

My name is Yaide Valdez. I am currently a Junior here at the University at Buffalo. My major is Political Science with a minor in Education Leadership and Policy. I was born in the Dominican Republic and moved to Rochester, New York with my mother to pursue a better education and seek more opportunities for me. I am a first-generation, Afro-Latina student who has struggled to find her place at an institution that is not built for her and I want to make a change. I am strong-minded, resilient, outspoken, committed, self-motivated, and unafraid to take on new challenges. A leader is not someone who has people behind them, but someone who has people next to them who will guide them, teach them, and hold them accountable when needs aren't being met.

I want to run for student council student representative, as the saying goes one must be the change one wants to see. This school year, I have served as Vice President and President of the Latin American Student Association, where I have had the opportunity to interact with students from different backgrounds, sexual orientations, and marginalized backgrounds, among other things, and was able to discuss their needs as students. During my interactions with students, the most significant point I have learned is how students feel our institution needs to do more to support them as students and regular people.

I am an advocate of human rights. I believe that no one should be treated differently because of their race, religion, sex, gender, sexual orientation, learning needs, age, among other things. I have participated in Black lives matter protests and facilitated events where I educate people on what this movement means, how we can help the Black community, and most importantly come together as one. In 2019 I worked for the Yversha Roman campaign, the first Latina elected as a legislator in Monroe County. I have advocated for students who are English Language Learners and was asked to speak at the New York Charter Schools Association "#StandUp4EdEquity" event, where I discussed the importance of equal education for all students as I am an advocate for education rights. In 2021 I started my activism page "A Girl With A Voice," where I use instagram to educate others on important topics. As a leader, I push for student advocacy because I understand what someone like me needs in their institution to feel comfortable and enjoy their college experience like anyone else.

**My goals as Student Council Representative are as follows:**

- Demand that our University meets more DEI advocacy as a whole, by pushing more cultural and accepting events to be created and sponsored by our institution
- Getting the University to provide more culturally diverse food options that serve ALL students
- Ensure that our University is working closely with student organizations to support them
- Provide more accessibility to accommodate neurodivergent students
- Fight low Latine retention rates that currently exist at our University
- Advocate for students' mental health
- Give valuable information to our campus leaders that come directly from the students

Through my goals, I hope to represent the majority of the student body and provide them with the support we all need in order to succeed.