy from student participation, this represents a crisis.

It may be tempting to view this crisis as a problem for CSG itself, not the wider student body. But CSG is one of the few organizations on campus that has the formal and institutional standing to represent the student population as a whole. CSG is one of the only direct vehicles that students have to ensure their concerns are addressed by the university administration. When CSG falters, so too does the opportunity for students to have their voices heard, particularly students from groups or organizations without institutional standing of their own.

Together, we can create change. We must confront the lack of faith among students that causes this low turnout, by demonstrating that CSG can be an effective advocate and policymaker for all students. If elected, United for Michigan will implement a series of comprehensive, research-backed reforms to vastly enhance the transparency and impact CSG has on the wider Michigan community.

With the five significant yet achievable innovations this platform puts forward, we have the opportunity to better the experience of being a Michigan Wolverine, by changing CSG from the ground up. We hope you'll join us and our Assembly candidates in making that opportunity a reality. **Go Blue and Vote United!**

Liam Reaser

Candidate for President

Abigail O'Connell

Candidate for Vice President

APPOINT A STUDENT RENTING COORDINATOR

Since before many current Michigan students were born, CSG (and its predecessor, MSA) have advocated for greater accountability of Ann Arbor landlords.² Though CSG cannot directly legislate on housing issues, it can serve as a trusted third-party assessor of a landlord's reliability.

In the private sector, the Better Business Bureau is a non-profit organization that serves as a platform for consumers to file complaints and for businesses to address and resolve those complaints. It then assigns and publishes business ratings based on various factors, including customer reviews and complaint histories.³

Possibly in partnership with Student Life, United for Michigan will establish an office within CSG to perform this work for student renters and landlords. This **Student Renting Coordinator (SRC)** will receive complaints from verified student renters in Ann Arbor and will work with landlords and city officials as needed to ensure such complaints are addressed. The SRC will also attempt to partner with Student Life to ensure the off-campus housing portal publicly lists statistics corresponding to the landlords' responsiveness to complaints, in addition to creating a database on CSG's webpage. If landlords decline to address their student tenants' complaints, CSG's recordkeeping will make that information available for future tenants seeking out their own housing.

Under United for Michigan, the SRC will create an extensive, reliable repository of information for students moving off-campus. The SRC will ensure landlords are held accountable, by maintaining records of their conduct well past the graduation of their individual student renters.



CULTIVATE DIVERSITY IN CSG INSTITUTIONS

CSG must not just be representative of the 15.3% of students that participate in its elections. Rather, CSG must actively seek out the perspectives of students of all backgrounds, particularly those that may not have a large electoral or institutional presence.

To accomplish this, CSG must encourage diversity within its own ranks. To ensure CSG is directly inclusive of various groups and communities, United for Michigan proposes a few key initiatives:

Expand the University Council. CSG's legislative branch is bicameral. Its advisory upper house, the University Council, can admit student organization leaders into its ranks. This power has never been used in the past. United for Michigan will actively seek leaders from various cultural and pre-professional student organizations, particularly those that are underrepresented in CSG, to admit into the University Council.

Appoint Student Ambassadors. Under our leadership, CSG officials will regularly communicate with organizations representing students of all interests and backgrounds. We will specifically appoint Student Ambassadors to maintain relationships with student organizations and their leaders, seeking invitations to attend and learn from events and dialogue which may make our work better.

Enhanced Internal Affairs. This year, CSG created the position of Director of Internal Relations with the aim of improving diversity and inclusion within CSG's ranks. United for Michigan will expand CSG's Internal Affairs from a single official to a full team, responsible for recruitment and training.



Establish a Central Student Reserve

CSG has one of the lowest student government fees in the nation.⁴ Accordingly, CSG could only fund 36.3% of the student organization funding requests it received (in dollars) last semester. Despite this, CSG estimates that over 12,000 students have benefited from its student organization funding.⁵

Given the number of students who benefit from CSG student organization funding, United for Michigan will strive to increase this funding while also ensuring our student government fee remains one of the lowest in the nation. To accomplish this, **we will create a student-run investment fund**, funded through the existing CSG Reserve fund and donations.

