

# Joy Valentine Interview

Director of the UIC Early Outreach Program

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## **SPEAKERS**

Jenna Courtade, Joy Valentine

### **Jenna Courtade 00:01**

Okay, and that should be good. So, let's start. Today's date is Tuesday, August 23 2022. And we are here via zoom to discuss the University of Illinois Chicago's early outreach programs' response to the COVID 19 pandemic, for inclusion in the University of Illinois COVID-19 documentation project. My name is Jenna Courtade, and I'm a graduate hourly representing the University of Illinois Archives. And I am joined today by Joy Valentine, the director of the University of Chicago's early outreach program and the director of the pre-college programs at the University of Illinois Urban Health Program.

{Pauses} University of Illinois at Chicago, pardon me, and which may throughout this recording be referred to as UIC and also the Urban Health Program may also now be referred to as UHP. Two just in case for those listening. Joy Valentine is a doctoral candidate studying language, literacy, and culture. And her current research interests include translanguaging, activist literacies and eliciting narratives of adolescents' lived racialized experiences. Thank you so much for being here today with us joy.

### **Joy Valentine 01:35**

Thank you, it is a pleasure.

### **Jenna Courtade 01:38**

So let's just get right into it. UIC's early outreach program celebrated its 40th anniversary in 2019. Right before COVID-19 emerged and became like well known, especially in the United States. For the sake of the recording, could you discuss the primary functions and goals of the early outreach program?

### **Joy Valentine 02:05**

Yes, so the primary goals and functions of our program, we are a pre-college program, and we are community of support for students and families. We understand with pre-college students the importance of family involvement. So we are a community of support for students and families. We function as also a program of support for our early outreach program, our Urban Health early outreach program alums, whether they are enrolled at UIC or not. 50% of our graduates do enroll at UIC, are accepted and enroll. And we function as academic support and social-emotional and wellness support for our students. One of the things that makes us so supportive and so appreciative that our students do appreciate, we not only prime our students for academic success, and post-secondary and career

success, but we want to make certain that they are equipped with the skills to handle something that's called racial battle fatigue. So we make them aware of who they are as Brown and Black students. We are big on identity building, and we want them to know who they are. So as they navigate through their post-secondary and careers that they are understanding of who they are, and how to navigate experiences with discrimination and racism. We also- the main thing that we do is provide a health-focused and medical sciences, supplemental learning experiences for K-12 students.

**Jenna Courtade 03:54**

Thank you. Yeah. And this program is obviously very important. And yeah, I'm really excited, especially in regards to COVID-19. We know that a lot of like, every, there's a lot of disproportionate effects. So that, you know, this is like, important before and even now, like even more so.

**Joy Valentine 04:18**

Absolutely.

**Jenna Courtade 04:19**

Yeah. So shifting to COVID now, do you remember the first time that you heard about the emergence of COVID-19?

**Joy Valentine 04:29**

The first time that I heard about the emergence of COVID-19 was actually the first time I was getting ready to- I had been invited to present at a conference in Nashville, February 2020. And I think it was the day before my airline flight that I heard about COVID. And while I was in Nashville, of course, the news began to emerge even more. And I remember really thinking about COVID because I was in a group of conference attendees and presenters who were from all over the world. And so that was the very first time I heard about it. It didn't raise any red flags, I was not concerned, and I just remember hearing that there was probably a virus. And that as each day passed, we would learn more. So that was, let's say, February 20, February 21, 2022. And each day of the conference, there, of course, was more conversation. And when I returned to Chicago and the campus, I heard even more, but heard about it for the first time getting ready to travel to present at a conference.

**Jenna Courtade 05:46**

Geez, that's, that's a little bit well, I guess it wasn't super stressful then. But looking back knowing now, you know? Yeah, I was I was going to, I was about to fly out on to New York in just the beginning of March. And then they said that Broadway went, went dark. Like, okay, maybe I shouldn't do this. And then everyone got sent home. So and, you know, so we all are many of us got sent home. And I believe you indicated that you did as well. Do you remember? Like that? How was that transition for you shifting? You know? Yeah, how was that?

