

Surge Fellowship Chicago Announces Its 2027 Cohort

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Thirty-one education leaders from across Chicago's schools, districts, nonprofits, higher education, workforce development, philanthropy, advocacy, and community organizations will join the 2027 cohort.



Chicago, IL – September 2, 2026 – [Surge Institute](#) today announced the 31 leaders selected for its 2027 Chicago Fellowship, the largest Chicago cohort in the organization's history. These Fellows lead across Chicago Public Schools, charter schools, nonprofit organizations, higher education, workforce development, philanthropy, advocacy, and community-based institutions throughout the Chicago area.

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Ulric Shannon

Surge is growing its flagship Fellowship Chicago because Chicago needs a larger, connected pipeline of leaders prepared to lead through disruption. At a moment when the city's education ecosystem is navigating budget pressure, staffing changes, shifting policy, and rapid

technological change, CHI27 will strengthen the skills, relationships, and collective power leaders need to respond with courage, clarity, and a deep commitment to the communities they serve.

“This announcement is more than a list of names. This is a signal of a powerful network being built. A network of leaders who are stepping forward, stepping together, and stepping into the work with courage, clarity, and conviction,” said Ulric Shannon, Executive Director, Surge Chicago Fellowship. “This is the moment. This is the movement. This is how Chicago answers the Surge.”

The 2027 Fellows will take part in the Surge Fellowship Chicago, Surge Institute's signature program, which includes intentional self-discovery, executive leadership skill development, community building, executive coaching, and culminates with Freedom Dream presentations.

"This is where individual leadership becomes collective power, and where Chicago's education ecosystem continues to grow stronger, more connected, and more courageous," said Shannon.

Meet The 2027 Surge Fellowship Chicago Fellows:

- Aaron Smoot - Community Engagement & Advancement Manager, The CAFE Group
- Aerionna Martin-Redfield - Executive Director of Strategic Initiatives, Harry S Truman College (City Colleges of Chicago)
- Alleson Knox - Director of National Partnerships, The Mind Trust
- Ashton Yurk - Senior Associate, Data and Innovation, The Chicago Public Education Fund
- Brandi Whitfield-Lewis - Assistant Principal, Chicago Public Schools - Calmecca Academy
- Brianna Taylor - Instructional Program Manager, Saga Education
- Carolina Estay - Director of Community Engagement, Academy for Local Leadership
- Charles Clark - School Counselor, Lindblom Math and Science Academy
- Charles Q. Myers - Director of Scholar Engagement & Enrichment, Catalyst Circle Rock
- Corinne Durette - Entrepreneurship Program Director, The Gray Matter Experience
- Daphanie Bibbs - Learning Specialist, Hansberry College Prep, a Noble School
- Delisa Greene - Enrollment Compliance Manager, Chicago Public Schools
- Diana Diaz, Director - External Affairs, Teach for America
- Diana Xitlaly Lopez - Director of Operations & Impact, Urban Warriors
- Dr. Marlena Little - Executive Director, Educators for Excellence
- Jeremy Thornton - Assistant Principal, Chicago Public Schools
- Jesus Galvan - Assistant Principal, Northwestern University
- Justin Hawkins - Managing Director, Teaching and Learning, Teach for America
- Karina Baird - Associate, Higher Ed Partnerships, Braven
- Katrina Adams - STARR Community Services International, Executive Director
- LaShawn Holloway - Senior Director, Braven
- Lindsay Levenson - School Counselor, Homewood-Flossmoor High School
- Lorraine Nunez - Assistant Principal, Otis Elementary School
- Megan Johnson - Assistant Principal of Academics, Great Lakes Academy
- Morgan Moss - Senior Auditor, Chicago Public Schools
- Myriam Durán - Director of Alumni Support, Noble Schools
- Natalie Summers - Director of Programs, COOP Careers
- Nicole Kerr - Instructional Coach, Chicago Public Schools
- Robert Wilson - Graduate Student, University of Illinois Chicago
- Theresa Alanis - English Learner Network Specialist, Chicago Public Schools
- Tyler Tucker - Teacher/Athletic Director, Noble Network of Charter Schools

The 2027 cohort will officially kick off with its opening retreat on October 15-17, 2026, with programming continuing until July 2027. Members of the public and media who are interested in learning more about the program are encouraged to contact Surge Fellowship Chicago directly.

The Surge Fellowship Chicago is made possible through collaboration with and support from [a host of Chicago](#) funders, investors, and community partners who deeply believe in the genius within the Surge community.

About Surge Institute

Surge Institute is a national 501(c)(3) nonprofit established in 2014 with the mission to develop and elevate leaders of color who enact transformative change for children, families, and communities. Since its founding by Carmita Semaan, Surge has been dedicated to creating authentic and powerful leadership development experiences. Learn more at surgeinstitute.org.

Ulric Shannon
Surge Institute

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