



Summary of Student Perspectives Series Meeting, February 28, 2019

Trustees in Attendance: Thomas A. Cole, Michael J. Klingensmith, Emily Nicklin, Steve G. Stevanovich

Students in Attendance: Chris Stamper (5th Year PhD student, BSD, Graduate Liaison), Kyle Shishkin (2nd Year, College, Undergraduate Liaison), Ryan Duncombe (5th Year PhD student, BSD), Aimee Gonzalez (3rd Year PhD student, Humanities), Chelsea Hopson (2nd Year Master's student, School of Social Service Administration), Stanley Ndambakuwa (1st Year Master's student, Harris School), Nora Taranto (4th Year medical student, Pritzker), Hani Warith (1st Year Master's student, Social Sciences)

Guest: Eric Heath, Associate Vice President for Safety and Security

The topic of the February 28 meeting was graduate student perspectives on safety, security and transportation on campus and in Hyde Park. In advance of the meeting, graduate liaison Chris Stamper prepared a memorandum for the Trustees that included questions for discussion focusing on three areas of interest: (1) Perceptions versus reality with respect to safety and security on and around campus; (2) Safety and transportation beyond Hyde Park; and (3) Evening safety and transportation.

Following introductions, Mr. Cole provided an overview of the role of the Board of Trustees at UChicago. He noted that Trustees give advice to, and provide oversight of, the administration and approve major decisions. Mr. Cole also pointed out that the Trustees in attendance at the Student Perspectives Series meeting present their own viewpoints and do not speak for the Board as a whole. He shared that the Student Perspectives Series meetings are helpful in feeding back information to the administration that can shape priorities and initiatives.

The graduate liaison provided some introductory remarks on the topic of safety and transportation. He reported input from a fellow Graduate Council member that likened some graduate and professional students to “guinea pigs” since they often are the first UChicago community members to move into new neighborhoods, and in doing so present new needs and areas for attention when it comes to safety, security and transportation. Because of the particular requirements of their program, some graduate students work odd hours, which pose special challenges for safely moving to and from campus. He also pointed out that the important role graduate students play in their respective recruitment days and weekends brings into focus some of the challenges associated with how Chicago is portrayed in the media, particularly in terms of crime and personal safety.

There are 77 community areas in the city of Chicago where the Chicago Police Department tracks crimes. For the last 12 months (February 1, 2018 to February 1, 2019), Hyde Park ranked in the 36th position (from lowest to highest) for the absolute number of violent crimes (193) out of the city's 77 community areas. For violent crimes per community area in the same time

period, Hyde Park had a violent crime rate (7.18 incidents per 1,000 population) that was the 15th lowest among the city's community areas. The last decade has marked the safest period in Hyde Park over the past 50 years. Often, however, how the University communicates information about local crime has impacted perceptions more acutely than the actual statistics. This is part of the reason why crime notices and daily crime bulletins are now available on an opt-in basis.¹

These perceptions of crime and safety extend to other city neighborhoods as well. It was noted that there have been three carjackings in Lincoln Park in the past two weeks, which may not be widely known (even by residents of Lincoln Park). While the absolute number of violent crimes may decrease in particular sections of Chicago, it is still important to stay informed and self-protective in every neighborhood.

The students were asked if they found campus security alerts helpful. One student shared that he prefers to receive “a lot” of alerts and that without them there may be a perception that certain information is being withheld from the community. It is often the case that students are particularly interested in incidents that occur in locations geographically close to where they live and work, so satisfying everyone all of the time is unlikely to be possible. A general discussion of the various types of campus alerts followed. For instance, the Medical Center has the ability to send its own mass notifications independently of the University. Efforts are made to ensure that alerts sent out to hospital staff do not lead to confusion on the University side, and *vice versa*. There are differences in purpose, format and content between cAlerts and security alerts. The former are short mass communications sent prior to, during and after a life-threatening campus emergency using a variety of media (including e-mail, text message, phone call and push notifications). Security alerts are informational messages about significant crimes that are reported on or near campus that are determined to constitute an ongoing threat to community members. If such a crime occurs and a suspect is caught and arrested, there is no ongoing threat to the community, so no security alert will be issued. This fact is sometimes not known by campus constituents, resulting in a perception that there is a lack of transparency around how these incidents are tracked and communicated.

