



ILLINOIS STUDENT VETERAN LEADER OF THE YEAR AWARD

Carly May Fournier, United States Navy Veteran and recent graduate of Loyola University of Chicago's School of Environmental Science and Sustainability, is the recipient of the Illinois Student Veteran Leader of the Year Award. As the Military and Veteran Student Services Student Coordinator for programming and initiatives for the University, she has dedicated herself to building a strong and supported student veteran community. When she came to Loyola, she recognized great opportunity for growth in programs and support for student veterans. She jumped in with both feet where she has contributed to building a strong foundation for a program that can serve student veterans for years to come. She is also Vice President of the Student Veteran Association.

The purpose of the Illinois Student Veteran Leader of the Year Award is to recognize student veterans for the quality of their engagement with their college/university and/or the wider community. This individual portrays both strong leadership characteristics and academics. They serve as a role model for the student veteran body by volunteering, participating in events, excelling in school, reaching out to fellow student veterans, and portraying an overall positive attitude. Nominees are reviewed by a committee, which is selected by the Administrator of the State Approving Agency, Illinois Department of Veterans Affairs

Dan Wellman, IDVA's Veterans Education and Training Services (VETS) Administrator, presented the award at a reception and luncheon at the Loyola University's Lake Shore campus. He cited a nomination letter from Alex Pirila, the Associate Director of the Office of Military and Veteran Student Services at Loyola University, "Carly's tenacity and determination for improving the veteran experience not just at Loyola but all higher education is a model for all to learn from. To the core, Carly believes better days for student veterans is on the horizon and she won't stop until we get there."

Alex complimented Carly's strategic planning, project management, and leadership skills which has been vital for SVA chapter development and student veteran engagement. "With her leadership over the past year, veteran engagement and SVA active membership has increased 50% and 25% respectively."



Pictured from left to right: Dr. Keith Champagne- Vice President of Student Development – Loyola University Chicago (LUC), Alex Pirila- Associate Director of Military Veteran Student Services – LUC, Dan Wellman, Veterans Education and Training Services (VETS) Administrator – IDVA, Carly May Fournier- Recipient of the Student Veteran Leader of the Year Award, Stephen Mitten, S.J.- Advance Lecturer, School of Environmental Sustainability – LUC, Dr. William Rodriguez- Dean of Students

"Student veterans are a unique group of students," said Carly. "I wanted to create a place where they could feel safe and part of a community."

Carly served four years active duty on the USS James E. Williams in the Engineering Department as a Damage Controlman. She served at Great Lakes Naval Station in the Reserves as a Hull Technician. In 2020, she was reactivated and was deployed to Joint-Base Pearl Harbor in support of COVID-19 relief efforts.

Her honors include the two-time recipient of the Navy and Marine Corps Achievement Medal and the Silver Good Conduct Award. As a Loyola Student, she earned the Community Engagement Award for Innovation in Sustainability from Students of SOAR and was twice nominated as the Loyola University Chicago Undergraduate Women's Leadership Award.

Carly earned her B.A. in Environmental Studies and is working toward her M.S. in Environmental Science and Sustainability. The Loyola campus is home to many bird colonies. Carly was instrumental in establishing a safe habitat for the birds to thrive on campus. Following completion of her Master's, she plans on attending the Inca Terra Research Center in Peru to continue her training as a bird scientist.