



# 2025 ENGAGEMENT REPORT

Rooting Civic  
Experiences in Local  
Communities –

Growing Competencies  
for a Prosperous Future

[engagenj.org](https://engagenj.org)

[info@engagenj.org](mailto:info@engagenj.org)





# TABLE OF CONTENTS

- 02. Letter from the Board
- 03. Mission & Values
- 04. Funders, Sponsors & Donors
- 05. Engage Corps
- 07. Student Programming
- 09. National MLK Day of Service
- 10. Engage NJ FY'25 Expenditure
- 11. Engage NJ FY'25 Revenue
- 12. Coming Soon & What's Next



*"Public service is the clearest demonstration of the American dream. Public service experiences enhance self-determination, for individuals, as well as for communities, who want little more than to have the dignity of dealing with their own challenges in their own way."*

**– Dr. Saul Petersen, Executive Director, Engage NJ**

[www.engagenj.org](http://www.engagenj.org)

# DEAR COLLEAGUES,

On behalf of the entire board of directors and administration at Engage NJ, I am delighted to introduce Engage NJ's annual report to you. My first year as chair of the board is drawing to a close, and I'm sure I echo everyone's sentiment that it feels almost impossible to keep up with all the changes we are all witnessing and experiencing across the nation - that no sooner have we made a decision that the ground again moves under our feet. Yet, despite this tempest of change and uncertainty, I have never been as clear-headed about the importance and value of the transformative educational journey to which we offer direction. Our institutions work ceaselessly to graduate people with all the tools necessary to contribute to the well-being of the communities in which they live, to be action-oriented in a representative democracy at local and national levels, and to carve out rewarding careers that will support both them and their families. These are the values and actions I am pleased to see are carried out by Engage NJ, the coalition of colleges and universities that serve New Jersey socially and economically.

This Engage NJ report, entitled "Rooting Civic Experiences in Local Communities - Growing Competencies for a Prosperous Future", highlights the tireless commitments made by the entire Engage NJ team in ensuring clear impact and dividends on your membership investment. Indeed, as our financial charts at the end of the report show, Engage NJ's grants, programs, personnel, and events collectively return an average of \$48,000 to each member campus.

The report reflects on our work together for a better and shared future, one in which the doors must be open to every single person. As our CEO, Dr. Petersen, constantly insists that Engage NJ's policies and programs seek out the broadest range of backgrounds and experiences in our work with students, that we keep our doors open to those least likely to walk through.

As our CEO, Dr. Petersen, constantly insists that Engage NJ's policies and programs seek out the broadest range of backgrounds and experiences in our work with students, that we keep our doors open to those least likely to walk through. With your ongoing partnership and active participation, what comes next for Engage NJ over the coming decade is to build widescale public service opportunities for our students right across New Jersey so that they are exposed to the kinds of experiences that will prepare them not only for success at work but also to ensure our alumni engage with and protect their communities. To deliver on this mission, Engage NJ continues to break down the false dichotomy between civic learning experiences and workplace skill development.

Through widening access to funded programs and models, the statewide Engage NJ coalition of colleges and universities will benefit from the following deliverables:

- **DELIVERABLE 1:** Continue to provide full-time program personnel to member campuses
- **DELIVERABLE 2:** Expand and tailor multiple experiences for your students to thrive, and continue to build out a statewide civic network of students
- **DELIVERABLE 3:** Continue to provide multiple grants to member campuses for fellowships, service days, and program incubator awards
- **DELIVERABLE 4:** Catalog public service pathways & networks, connecting students to professionals representing myriad professional pathways, making persistence and completion more tangible and intrinsically motivated
- **DELIVERABLE 5:** Provide formal and recognized credit-bearing credentials for public service and workplace competencies
- **DELIVERABLE 6:** Expand industry-sector recognition and employment opportunities

Sincerely,

**Jonathan Koppell**  
**President, Montclair State University**  
**Chair, Engage NJ**





# MISSION

Engage NJ is a collaborative force in equipping and empowering campuses to foster competencies that advance democracy and enable students to thrive in 21st-century life and work.