**Joy Valentine 06:37**

So with our program, one of the things that happened with us in fall of 2019, with our Saturday program, because we have a six week summer program and a Saturday academic program throughout the academic year. So fall of 2021, [Joy actually means Fall 2019] we actually instead of having our students come to campus, every Saturday of the month, we decided to do three Saturdays and do one

Saturday remote, not knowing what was ahead. So when the semester began in August, or September for our pre college students, they were already doing one Saturday, a month remotely. And these were students who did not have any idea about zoom. So that was a teaching experience for us. We successfully did the one Saturday, a month, all the way until December. And then when the spring semester started, we were still doing one Saturday a month. So when COVID hit, when the campus shut down on that third Friday in March, our students were able to transition very successfully, not only for our program, but for their brick and mortar schools, which were now remote. So we had so many parents and teachers, I'm sorry, and students tell us that they were thankful that they were somewhat prepared. When everything stopped, they were able to transition very successfully to remote learning.

**Jenna Courtade 08:21**

Yeah, wow. That's really that's a really great coincidence that that were you-

**Joy Valentine 08:27**

Huge coincidence

**Jenna Courtade 08:28**

At the time, too. Were you using Zoom?

**Joy Valentine 08:32**

We were actually using Google Classroom. So let me make that clear. And then we move to Zoom. But the Google Classroom platform was working well for us. And that also helped our students a lot because 87% of our students are Chicago public school students, and CPS, Chicago public schools, used Google Classroom as opposed to Zoom. So the fact that we were using, our students were using Google platform for that semester and a half until COVID hit also made them successful with Google Classroom.

**Jenna Courtade 09:15**

Yeah. Wow, that's really great to have the two platforms too, but it just couldn't work. Sometimes. You just like, how, like, what are the odds? You know, I know this is crazy, like in a pandemic, but the skill set like how things can sometimes work out, you know, yeah, yeah. You have to smile at something, you know. Absolutely. Absolutely.

**Joy Valentine 09:46**

Absolutely. And you know, one of the things that also gave us great success was the fact that our teachers who work with our students, our teaching associates, are a combination of graduates. Students and schools and read and educators within public and private schools. So they had the experience and they had all of the tools that they needed to not only be successful doing this, but to also make the students feel successful.

**Jenna Courtade 10:21**

Yeah, that's great. And now to focus on you for a moment, when you transitioned to, you know, working in this new time period. Did, did you have any challenges? Did you feel supported? Like, technologically? Or, you know, I guess, because you already had this infrastructure in place for partial remote? You know, learning? How did, how did this change for you, once you transitioned yourself? You know, just as, like you and your position as directing these programs? And yeah,

**Joy Valentine 11:12**

So, one of the things that I can say is, I knew that I had, so the biggest thing on my mind was making certain that I provided support, and was able to ask questions for my team members. That was big for me. And so one of the strategies that I began immediately was to make certain that I was doing weekly check-ins with staff, and I framed it from a position of making my staff know, "I'm not checking on you to see what you're doing. I'm checking with you to see how you're doing." We have a very close knit staff anyway. And even though I could not see down the road with COVID, one of the things that I wanted to make certain is, of course, nobody knew how long this thing was going to last. We didn't even think about that. But I just knew that with our being apart, and the fact that we were in the middle of a semester, and had to continue to provide support to students who, number one, were in a Saturday program after unexpectedly having to deal with a five day a week remote learning situation with their regular schools, I knew that staff had to be supported to make certain that they were giving support to students. So checking with my staff, wellness checks to see how they were doing. Beginning each meeting with a quote, or discussing a concept so I could get everybody's feedback. And also making certain that we were continuing to give not only the learning experiences and academic supplement to our students, but making certain that we were supporting our students too. So I checked with checked with staff, our also our seasonal staff. And I also continued what I call my directors roundtable, where I have conversations with all of my students as a group, and individually, because I knew it was important to make certain that students were talked to and they had a chance to talk to me. And we also continued our once monthly parent workshops, we have team members that do parent workshops. So all of those things continued, I would say with a lot more intentionality to make certain that people felt connected to us.

