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April 29, 2024

Robert J. Jones  
Chancellor  
University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign  
517 Swanlund Admin Building  
601 E. John  
M/C 304  
Campaign, IL 61820-5711

Dear Chancellor Jones,

I am writing to you to convey that AISES enthusiastically endorses the use of the Belted Kingfisher image as the University of Illinois Urbana – Champaign’s (UIUC) new mascot. AISES is national nonprofit organization focused on substantially increasing the representation of Indigenous peoples of North America and the Pacific Islands in STEM studies and careers. Our vision is for the next seven generations of Indigenous people to be successful, respected, influential, and contributing members of our vast and ever-changing global community. To achieve this mission and vision, we believe that all stereotypical imagery of Indigenous people must be eradicated. The University acknowledged using such imagery was a harmful practice by retiring Chief Illiniwek as its mascot in 2007.

As you are aware, the Belted Kingfisher received a majority of the student vote as a mascot in 2020 and was overwhelmingly endorsed by the University Senate. As expressed by the UIUC stakeholders and community’s vote, the Belted Kingfisher is a welcome alternative to a harmful image. We respectfully urge you and the administration of UIUC to act and formalize the adoption of the Belted Kingfisher as your official mascot. This positive mascot can be seen as a unifying image for all to demonstrate their school pride and spirit. We appreciate the leadership you have shown by offering this new mascot. It is our hope that your leadership will incentivize other institutions to make needed changes in their mascots.

Thank you for your consideration of our request. Should you have any questions, I can be reached by email at [Lpaz@aises.org](mailto:Lpaz@aises.org) or by phone at 505-765-1052.

Sincerely,

Lisa Paz  
Managing Director for Engagement and Advocacy