Another student noted that students can feel targeted by criminals simply for being highly visible as students (wearing backpacks, etc.). This, in turn, can contribute to students doubting their safety around campus. Having more timely warnings about suspected crime sprees would be very helpful – is this possible? Mr. Heath acknowledged that there is often an unavoidable built-in delay to sending out security alerts given the time it takes for victims to report the crime, a responding officer to take the report, the alert to be drafted, etc. The vast majority of robberies are quick, geographically constrained incidents where the offender flees the scene and is unlikely to return; thus, the immediate vicinity of a robbery is often a relatively safe place to be once the crime has been committed. Approximately 77% of violent crime victims around campus are not affiliated with the University. Students make up the largest group of affiliated victims as they are

¹ See https://safety-security.uchicago.edu/stay_informed/ for information about how crime information is available to University community members and the public.

more likely to be moving around Hyde Park at times when street crime is most likely to occur.

It was observed that there should generally be more communication about the various options available to students for getting information about crime on- and around campus; Mr. Heath agreed. Another meeting participant reinforced that this may be particularly important in Hyde Park given that residents have very different notions of how “safe” or “dangerous” the neighborhood really is.

The discussion then turned to where graduate students live and how they get to and from campus. Anecdotally, it appears that more graduate students are moving into Woodlawn and data from the Office of the Registrar shows that more students are living in Englewood than is widely known. How does this impact their transportation needs? Mr. Heath informed the group that the Department of Safety and Security (which includes Transportation & Parking Services) administers a multimodal transportation survey every five years. This survey helps inform the transportation options provided by the University, including bus and shuttle routes. In recent years, the School of Social Service Administration and the College have adopted the CTA’s U-Pass program to provide discounted transportation on CTA’s bus and train routes. However, to date the majority of students in other graduate divisions and schools have consistently voted against imposing the required quarterly fee for U-Pass on their peers.

Some students can work remotely, thus making it more feasible to live in neighborhoods further away from campus. However, this is not an option for students based in labs or for medical students. Moreover, even students who can work remotely often find that they must come to campus for group projects and academic events (seminars, colloquia, etc.). There was general agreement that more nighttime shuttles would be helpful along with low-cost (if not free) options for getting to other parts of the city (the South Shore and Loop were cited as popular destinations), particularly for those students seeking more vibrant and active areas of the city on evenings and weekends.

One student pointed out some significant challenges for individuals trying to get around campus if they have disabilities that affect mobility. The UGo shuttles do not make auditory announcements about upcoming stops, so visually impaired riders may not know when they have reached their desired destination. Planning for and scheduling transportation services can be very challenging for students with a short-term disability. For instance, requests must be made one week in advance and changes after this cutoff are generally not possible. There appears to be only one driver available after 4 PM, and the “Dial-a-Ride” service is not reliable. Street lighting is also a concern, as some streets around campus are not brightly lit which can impact both students’ sense of security and their ease of travel. These issues are exacerbated in the winter months when it is potentially more perilous to get around.

The last few minutes of the conversation focused on graduate housing. Unlike many of UChicago’s Ivy Plus peers, there is no graduate housing plan at the University, and graduate and professional students are concerned about housing affordability as rents increase in Hyde Park.

One student notes that as students live further afield, University infrastructure has yet to catch up.

The meeting concluded with appreciation expressed all round for the helpful student input and the interesting conversation.