**Jenna Courtade 14:00**

Yeah, no, that's those. It's those type of like meetings, especially in the beginning with the lockdown that are imperative, you know, to like keeping you at least in some form. Okay. And doing well. So. Yeah. Okay, great. Thank you. Um, let's see. So I'll ask one more initial question and then we'll really we've already started to talk about your experiences in these programs and how the programs still so but just one more final question and then we'll really go into it. Um, did you have to cancel or postpone any major projects or initiatives due to the pandemic or not? I'm sure, yeah, let's just stick with cancel or postpone. Yeah.

**Joy Valentine 15:04**

So last year was the 40th anniversary of the Urban Health early outreach program. And we had planned for an in person gala at the forum that was going to take place at the end of the semester. And of course, with the lockdown, we were not able to do that. So we began to scramble and think, Okay, how are we going to do this? And how are we going to effectively do this? Making it online, the conversations first, were around well, "let's just wait till COVID is over. "And of course, that that was a term that was used before we know what we know now, "let's just wait till COVID is over and still do it face to face." But then we would be celebrating year 40 in year 41, as we continue to keep looking at things and so the decision was made just to do it in the fall. And whether or not COVID restrictions or the lockdown was lifted, we would still do a virtual program. So that was the biggest project event that was postponed. And in September of last year, we went ahead and had our virtual 40th celebration, and year 40 for marriages and other events is a Ruby celebration. So we had our Ruby celebration, using the term celebrating 40 years of G.E.M work, G E M, Growing and Educating Minds. So that was

our 40th anniversary celebration, which was attended virtually by more than 100 people. And the greatest thing about it that we would have, maybe we would have had a video, but one of my team members did the legwork and found the very first director of the early outreach program. Her name is Dr. Susan Lorenzo. And she actually lives in Berlin. So she was able to join us virtually. And give great commentary about how she began the program here in Chicago, and her life as an educator, and how she has since retired and now lives in Berlin. So the fact that she was able to join us from Germany, the fact that she was able to provide such great commentary, not only about the beginning of the program, but her continued support of the program was great. The only other thing that we had to postpone was considering whether or not we were going to do our six week summer program virtually. And we did decide to go ahead and do that. We started later and ended a little earlier. But we still had a great summer program for our middle school and high school students. Because COVID as well as rethinking some other things with our program, even prior to COVID made us they made us come to the conclusion that we were not going to do elementary grades. So our summer program was grades seven through 12 only. So those are the two main things that changed with regards to postponing and rethinking.

**Jenna Courtade 18:51**

That celebration, I'm glad it was able to happen. Of course, no one wants it in, in this well, I guess some people might want it in a virtual format. But do you use you sometimes miss things right that you have in person, but to be able, but you can also get new other things like having the first director. That's great. Yeah, me and Paul over here. We're like, Wow, that's so cool. That sounds like it was great. And the gym. Yeah. Sounds like it was a great time.

**Joy Valentine 19:26**

It was a great time.

**Jenna Courtade 19:30**

Okay, so, um, when you talk to you mentioned a little bit about, you know, the burnout, right is a thing, especially, what's the term zoom fatigue? So, yeah, for the students that now are, we're virtual all the time. Did you see that? Cause any enrollment issues Due to resume fatigue, but also just I mean life, just everything that was happening. So did you did the program see any enrollment like changes in either positive or negative?

