At the core of the Illinois Space Society's mission lies the belief that collaboration and inclusivity is the key to our success. The Illinois Space Society stands in solidarity with the Black Lives Matter movement to that end. Recent events have led to reflection on our daily lives, our preconceptions of the world in which we live, our biases, and our varying levels of privilege and responsibility. Collectively, we reflect, and as students it is our responsibility to take action and to advocate for our BIPOC peers. We stand by the activists, organizers, and our own BIPOC members who continue to be impacted by systemic oppression and discrimination.

ISS is dedicated to supporting and providing resources to help students achieve their full potential. The ways in which we can best use our platform is through commitment to inclusion, and fundraising. This year, one of our main goals is to diversify our society through panels, subcommittees, and highlighting positive member dynamics. Additionally, we will be raising funds for the BLM movement, and organizations which stand to increase diversity of STEM fields. The Engineering Council will match donations up to a total of $6000 to any of the organizations listed on the Black Lives Matter donation page. The Illinois Space Society has decided to donate to the Innocence Project, more information about this amazing organization can be found here. If you would like to donate, please Venmo @illinoisspacesociety with “BLM donation” written in the description. We will collect donations until July 5th.

Our individual actions to come also define what we stand for as a society. First, it is important to educate yourself. Read about the experiences of those different from yourself, watch documentaries, fight for Black voices to be heard, research our healthcare and education and criminal justice systems. Further, engage in communication to educate your family, friends, and community in a safe space on these issues as well.

As space enthusiasts and the next generation of STEM workers, change in our field of interest begins with us. Modern medicine, technology, and scientific understandings have dark roots in the exploitation of marginalized groups. Racism is everywhere from the narratives we learn in school, to the barriers to entry of these fields in the forms of access and representation today. Diversity matters, and empathy and inclusivity are important for all of us. A quick read to check out is Kenneth Gibbs’ 'Diversity in STEM: What it is and Why it Matters'. His words speak for our mission: "When we consider scientific research as group problem-solving, instead of the unveiling of individual brilliance, diversity becomes the key to excellence."

ISS members have built such a strong support system of friends and allies. We cannot wait to see you all back on campus, please stay safe and healthy in the meantime.

Ad Astra,

The Board of the Illinois Space Society

If you have any ideas for how we can address diversity and inclusion within ISS, please feel free to reach out to us at iss.ae.illinois@gmail.com