

Riki Jacobs Livingston Pride Award Essay

I believe my actions have positively impacted and brought change to the Rutgers community in various ways, which as a result have made an impact on the world and improved both my life and others I have supported around me. I believe that I have brought change to Rutgers based on my most meaningful involvements since beginning my undergraduate career at Rutgers. My first most meaningful involvement at Rutgers is chartering Black Business Association (BBA). Establishing BBA has been my proudest accomplishment since coming to Rutgers. After analyzing the current state of underrepresented minority students in Rutgers Business School, I knew Rutgers needed a student organization like BBA. Having a platform for minority students to share their ideas, discuss their plights, and continuously learn in every academic area, is a necessity in education. It is specifically important when preparing for a career in Corporate America or Entrepreneurship. BBA was founded to fill an unmet need on campus and to bring together past, present, and future underrepresented minority students to enrich and support each other. To think back to the beginning of my sophomore year and hoping to have a Black business club whose events I could attend, to taking the initiative to create one, makes me proud to lead with confidence. BBA is the only student organization on Rutgers NB campus catering to Black students interested in business careers, and the first in many years. Seeing the organization flourish in its first semester on campus, attracting more than minority students, getting recognition from professors, and even hosting a former NFL player, was more than I could have ever asked for and I am so grateful. Now finishing up our second year, beating the odds of hosting events virtually during the pandemic, BBA continues to have a promising future.

My second most meaningful involvement at Rutgers has been being part of Student Organized Rutgers Against Hunger (SORAH). Through my involvement in SORAH over the past three years I have had the opportunity to give back to those in need and educate students of Rutgers on hunger awareness. It is often overlooked that 30% of college students are food insecure, so educating our members allows us to help and inform fellow students to drive action. With the addition of the Rutgers Student Food pantry in recent years, as co-president

of SORAH last year, we made a commitment to contribute more of our efforts towards the student food pantry, as our members are Rutgers students. We recognize that it is important to give back to the greater community, however giving back to our fellow students gives us the opportunity to positively impact those in need who are so similar to ourselves. Seeing myself in each of the students I have helped motivates me to continue to serve. Whether SORAH was farm gleaning at Von Thun Farms picking potatoes to give to less fortunate families or volunteering at the Community Food Bank of NJ or even preparing meals at Elijah's Promise Soup Kitchen, an impact was made.

My third most meaningful involvement since my time at Rutgers was being a Career Prep fellow in one of the top fellowships in the country for high-achieving, academically driven, diverse students, Management Leadership for Tomorrow (MLT). Starting in my sophomore year I was accepted into this 18-month fellowship on the career preparatory track. I was given a career coach and the opportunity to travel across the country to places like Dallas in August 2019 and Minneapolis in October 2019, with more in 2020 before the pandemic hit. MLT equipped me with a network spanning the entire country. At each of our conferences we had the ability to demonstrate our analytical skills through case studies, our leadership through small and large group roundtables, and most importantly, become a family while having representatives from the top companies in the world interacting and leading our sessions. The parallel that I draw between MLT and the work I have done at Rutgers is helping serve underrepresented communities where I feel I have been given all the tools and resources to succeed and excel, creating a seat at the table that we were not traditionally invited to or allowed to even perceive. The deeper meaning, I see, behind supporting and fueling students of color is building up an army full of diversity of thought. Throughout my time in MLT, I was the only fellow on behalf of Rutgers NB in my cohort. Schools like University of Michigan, Harvard University, and Stanford University had groups of fellows, while I was the single representative from Rutgers. I was representing Rutgers across the country through my character, career potential, and leadership, carrying Scarlet proudly amongst the ivy leagues and other top schools.

Other meaningful involvements I would like to highlight are being a part of the

Rutgers National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), having the opportunity to fight for Black faces and bodies at Rutgers. Last year, as a part of the executive board, we organized the first rally against racism and for Black solidarity in four years on campus, demanding equal treatment across all student demographics. In addition, last year when we were on campus I served as a mentor in the Global Roommate Program where I lived with two freshmen international students in their transition to the United States and college. Serving as both a friend and mentor in their transition allowed them to flourish and as a result give them an opportunity to positively impact Rutgers in their own way. Even as a Rutgers Business School ambassador, I impacted the future of Rutgers every time I talked to a perspective or current student, influencing the way they perceive Rutgers, and making sure they left with a smile on their face.

After graduation I will be working for Visa Inc. in Product Management and they recently launched their own Economic Empowerment Institute for the exchange of ideas on payments and public policy. I would love to work my way up to a public policy office similar to this initiative where I am advocating for vulnerable populations from a corporate lens. I have always been passionate about creating healthy communities throughout my life and college career, championing inclusion efforts, and giving back. I would love to bring my activism efforts into Corporate America to leverage the social responsibility of large institutions. My approach may be more indirect, but I believe it could be equally beneficial to the communities I would serve. I would ensure that all voices are heard, and I would know that I am making a difference. Excluding my impact left on Rutgers through establishing the only Black business student organization and leading one of the most giving community service student organizations, as well as being a force for change in our Rutgers NAACP, I have stood in the gaps and left my mark. Through the impact I have made on Rutgers thus far, I believe I have changed the environments and communities I have been a part of at this university for the better, and I am extremely grateful.