**Joy Valentine 20:14**

So let me say this before I answer the enrollment question, one of the changes that we did see, and nationwide research also bore this. Shows talked about this, and we definitely saw it. So I think I did tell you that the semester prior to COVID, we were doing once, one Saturday, a month, that one Saturday, a month, all of our students 100% of them, when they came into the Zoom classroom, their cameras were on. Wow, when their schools became remote learning places, and then you add a sixth day of the week, remote learning. Cameras were off. Yeah, we had to be very creative. It was almost- I don't want to use the word bribe, but we had to be very creative and fist pumping. And we'd like to see your faces or show your face so we can blah, blah, blah. So that was the first change that we noticed. The question that you had about enrollment, believe it or not, our enrollment increased by about 40%. During the COVID, we would typically have during the summer program for middle school and high

school students anywhere from 20 to 25. Students, we had 45 students. Wow, during COVID, because we noticed that there were parents the conversations we were having with parents, parents were asking, you know, well, how is this going to benefit my child because my child is already not wanting to be enrolled remote, the involved or engaged remotely at their regular school? How is this going to happen differently? So we did increase enrollment for the summer, we did have better we did have more participation of parents. I can say that during the COVID period, because typically, we would only have a few parents at our parent workshops, but we noticed that we had more parents and our parent workshops. And just to say a little bit about our workshops, our workshops each Saturday, were our workshops that were facilitated by college, the graduates, and students of the different urban health program, Colleges College of Dentistry, College of Pharmacy, College of Applied Health Sciences, and College of Medicine. In fact, one of the biggest workshops that we had that was well attended, as well as the most requests for the recording was the workshop that was done by a College of Pharmacy students on why you should get the vaccine. So in that 90% of our students and families identify as Black or Brown, there's was a lot of vaccine hesitancy. So the workshops around the vaccine, the education around pharmacy from the College of Pharmacy students, the education and workshops around the lack of underrepresented minorities in medical and health sciences professions also, was something that built up attendance for families and parents during COVID. So the enrollment, the short answer to your enrollment question, our enrollment did increase, especially for the summer, because we were also aware that with the pandemic, there was a growing interest in medical and health sciences.

**Jenna Courtade 24:23**

Yeah.

**Joy Valentine 24:24**

We are aware, you know, with the pandemic that COVID-19 laid bare the inequities in medical and health professions and education, and not to mention all of the social issues that just seemed to hit like a bullet around all of this.

**Jenna Courtade 24:45**

Yes, yes. Yeah. So, let me see. I want to jump around to like keep the conversation flowing, how we have it um, So, so you were you mentioned that there was, of course, this interest or this, this increasing, increasing enrollment, increase in enrollment? Pardon me? Especially with the nature of studying? How do Did, did you have any students who, at this time were specifically like? You see, you saw them, like being even more interested in medicine and health? Because of COVID? Or, you know, like, were students expressing interests on their own? Or was this just? Yeah. So

**Joy Valentine 25:58**

We did have a lot of students expressing interest on their own about medical and health professions, especially pharmacy. And that led me to do some research and do an even stronger, or should I say, a more collaborative connection to the College of Pharmacy? Because we did have students asking about pharmacy and pharmacy programs. So that did happen. The other question that came, the other should I say, spark of interest that came about with a lot of our students was, in addition to pharmacy, just anatomy and understanding the connections to the body, and COVID, and why things happen like