STUDENT PERSPECTIVES SERIES: WINTER 2019 MEMORANDUM

TO: Student Perspectives Series Trustees
FROM: Chris Stamper, Graduate Student Liaison to the Board of Trustees
DATE: February 19, 2019
SUBJECT: Strategic Themes and Question Prompts for February 28th SPS Meeting

I look forward to meeting you and discussing safety, security, and transportation for UChicago graduate students. In advance of our meeting, I am proposing the following themes and question prompts for your consideration, which I hope can guide our conversation when we meet:

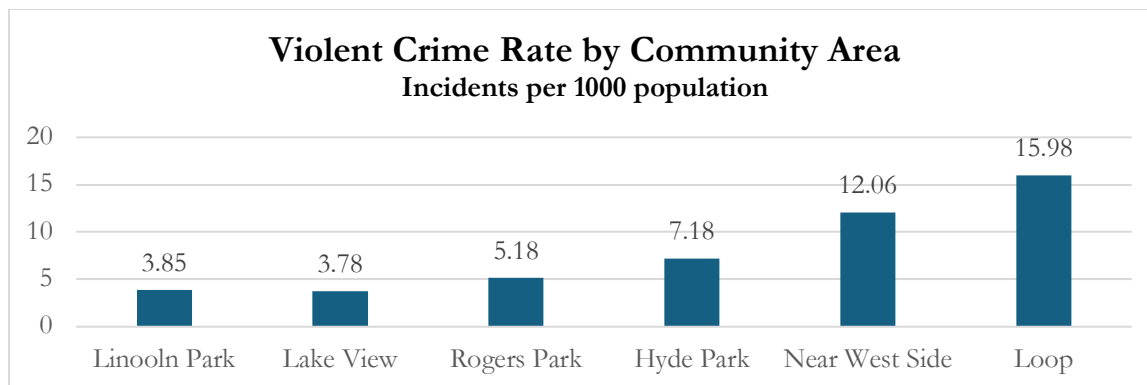
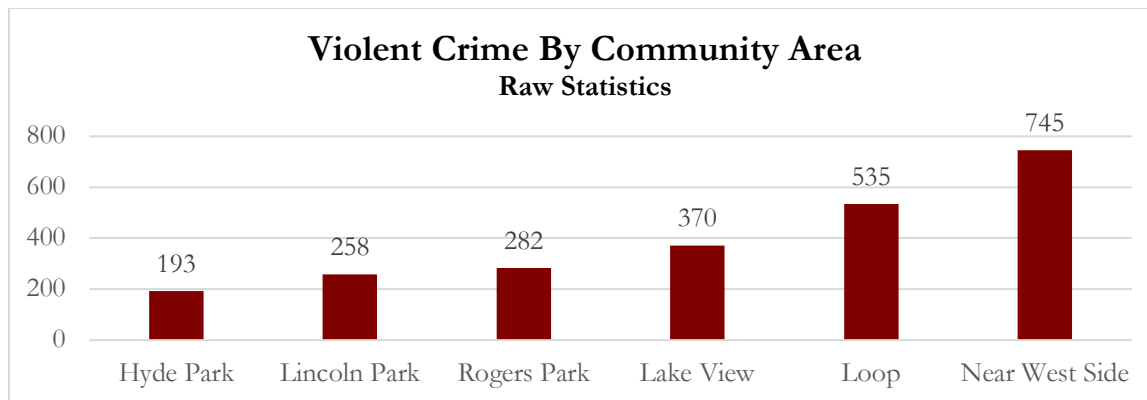
1. **Perception vs. Reality:** Current students, and especially prospective and recruited students, often perceive Hyde Park to be more dangerous than statistics suggest. Why is this and what can be done to help ensure that perceptions match reality?
2. **Safety and Transportation Beyond Hyde Park:** As Hyde Park rents increase, more graduate students are considering housing in other neighborhoods. These include nearby neighborhoods such as Englewood and Woodlawn (where the rent is less expensive), as well as the South Loop, downtown, or the North Side (where rents may be similar to Hyde Park but the neighborhoods are more desirable for some students). This raises questions about transportation to and from campus, as well as safety concerns for students living in, or commuting to and from, these neighborhoods. What is the best way to address the safety and transportation needs for these students?
3. **Evening Safety and Transportation:** Students in some schools and divisions often find themselves having to work odd or very late hours, when regular transportation is less available or when travel is perceived to be less safe. What's the best way to ensure the safety of this population? Is there more that could be done or improved upon, or do current programs such as the [Safety Escort Program](#)¹ work well in their current format, but be better utilized?

