



*Six students were selected as recipients of the 2021 Changebuilder Scholars Award through New Jersey Campus Compact's AmeriCorps Changebuilders program*

**JERSEY CITY, NJ. – April 2, 2021** – New Jersey Campus Compact (NJCC), a statewide coalition of colleges and universities committed to the public purposes of higher education, has honored six New Jersey students with the Changebuilder Scholars Award. These scholars were selected through a competitive statewide application process as part of NJCC's AmeriCorps Changebuilders program, designed to increase by at least 5,000 the number of civically engaged college graduates who show every day by their deeds their commitment to advancing a vibrant and engaged democracy, while also clearly demonstrating the skills necessary to thrive as a 21<sup>st</sup> century graduate. Traditionally, one awardee from each institution receives \$1,000 to be used in any way that the awardees believe supports their continued success as students and engaged members of their communities.

A common theme and passion of the 2021 cohort of Changebuilders Scholars is one of working to ensure there is a nurturing campus environment for ALL students, given the added strain and fear ever present over the past year, by completing projects to address Covid safety, food insecurity, environmental stewardship, peer tutoring, census completion, and more. Congratulations to the following public scholars:

**Alexander Lazeration (Mech. Engineering, Physics, AS'21, 3.7GPA) – Raritan Valley Community College.**

Alex volunteers with the Arc, an organization that works with individuals with intellectual or developmental disabilities, has nurtured people through these anxious and lonely times. His demonstrated leadership, passion, and joy in collaborating stand out most in the ways he helps fellow students as a Calculus volunteer instructor and as a student peer mentor at RVCC.

**Joseph DiTaranto (Biology, BS'24, 4.0GPA) – Ramapo College of New Jersey.**

Joseph's engagement as a Leader in Service was evident during Covid when he chose to mentor with a Million Reasons Why and to tutor with Math Adventures and Workplay. In addition, his coordination of the patient-reading project at the Dellridge Medical Center showed both his work ethic as well as your commitment to service.

**Rebecca Gilliland (Sociology, Criminology, & Forensic Studies, BA'23, 3.98GPA) – William Paterson University.**

Rebecca is clearly a skilled project leader and resilience builder, based on her demonstrated accomplishments in creating a Covid-safety team, by revitalizing the campus food garden so as to add fresh produce to WPU's impressive and growing food pantry, and by being a Peer Leader in the Will Power class. Giving time to these projects is clearly a social justice and equal rights matter to Rebecca.

**Ruth Ovil (Psychology, BA'24, 4.0GPA) – Stockton University.**

Through Changebuilders and our conference, Ruth has deepened her understanding of the world of volunteering and of the causes that will help her to make communities better. Ruth builds her views and goals through consultation with others, coupled with significant research and preparation. Finally, her projects that advance environmental justice at the Marine Science Club and Chelsea Neighborhood show a commitment to having an environment we can be proud of.

**Thyquel Halley (Political Science & Pre-Law, BA'23, 3.71GPA) – New Jersey City University**

Thyquel has focused his efforts as a Changebuilder on policy and public service for some time. In one particularly fascinating project, he used his understanding of the outcomes of Census completion in allocating funds while

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volunteering at the City of Jersey City Mayor's Office Census Team, coupled with his goals for volunteering at and supporting AngelaCares Inc Food Pantry, to deliver both census completion by 50 residents while also delivering significant food donations to many Jersey City residents... all in one fell swoop!

**Vanessa Raab (Biology, Public Health and Biochemistry, BA'21, GPA3.49) – Drew University.**

Vanessa exemplifies a Changebuilder graduate, possessing both the tools and the confidence to pursue equality and the immediate relief of suffering for individuals. Vanessa stepped up and became a certified contact tracer, while also running virtual and local food drives. An accumulation of experiences through places like the Morristown Neighborhood House has given Vanessa skills of effective and professional communication, perseverance in fundraising, and a commitment to public health.

**Director of Changebuilders, and CEO of New Jersey Campus Compact (NJCC), Dr. Saul Petersen,** explained, *"These young scholars are following in the footsteps of last year's scholars in building the foundations of change for a better future. Over the past year in particular, we were delighted to witness the efforts by these scholars and many other changebuilders to improve how campuses care for and support fellow students. Efforts include – Covid-safety, peer mentoring, food pantry supplies, community garden development, and peer mentoring. We at NJCC are immensely proud to support their work as Changebuilders in partnership with our current Changebuilder campuses. Through our partnership with AmeriCorps and our member campuses, these students are building change from within, demonstrating with their actions how we ALL play a crucial role, it's who we are!"*

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To learn more about the program, and for public comment, contact Executive Director, Dr. Saul Petersen, at [saul@njcampuscompact.org](mailto:saul@njcampuscompact.org) or call at 609-335-3668

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