they do. So for our summer program, which was remote, we had a, a new addition to our program, which was pharmacy, and was, I'm sorry, which was anatomy, where students actually had hands on experiences with skeletal models. And, and, and clay. In fact, the program itself was called anatomy and clay. And I and my team actually delivered the skeletal models to all of the students whose parents could not come to campus to pick them up. And because we wanted to make certain that each student had their skeletal model, so the interest from there, in addition to pharmacy was something that made our program I say, added more value to our program, because students were able to have hands-on experience, even though they were remote, with the anatomy and clay models, the skeletal models, and our students were able to have these continued conversations and workshops from the College of Pharmacy, and connect to the overarching theme of last summer, which I should have said many minutes ago, our theme for last summer was social determinants of health and social distance, social distancing. So we wanted students to understand what the social determinants of health are, the root causes of the social determinants of health, which connected quite well to the values and the functions and goals that I talked about earlier. You know, why, in the beginning, did we hear about so many ethnic minorities contracting and having complications with COVID? Isn't just because they were Black and Brown people? No, it's because of how they live, where they live. And I could go on for a long time with that. But the main thing is to answer- short answer to your question, yes, there was more of an interest. And I would definitely say it was because of COVID because many students were able to see and hear that grandparents, older relatives were, you know, being affected by this disease or being affected by the social isolation. So they, in their minds, they said, Okay, let me see what I can do now to help this and what's my future path going to be in terms of looking at a medical profession. So we had careers exploration. And I also will say that last April, we had a city wide virtual career health and careers explorations conference for high school students that was very well attended.

**Jenna Courtade 30:16**

Oh, great. Yeah, thank you, um, you used you touched on this, and I just want to make sure we have a full coverage of what you did, and what, what the program did during this time. But in addition to the anatomy and clay, like hands on experience, were there other examples of, or other ways that you pushed for like more hands on and engaging learning, were there other examples or was like this, the main one.

**Joy Valentine 30:56**

Um, there were other examples, especially during the health careers exploration conference that I talked about, that was required, attended, we required all of our students to attend it, and as I said, was promoted throughout CPS and also city wide. So during that conference, and as well as during our program, we had a hands on something that was called 'Stop the Bleed.' And what that was, was a video representation. And that Stop the Bleed is a program that started by Dr. Michael McGee, who was a physician in Hyde Park. And also is the doctor and founder of the first black-owned health care facility in Hyde Park. And so what his Stop the Bleed program is geared directly towards adolescents, because the percentage of Black and Brown people who die because of gunshot wounds or other trauma happens because no bystander or no family member, anybody that's there, is familiar with how to work very quickly to stop the injured person from bleeding. People bleed out more, so the majority of people bleed out. And so stop the bleed was a hands on- was a video that showed how you, showed our students how, as adolescents, what they could grab around the house immediately to stop the

bleed. And it showed hands-on on how using pillows, feminine hygiene products, and things that can absorb and compress, the individual can stop the bleed so that all of that can happen while 911 is being called and until paramedics arrive at the situation. So that was hands on. We also did hands on suturing. College of Medicine was very instrumental in carrying that out so students could understand using a banana and other threading utensils, how to do suturing. So the suturing the stop the bleed, and the anatomy and clay, were all part of our hands on experiences because we knew and we know that unless students can be hands on, unless what I like to always say with our generation of students, just like the self-immersive process of taking a selfie, if students don't see themselves in their learning, it just doesn't work. So those are some examples of our hands-on and I hope I didn't ramble too much with that one.

**Jenna Courtade 34:09**

No, no, not at all. Um, yeah, those are a great way to keep students I really like how you said this, like compared to compare it with a selfie. Yeah, no, thank you. Those are great to know. And I'm, I'm glad you shared those other two because the anatomy and clay just sounds I want to do that my birth family I love anatomy. But okay, let's see. Um so, okay, this I'm going to ask a question first, just for me to make sure I'm understanding correct. You mentioned that for the summer program. You limited it to seventh grade to 12th grade. As students only, but up in your other programs, you would have younger students correct.