As our conversation unfolds, it would be helpful to identify how students and Trustees view these concerns differently, what suggestions there are for improvement, and to consider how we measure against our peers.

I look forward to our conversation.

VIOLENT CRIME DATA: COMPARISON TO COMMUNITY AREAS WITH INSTITUTIONS OF HIGHER EDUCATION

Within the City of Chicago, the Chicago Police Department (CPD) has reported 193 violent crimes in Hyde Park the last 12 months (February 1, 2018 to February 1, 2019). From lowest to highest, this places Hyde Park in the 36th position out of Chicago's 77 defined community areas. Using violent crimes per community area, Hyde Park rises to 15th lowest in violent crime rates within the City of Chicago.



Source: Department of Safety & Security

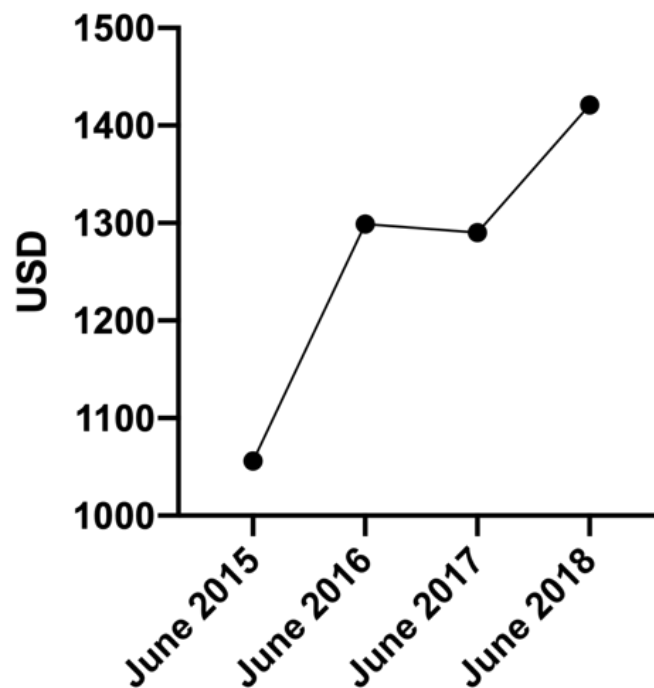
Notes: Data based on the past 365 days of CPD data (Feb. 1, 2018 to Feb. 1, 2019). Violent crime includes homicide, robbery, criminal sexual assault, and aggravated battery. The sharp difference in the crime rate for the Loop is largely related to the daily influx of business and tourist populations.

RENTAL DATA

The rise in rental prices has coincided with the University of Chicago reducing and removing its Graduate Student Housing. This decision stood in contrast to every other university in attendance at the Ivy+ Student Government Summit (October 26-28, 2018), whose leaders all mentioned their campuses were currently constructing additional Graduate Housing.

Rising rents and declining options push graduate students to live in other neighborhoods, which present new security or transportation challenges. More graduate students report they are living in Woodlawn, which has a violent crimes per capita rate higher than all neighborhoods mentioned above, placing it at 44th of 77 in the city as reported by Chicago Police Department's CLEAR (Citizen Law Enforcement Analysis and Reporting) system. For students who move to the North Side there are concerns about the cost of transportation, with a monthly CTA pass costing \$105, and a guaranteed parking spot on campus ranging from \$115-\$225/month.

