

“Sun of righteousness shine upon the West also” is interpreted as a request for the enlightenment of learning to shine equally upon the New World. Rutgers has not only adopted it as our motto (translated) but it’s one of the first phrases we are introduced to as new students. Which brings me back to the Welcome Anthem video, I eagerly watched during freshman orientation. “Rutgers brings New Jersey to the world and the world to New Jersey but we can’t do it without you, our newest, brightest Scarlet Knights”.

As I reflect on my time on the banks, I will look back on the time spent working with the New Jersey Healthy Kids Initiative. As the student research director, I was able to build upon my interests in the intersection of community partnership and equity to see first-hand the groundbreaking collaboration between New Jersey Institute for Food, Nutrition and Health (IFNH) and the Child Health Institute of New Jersey (CHINJ). The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation provided a \$3 million launch grant highlighting the shared vision to pinpoint child health needs and explore where they are unmet in their school curriculums. Alongside an intern team and volunteers, we administered a total of 12 lessons to compare the effectiveness of physical and nutritional literacy curriculums in K-6 populations. The first six lessons tackled physical literacy which assessed endurance, heart health, strength, coordination, fine motor skills, and balance. The remaining six lessons focused on nutrition, testing their understanding of different food groups and ways to achieve a balanced diet. I’ve especially grown attached to kindergarten students at Benjamin Franklin Elementary School. The assessment of data continues to be an ongoing process; however, it’s been rewarding to understand the impact our work has had. Whether it’s been exposing students to cleaner eating habits, modifying lesson plans to meet their limitations, or providing a change of pace to their learning day.

My desire to help in the community also extends into fostering civic engagement especially for underrepresented communities. As the daughter of undocumented immigrants, I remain committed to lead a life in service of others. I took a personal role throughout the 2020 midterm election to translate voter registration information with the Eagleton Institute of Politics. As a Darian Civic Engagement Fellow, I worked to make voter registration information digestible through a step-by-step video in Spanish. I was prompted to then work as an intern, where I was able to learn about what empowers students to get involved within the New Brunswick community through RUReady. Under the direction of Dr. Matto, students worked directly with New Brunswick high school students and administered workshops to foster active citizenship.

I shared with my students that my personal calling lied between being undocumented and living as a young woman of color learning to navigate life. I risked everything, every day to remain in this country, and after the Deferred Action for Late Childhood Arrivals passed in 2012, I refused to live in the shadows. DACA was here, and it changed my life. I put my passions for advocacy and government to test by working to implement a dynamic civic education workshop to foster engagement outside of the classroom and into the polling centers. These interactions made the lessons of RU Ready absorbable and allowed students to walk away with an understanding of political engagement could look like locally.

Bringing change to Rutgers did not stop in a virtual setting and I actively worked with the University Student Assembly as one of eight allocation board members during the pandemic. This was of the outmost importance to me as promoting diverse and inclusive programming was necessary as we acclimated to life on Zoom. Learning to manage and budget a fund of \$1.5 million dollars allowed me to actively serve as a resource for organizations and find meaningful

ways for students to stay connected. I understood the importance of community during such a pivotal time given my induction into Zeta Tau Alpha during the same academic school year.

Within ZTA, I was given meaningful opportunities to develop leadership skills as the Academic Achievement chair, supporting member's growth through educational programming. I was most proud of the chapters ability to promote breast cancer education and awareness as a part of our Think Pink campaign. We have successfully partnered and fundraised on a national level with the American Cancer Society, the National Football League, and Bright Pink (a nonprofit organization focusing on health equity).

As I prepare to walk on stage in May, I am most inspired by the Douglass Women's Community and the BOLD Center for surrounding me with a group of like-minded women, re-affirming me of the power of being first generation. I will be the first women in my family to graduate from both high school and college, feeling more enabled than ever to start a new chapter in my life within financial services in New York City.