Wesleyan University successfully trialed the first student government-administered endowment in the nation in 2008. Wesleyan's student endowment was funded through its Student Assembly's surpluses and significantly outperformed the S&P 500 throughout the 2008 financial crisis. Despite enrollment in Wesleyan sitting at just under 3,000 students,⁶ its student endowment grew to more than \$300,000, freezing their university's Student Activity Fee increases.⁷

Working with students who already have experience managing student investment funds, United for Michigan hopes to upscale this success at Michigan. United for Michigan will keep student fees low while working to dramatically increase funding for student organizations all across campus.

STREAMLINE THE CSG INFORMATION SPACE

Studies have consistently shown that greater transparency in government leads to greater political engagement.⁸ To that end, United for Michigan will strive to greatly increase the transparency in government through a number of key initiatives:

Streamline our rules and constitutional order. CSG's Compiled Code is nearly 25,000 words. CSG's Operating Procedures is just over 10,000 words, down from roughly 20,000 words following a United for Michigan-led rewrite. United for Michigan will continue to ensure CSG policymaking is accessible to all, by revising our governing documents as needed and by producing helpful resources about CSG rules and procedure.

Appoint a CSG Historian. A United for Michigan administration will appoint a student to serve as CSG Historian. This student will be responsible for collating information on all the CSG's past and present initiatives and officials, providing greater context and information to CSG officials and other students alike.

Improve our online presence. CSG officials, including the Historian, will work to ensure that our online presence provides a cohesive view of CSG activity and policymaking, rather than simply advertising CSG events as they occur.

Greater public engagement. CSG cannot address the concerns of students if it never hears those concerns. United for Michigan will strive to increase student-CSG communication by actively attending student organization events and regularly tabling in public locations on campus, providing students a direct outlet to express concern over university or CSG policy.

Create a unit government repository. The vast majority of colleges within the University of Michigan have their own student governments. These governments act as devolved governments of the CSG, similar to how the federal and state governments act with respect to each other. These unit governments offer valuable insight to CSG, and would benefit from greater engagement just as CSG does. A United for Michigan administration will create a unified repository recognizing the unit government for each college in the university.

EMBRACE SUSTAINABLE, IMPACTFUL PROGRAMMING



Outside of student organization funding, CSG spends its budget on a variety of different events and programs. These programs vary wildly in their relative cost per student. Some projects, such as CSG’s hydration stations, directly ensure student safety at a cost of less than \$0.50 per student.⁹ Several programs like CSG’s Test Prep and AirBus programs are often self-funding, requiring no student fee dollars to maintain.¹⁰ Other projects, meanwhile, incur much higher per-student costs for comparatively little benefit.¹¹ Projects similarly vary in per-student waste versus benefit.

United for Michigan will subject all its initiatives to a comprehensive sustainability and cost-efficiency analysis before implementation. United for Michigan will prioritize initiatives which directly benefit academics, safety, and engagement. Particularly, we will focus on funding zero-waste digital services for students, such as CSG’s New York Times and Wall Street Journal partnerships. We will also strive to forge new partnerships with companies whose products students already pay for and use.

FOOTNOTES

- 1 [SGC: What causes high election turnout?](#)
- 2 [Students ask city to certify all landlords | Michigan Daily](#)
- 3 [Better Business Bureau: An Overview and How Its Ratings Work | Investopedia](#)
- 4 [Budget and Finances| Central Student Government](#)
- 5 [Student Organization Committee Report to the 13th Assembly - 19 November 2023](#)
- 6 [Enrollments | Wesleyan University](#)
- 7 [WSA Endowment | Wesleyan Student Assembly](#)
- 8 [Evidence on the Impact of Transparency | World Bank](#)
- 9 [Budget and Finances| Central Student Government](#)
- 10 [Fall 2023 Financial Status report | Central Student Government](#)
- 11 [Budget and Finances - Line Item Expenditures | Central Student Government](#)