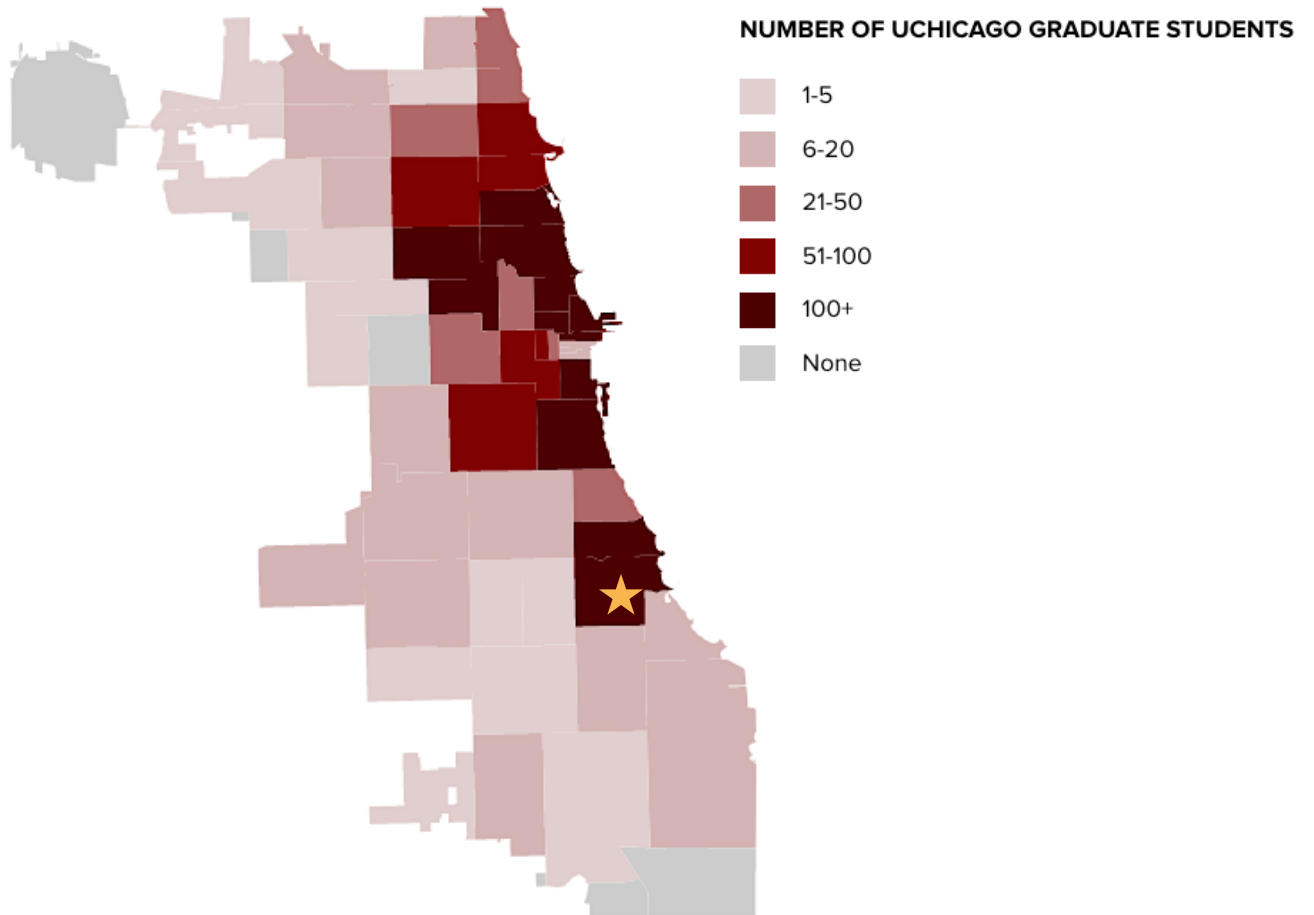
Median Monthly Rent for 1-Bedroom Apt



Source: [Zumper's](#) Hyde Park Real Estate Report. Zumper is a rental platform utilized by UChicago students.

