

**UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS
URBANA-CHAMPAIGN SENATE**

THE UC-SENATE RE-ENDORSES THE KINGFISHER AND SUPPORTS THE PROMPT
ADOPTION OF THE KINGFISHER AS THE UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS AT URBANA-
CHAMPAIGN'S MASCOT

WHEREAS, the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign has been - by inaction - noncommittal to the continued retirement of Chief Illiniwek in 2007; and,

WHEREAS, The UC-Senate acknowledged Chief Illiniwek as a mascot of the University in Senate Resolution EQ.97.04 on March 9, 1998 (“Resolution to Retire Chief Illiniwek”)¹, thereby confirming that Chief Illiniwek was indeed seen as a mascot by the University at large and not a symbol; and,

WHEREAS, The Cambridge Dictionary defines cultural appropriation as “the act of taking or using things from a culture that is not your own, especially without showing that you understand or respect this culture” ; and

WHEREAS, the American Psychological Association has compiled research that shows the negative effects of appropriation of American Indian imagery on not just indigenous students but all students²; and,

WHEREAS, the University’s non-committal response to not replace the previous mascot has allowed unofficial channels to continue the use of the mascot with little resistance over time, furthering the creation of harmful campus sentiment towards Native American students, staff, faculty, and community members; and,

¹ <https://www.senate.illinois.edu/eq9704.asp>

² <https://www.apa.org/about/policy/mascots.pdf>

WHEREAS, both the Illinois Student Government and the Academic Senate recommended the exploration of a new mascot in 2016; and,

WHEREAS, the Critical Conversations on Native Imagery Advisory Committee reaffirms this recommendation and urges a clear plan of next steps towards moving forward³; and,

WHEREAS, the popular argument that alumni will no longer donate to the university if a new mascot is established (“No Chief, No Check”) has had no actual effect on donations received by the University, as on September 21st, 2018 the University of Illinois System and University of Illinois Foundation announced “record fundraising for fiscal year 2018 with \$498.5 million in new business, comprised of new gifts, grants, pledges and deferred commitments”, demonstrating that the University thrives without the Chief as a mascot⁴; and,

WHEREAS, in 2019, Student Spencer Hulsey created and proposed a new mascot idea called “The Kingfisher” to resolve much of the issues aforementioned; and,

WHEREAS, Kingfishers are native, predatory birds of Illinois not used as a mascot by any American business, notable sports team, or University in America; and,

WHEREAS, the University of Illinois would have the first female mascot in the Association of Big Ten Schools (ABTS) as it is the female Kingfisher that is naturally true to the Orange and Blue; and,

WHEREAS, Within two days a majority of students voting (4,222 of 7,819) voted yes on a student referendum question asking “Should the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign adopt the Belted Kingfisher, an orange-and-blue bird native to Illinois, as the mascot for the University?”⁵; and,

³ <https://chancellor.illinois.edu/files/diversityreview/nativeimagerycriticalconversationreport.pdf>

⁴ https://uif.uillinois.edu/news/2018/university-illinois-system-u-i-foundation-achieve-record-fundraising-success-fy2018?fbclid=IwAR29ds96RfBjP9XBhKfdL6LZ_EVDzbxJFN9ArU2pYh9SYcC2B-C_sfv3TSM

⁵ <https://uofi.app.box.com/s/5kpcz4b5o75nc2ykn7zk4w6axfv3qull/file/631059370269> CSEC Preliminary Election Results released March 9th

WHEREAS, In October, 2020, the Faculty Senate passed (105 of 109) a resolution that stated “THE UC-SENATE ENDORSES THE KINGFISHER AND SUPPORTS THE PROMPT ADOPTION OF THE KINGFISHER AS THE UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS AT URBANA-CHAMPAIGN’S MASCOT”⁶; and,

WHEREAS, the campus community has begun embracing the kingfisher as a new mascot through its use in RSO logos for Engineers Without Borders⁷, Red Bison⁸, The NRES Graduate Student Association⁹, the American Nuclear Society¹⁰, etc., as well as its use in prominent murals along Green Street painted by the Boneyard Creek Mural Initiative¹¹; and,

WHEREAS, since the Faculty vote, the Belted Kingfisher as a mascot for the University of Illinois has received endorsements from the Chicago Tribune Editorial Board¹², the National Congress of American Indians in DC¹³, the Association of American Indian Affairs¹⁴, the National Indian Education Association¹⁵, the Native American Rights Fund¹⁶, etc.; and,

WHEREAS, upon the start of the 2023-2024 academic year, students have been inspired to make a full-body kingfisher mascot costume and have brought it to numerous events at which it has been positively received¹⁷; and,

WHEREAS, the Kingfisher costume has proven itself to be a competent sports mascot during its well-received appearances at Hockey Games, Rugby Games, and a Triathlon¹⁷; therefore,

⁶ <https://www.senate.illinois.edu/20200921senate/20200921m.pdf>

⁷ <https://ewbuiuc.org/>

⁸ https://www.instagram.com/redbison_uiuc/

⁹ https://www.instagram.com/nres_gsa_uiuc/

¹⁰ https://www.instagram.com/ans_illinois/

¹¹ <https://dailyillini.com/news-stories/administration/2022/10/12/kingfisher-mascot/>

¹² <https://www.chicagotribune.com/opinion/editorials/ct-editorial-university-illinois-illinwek-kingfisher-20200312-jfunuyh52vfpjoo6xxcncbkv7i-story.html>

¹³ https://898e3702-ae9e-4445-a58a-030bc4ee98f1.filesusr.com/ugd/35a6ff_c791d5dd431d47b691a29123b5825f6b.pdf

¹⁴ https://898e3702-ae9e-4445-a58a-030bc4ee98f1.filesusr.com/ugd/35a6ff_45edbbf56ae849399813a3061549352b.pdf

¹⁵ https://898e3702-ae9e-4445-a58a-030bc4ee98f1.filesusr.com/ugd/35a6ff_b104aeb5a1b648609e78d4c536faed03.pdf

¹⁶ Campbell, Matthew. “ Letter of Endorsement for Changing the University of Illinois’ Mascot to the Belted Kingfisher.” Received by Robert Jones, 10 July 2023.

¹⁷ <https://www.instagram.com/kingfisheruiuc/>

BE IT RESOLVED, that the Senate of the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign endorses the adoption of the Kingfisher as the mascot for the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign; and,

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Senate of the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign strongly urges the Chancellor and all appropriate Administrative Officials immediately announce their intention to commission a plan for the implementation of the Kingfisher as the mascot for the University; and,

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the University administration publicly condemn any public display of the former mascot; and,

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the University administration will spread education about the racist history of the University's former mascot in order to ensure that the entire campus community can be aware in order to prevent further cultural appropriation; and,

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that in order to start making reparations to the Native American community on campus, the University will implement a task force including student and staff representation from the Native American Cultural Center and the Office of Inclusion and Intercultural Relations with the sole purpose of the task force being to advocate for scholarships, funding, and resources for the Native community on campus; and,

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Senate of the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign acknowledges this measure to be more than eighteen years overdue; and,

BE IT FINALLY RESOLVED, that the Senate of the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign expects an update from the Chancellor or a designated official at a Spring 2024 Senate Executive Committee on the status of the implementation of the Kingfisher as a mascot.

**APPENDIX A:
IMAGES OF THE KINGFISHER, SAMPLE MASCOT IMAGERY, & COSTUME**

