

Mariel Rancel was awarded the Abraham Lincoln Civic Engagement Award on Saturday, November 11, 2017 in the Hall of Representatives in the Old State Capitol in Springfield, Illinois. She is a Student Laureate in the 43rd Annual Convocation and Investiture of Student Laureates. Her academic and extracurricular activities made her the choice of the University of Illinois at Chicago for this prestigious annual award. It is presented to outstanding seniors at Illinois colleges and universities.

A member of the Honors College of the University of Illinois at Chicago, Mariel is working toward her Bachelor of Science degree in Biological Sciences, with minors in Nutrition and Disability & Human Development. In 2014 she was named a [Golden Apple Scholar](#) and has since completed teaching internships at Benito Juarez Community Academy in Pilsen, Illinois and the Illinois Mathematics and Science Academy in Aurora. After graduating this spring, she hopes to pursue her master's degree in education to become a secondary school science teacher.

Throughout her undergraduate study, Mariel has conducted research in Dr. David Marquez's [Exercise Psychology Laboratory](#) and as a part of the [Urban Public Policy Fellowship](#) (UPPF). Her Honors College capstone project included research on voucher redemption among African-American and Latino Chicago Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) recipients. Participation in the UPPF Program also allowed her to intern at Catholic Charities.

Mariel's coursework in nutrition took her to [Geneva](#), Switzerland, in the summer 2017 to examine global food security, nutrition, and sustainable development. It was important for her as a disabled Puerto Rican woman to complete her study-abroad capstone project on the [challenges women with disabilities face when claiming their right to food](#).

You may find her on [LinkedIn](#)