GRADUATE STUDENTS IN CHICAGO

More than half of our graduate students live near the University's campus in the Hyde Park and Woodlawn neighborhoods, but many choose to live elsewhere in the city and commute to campus. Below is a density map showing where UChicago graduate students live throughout the city.



provided by University Registrar.

Source: Student address data



STUDENT LIAISONS TO THE BOARD 2018-219

UNDERGRADUATE LIAISON: Kyle Shishkin



Kyle Shishkin is a Ukrainian-Israeli undergraduate, pursuing degrees in economics and fundamentals. His research interest in the latter division concerns the history of rationality and argumentative thought under a logical framework. Prior to his occupation as the liaison, Kyle worked on debt financing in the oil and gas sector at Concorde Capital, a premier investment bank in Ukraine. His past work experience also includes leading a transatlantic policy think-tank European Horizons, liaising for the Institute of Politics, writing for *ELLE* magazine, as well as publishing an internationally-sold book on American History. In 2015, Kyle served as a paramedic in the Anti-Terrorist Operations under the Ukrainian Military. On a recreational level, Kyle enjoys Atlantic surfing, tandem skydiving, and deep-water diving among other sports that appear dangerous. After completing his undergraduate degrees, he plans to pursue a master's degree in international relations before entering a career in real estate development and investment.

GRADUATE LIAISON: Chris Stamper



Chris is a fourth year PhD student in the Biological Sciences Division (BSD). His research combines mathematical modeling and computational biology with more traditional murine models and human patient samples to understand the body's response to influenza and flu vaccines, with the ultimate goal of bringing us closer to a universal flu vaccine. He earned his undergraduate degrees in biochemistry and English literature from the University of Virginia's College at Wise. He then worked for a year in Ireland at the intersection of biology and sociology studying respiratory syncytial virus. After returning to the United States, he worked for Eastman Chemical Company developing optical films for use in consumer electronics. At the University of Chicago, he has served as an Immunology representative to the BSD Dean's Council and as a recruitment organizer for three years, the BSD representative to Graduate Council for two years, and as the vice president of finance for Graduate Council for one year. After graduate school he intends to pursue opportunities in science policy. Originally from the rural Appalachians of Virginia, Chris is as comfortable outdoors as indoors and is an avid backpacker, whitewater kayaker, and scuba diver.

STUDENTS PARTICIPATING IN THE FEBRUARY 28, 2019, SPS MEETING

The following students represent a broad and diverse set of academic interests and participation in student governance throughout the University.

Aimee Gonzalez – Miami, FL

A third-year PhD candidate in the Humanities Division's Department of Music. Aimee serves on the divisional Diversity Committee.

Ryan Duncombe – San Juan Capistrano, CA

A fifth-year PhD candidate in the Biological Sciences Division's Immunology program. Currently, Ryan serves as the co-chair of Student Government's Graduate Council.

Chelsea Hopson – Richmond, VA

A third-year master's student in the School of Social Service Administration. Chelsea serves as a divisional representative on Student Government's Graduate Council.

Stanley Ndambakuwa – Zimbabwe, South Africa

A member of the inaugural class of Obama Foundation Scholars at the Harris School of Public Policy. Stanley is the founder and CEO of African Community Fund for Education Group and chairman of African Community Fund for Education Canada.

Nora Taranto – Washington, DC

A fourth-year student in the Pritzker School of Medicine. Nora serves as a Pritzker chief (co-president) of Pritzker's fourth-year leadership team.

Hani Warith – Giza, Egypt

A student of Social Service's International Relations one-year master's program. Hani serves as a GRAD Global Impact Intern, advocating for International House and its mission within the UChicago GRAD community and beyond.