**Joy Valentine 35:06**

In our other program, we would have younger students, in fact, pre COVID. And I would say a couple of years before COVID, we were actually K through 12. We actually, the requirement that was summer only requirement is that the student had to have completed kindergarten, they had to be on their way to first grade and we would have students during the summer. However, pre COVID, we had stopped the younger students for a couple of reasons. And one of the reasons we were in budgetary constraints. And the other reason is, thanks to the help of the Urban Health Program, and the Executive Director, Dr. Darrell Pendleton, they were able to provide stipends, but only for high school students. So right before COVID. And in order to be fair to all students, we didn't want middle school or other students in the program, who were not going to be able to receive the stipend, it just would not have been equitable, and it wouldn't have been fair. So we, prior the year before COVID, we had only high school for the summer program, because it was a rigorous program. And as I said, students received a stipend at the end. And it was the fall semester after that, that we begin introducing middle grades back into the program. To the point where we were introduced, the format was introducing one grade lower each semester, until we get back down to having all middle school students. And then fast forward to COVID. Once COVID hit, we knew we did not want to have little bodies on campus. There's so many reasons I won't even get into all of them. But it more manageable. Making certain that and especially with the COVID requirements. When we began our room, our remote learn our back to campus. With the vaccination age levels, we knew we could comfortably say to a parent and cite the university policy and guidelines that you know, they couldn't come to campus unless they were vaccinated. They had to show proof of vaccination. So with that said, we were middle school and high school only for the last semester and for our summer semester. And that's what we're working towards now for our fall semester.

**Jenna Courtade 37:52**

Okay, thank you. Um, and you just started to talk about the requirements of shifting back to on site learning. Um, could you talk a little bit more about so in addition to those requirements, how has that? How has that process been? You know, it's just coming back to the student myself. I know, it's been like, an interesting thing to navigate. So I'd like if you could share a little bit about how that's been for y'all.

**Joy Valentine 38:25**

Coming back to campus was... So for staff of course it has. It has been okay, it's been a good transition. Because coming back to campus with staff, we did a staggered skeletal model of people coming back so we wouldn't have everybody in the office at once. So some of us are in the office, on certain days, no more than two or three of us while the others will remote and we would shift days. So that worked well, coming back to campus for students worked well. We of course, the university did provide us with masks for everyone, especially for students who would come to campus without a mask, because, as you very well know, the signage and the requirement was that in classroom settings, and in labs, where our students where we operate our programs, there had to be masking. So there were no objections to that. We were- parents had no problem with giving the electronic version of their students' vaccination. We did have a small percentage of families who had enrolled for the program were coming back to campus and when we requested their vaccination cards, you know, we heard from parents, well, my child is 12 or my child is not yet 12 And I've made the decision not to get my child vaccinated, and we had to cite the university policy, you know, well, thank you, however we can't accept your child. So that was just a small percentage of students. And coming back to campus with using the masks, abiding by the masking guidelines was no problem. And parents who came to campus either to bring their child to campus, or to accompany on field trips, because every Wednesday during the summer, it's a field trip, we required parents to show proof of vaccination, and wear masks as well. So coming back to campus has not been a problem for us, and has not been a problem for our students or families.

**Jenna Courtade 40:52**

Okay, great. And in addition to being on campus, I've read that the Urban Health early outreach virtual education program continues to offer instruction through digital means. And so could- would you mind talking about that, and how that's been, you know, keeping that up as well.

**Joy Valentine 41:18**

So that has been what I talked about earlier with the workshops that the graduate students in the College of Medicine, College of Pharmacy College of Applied Health Science, College of Dentistry, those have been the virtual workshops that have been facilitated by those students, where the each workshop begins with an introduction of the student of the graduate students and the facilitation of the workshop for about 30 to 40 minutes. And then students are engaged in questions. One of the things that we do at the end of each workshop is send out, it's actually a link that's put into the chat. And all of our students are encouraged to do the evaluation of the workshop right there on the spot. And so all of those workshops have been highly evaluated. So that has been something that we know that has worked in terms of not only engaging the students, but making a way for them to have a virtual learning

experience, and a different health careers. Path for each of the Saturdays that we engaged in that are that we engage in that.

**Jenna Courtade 42:46**

Okay, thank you. Yeah. And, let's see, I want to this will be our last question in this specifically. And then we can kind of start to end on reflecting I don't, I want to give you know, this hour and not go too much over. Respect your time, you know, so you did mention, now I'm jumping back a bit a bit, but especially with the, the, the meetings for the parents, interest in vaccination and like learning about that. We know that communities of color are disproportionately affected by COVID. But and by the pandemic. So in addition to having those parent conferences, did the office or did your office and these programs engage in other additional community education efforts to, you know, discuss or help, like mitigate, spread and educate on vaccinations. And if you would just like to talk about that more too.

**Joy Valentine 44:08**

So, going back to what I stated earlier about the graduate students, was actually College of Pharmacy and College of Medicine, College of Medicine, graduate students did an excellent job, and engaging our students and speaking to parents and students because not only did they have workshops with just our students, they had workshops with the students and families where they talked about vaccine hesitancy where there was also interactive engagement with games and questions during the presentations where participants could, you know, click on an answer to a multiple choice question and then there was conversation was around, you know why that was the right answer or why it was not. So that was our biggest work working with college of medicine College of Pharmacy students. And they're facilitating learning to our stakeholders, because each of those workshops that they facilitated, was not only attended by our students, but we welcomed families as part of the audience on those given days. So the, as I said, we had evaluations afterwards. And one of the biggest takeaways from those workshops was that we had parents, students, and even some of my UIC team who had vaccine hesitancy who said that after those presentations, they knew that they had to get the vaccine. So we were able to not only understand why it was important learning from those graduate students, but the greatest thing that I got from that was the number of stakeholders, staff, parents and students who at the time, were old enough to say, "Oh, I'm going to go ahead and get this vaccine." Because, you know, their hesitancy is there for any number of reasons, the main reason with, especially people in the black community, those who know about, and were, were old enough to understand the Tuskegee syphilis experiment, and how, you know, from a period of [the] 1940s, to the mid-70s, you know, black men were actually who had syphilis or ignored, were not treated, and were duped into being a part of a program where they were supposed to be helped, and were not, so we had a lot of older parents and grandparents who said, because of that, they were not going to get a COVID vaccine, but the workshops changed their minds.

**Jenna Courtade 47:21**

Wow, that's, that's like, very, very great news to hear, you know, and the impact on the community, like you'd see it directly. And those post program...

**Joy Valentine 47:45**

Evaluations?

**Jenna Courtade 47:46**

Thank you! I was like, "where did that word go?" The evaluations, that's like, that's also just like, that's separate. But good. Good to know. Like, if I ever do something like that. So, okay, wow. Thank you, you've been like giving so much great insight and reflections on the experiences that your office has had. So I'm really appreciative. Just saying that here. So we have 10 minutes now, I'm just going to ask just a few final questions. So [let's] see, if you could have done anything differently from all that you have done? Like, is there anything that you would have done? Or is there not? Would you reflect on that?

**Joy Valentine 48:49**

What I would do differently. Because I'm all about promoting the academic and social successes of the pre-college students that are about a part of our program. What I would do differently, especially if for some reason, we go to a 100% remote format ever again in life, I would find a way to communicate with each student to- I want to have a conversation so I can understand from them how we can create a sense of belonging. I would also want to have a conversation with them so I can understand how they can feel more engaged. As I said earlier, we had so many students who did not turn their cameras on. And research shows there were any number of reasons why students, especially students of color, didn't turn the cameras on but I want to make certain that students know how to use a virtual background that we're concerned with connecting with them, because we want to see their faces, it makes learning that much more enjoyable for everybody on the screen where we can see everybody's face. So I would look at ways to make certain that students turn their cameras on, I would look at ways to make certain that when students come back to campus that they feel welcome and supported. There were so many stressors around remote learning, there were there was so much inequity around remote learning. If I could do it, again, I would do some fundraising, because one of the things that we were not able to do for our pre college students that pained me, we were not able to loan them technology devices, because they were not university students, we had so many students who, during the pandemic had to use their phones. So if I could do anything differently, I would appeal to the powers that be at the university to say, hey, you have this pre college program with students who want to be a part of here with students who a good percentage of them will matriculate into UI system schools, make them feel welcome by supporting them with a device. You know, we were just told flat out "no," even though we did have money, because we only had three students that we needed to buy devices for, the university draw a hard line of note, even though it was our budget money, but that's another story. So I would make a way for every student to have a device, I would make a way to have every student turn their camera on, so that they're comfortable in their learning so that we- our teachers can see faces when they're having- during instructional time. And I would also make certain that all parents are supported in every way that they need to be supported. So even though we do have opportunities for parent support, I do know that COVID made it difficult. And I do know that budgetary constraints make things even more difficult. But I would I would do everything that I could to make certain that all of our stakeholders felt a sense of belonging, felt support, and in that support, provide the technology that's needed. Because that was the one thing that was missing.

**Jenna Courtade 52:57**

Yeah, as soon as you started talking about that, I was like, Oh, my gosh, how did I not ask a question about that? Because we know that's that the technological divide just in the country and is Yeah, so I'm sorry that I didn't ask a question about that earlier, but I'm glad that we got to talk about it. And that's really frustrating, especially just for three students in the program. But like you said, that's another that's, that's another conversation for another time. Okay, so, um, one more final question more for you or just anything? Did you feel that you learned- what did you feel that you learned from this pandemic about you know, yourself, it could be about your work, the university any, any of it.

**Joy Valentine 53:57**

So I can- I'll begin that by saying COVID 19 does, because I'm not going to use past tense, have some silver linings. There were some silver linings in this whole thing. I found out that my team is a very effective and productive team remotely. So many units and so many other directors that I talked to did not experience that. They even talked about people missing in action, I won't get into all of that because we are being recorded, but my team was on point, present, did what they were supposed to do, and because of the weekly check-ins, I think we even I supported each other more than we would have- more than we usually do, I wouldn't say would have because we consider ourselves a family, but COVID made us provide more support to each other, COVID made us provide more supports to our students and families. So that was a silver lining. About myself, I learned that working remotely required me to be more protective of my time. Because I am a director of a program at the University and you did say earlier, I am also a graduate student in the doctoral program, and I'm also a UIC alum. So this is my second round as a student. So I do know that as a director of a program, the hat that I wear, I have to make certain that I manage projects, effectively, that I manage people with compassion. And I learned that I am able to do that. As I would say even more effectively, remotely, if that even makes sense. Because I'm a good read of people. And I can tell when something was missing. And I can tell I could tell when I needed to say things or do things to bring people more into the fold. So I learned more about myself, and the strategies that I had to employ to get people to a certain space. So I would say I learned that I learned that about myself. I learned that as disruptive as COVID could be, that there also were times when there were situations where because of, should I say in spite of COVID, things got done, that may not necessarily have been done as well. Case in point was our 40th anniversary. I do not think even with a big gala, and dinner and people being face to face in person, I don't think we would have had the same response that we did remotely because more people were able to tune in, the recording lives in perpetuity, so the recording is there. So COVID made me a more strategic thinker. COVID made me protect my time more. COVID made me understand that people need support. And when you do that effectively as a director, you are able to not only have respect, but also have tasks done and work can be completed.

**Jenna Courtade 58:22**

Thank you. Thank you for sharing that insight. And on the topic of respecting your time. This has been our um, it's been really wonderful speaking with you, Joy. Thank you so much for sharing everything and the experiences of this program. And yeah, thank you.

**Joy Valentine 58:49**

Thank you so very much, Jenna. Great questions. This was a great interview. I enjoyed it and I'm happy to be a part of this. I can't wait to see the finished product with everybody.

**Jenna Courtade 58:59**  
Yeah,