# VALUES

**SUCCESS FOR ALL** – We assume that everyone achieves equally when all barriers to opportunity are removed and when just policies and actions prevail

We **ADVANCE DEMOCRACY** only when we act each day based on an unshakable commitment to all people, and all life

Competencies **FOR LIFE AND WORK** are interchangeable – the skills developed as a civically engaged student transfer to meaningful and successful work

We are effective at scale only when we **COLLABORATE**

Long term impact is gauged through the competencies demonstrated by students that lead to **IMPACT IN COMMUNITIES**

## Member Institutions & Nonprofit Partners

Hudson Co. Comm. College  
Kean University  
Middlesex College  
Mercer Co Community College  
Montclair State University  
NJ Institute of Technology  
Passaic Co. Community College  
Raritan Valley Community College  
Ramapo College  
Rowan University  
Rutgers New Brunswick  
Stockton University  
William Paterson University  
Mercer Street Friends  
NJ Environmental Justice Alliance  
Big Brothers Big Sisters  
Subject to Climate

“As I served with Engage NJ, I was fortunate to be a part of an organization that tirelessly strives for a more just and equitable New Jersey, particularly by empowering our next gen of leaders to get involved in shaping their future. This experience made me realize that pursuing a law degree is essential to becoming a better advocate for all.”

**Admir Molic, JD, Rutgers Law '24**  
**Engage NJ '22, VISTA Alum**





## FUNDERS, SPONSORS & DONORS

### Program Funders

9/11 Day  
AmeriCorps MLK Day  
AmeriCorps VISTA  
NJ Department of State  
NJ Office of the Secretary of Higher  
Education

### Conference Sponsors

AmeriCorps Volunteer Generation Fund  
Middlesex College  
NJ Council for the Humanities  
Stockton University

### Donors

Haskell Berman  
John Garbarino  
Harvey Kesselman  
Saul Petersen

## State Supporters

Department of State  
NJ DOS Office of Volunteerism  
NJ Council for the Humanities  
Office of the Secretary of Higher  
Education  
NJ Association for Civic Engagement  
Jersey Civic Engage  
NJ Business & Industries Association  
NJ Coalition of County Colleges

## National Partners

AmeriCorps  
Alliance for  
Campus Community Engagement  
College Civic Learning  
CLDE's Multi-State Collaborative  
911day.org

## ALLIANCE FOR CAMPUS COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

The Alliance is the largest network of state and regional coalitions dedicated to supporting the public purposes of U.S. higher education.

Representing 400 member institutions – community colleges, public four-year universities, and independent colleges and universities - the Alliance promotes public service, civic engagement, campus-community partnerships, and social mobility initiatives tailored to place-based and local contexts.

As one of the largest statewide Higher Education AmeriCorps VISTA programs in New Jersey, Engage NJ works closely with campuses and community-based organizations to build the capacity of initiatives and programs that truly foster sustainable and equitable collective impact. EngageCorps VISTA sites are developing solutions to overcome critical challenges such as food insecurity, urban socioeconomic inequities, student retention, and disparities in access to quality healthcare and other resources.

EngageCorps VISTA members are encouraged to serve not only because they are passionate about making a difference, but also because the program offers meaningful work that creates lasting change in communities. In addition to the rewarding nature of the work itself, VISTA members receive a variety of valuable benefits, including education awards, living stipends, insurance, professional development, networking, non-competitive eligibility, and more!

## ENGAGECorps will focus on:

**Capacity Builders:** Increasing an organization's effectiveness, efficiency, and program reach

**Skill Builders:** Developing college students' 21st-century skills for life and work

**Community Resource Centers:** Supporting Students' Health and Food Security

**Tutoring & Mentoring:** Increasing high school completion and college access

**Environmental Stewardship:**

Ensuring people have the competencies to care for and protect our natural resources and planet overall

## EngageCorps VISTA Members

1. Engage NJ  
*Leader and Fundraising VISTA*
2. Hudson County Community College  
*Health Care Coordinator (2)*
3. Kean University  
*Civic Engagement Project (2)*
4. Middlesex College  
*Community Resource Center Liaison (2)*
5. Mercer Street Friends  
*Food Pantry Coordinator (2)*
6. New Jersey Environmental Alliance  
*Youth Education Coordinator*  
*Research & Policy VISTA (2)*
7. Middlesex College  
*Community Resource Center Liaison*
8. William Paterson University  
*Educational Opportunity Fund Coordinator*  
*Changebuilder Project (2)*  
*Food Pantry Program Advocate*

[Hear from our VISTAs](#) 



**DESTINY RODRIGUEZ**  
**PROGRAM MANAGER**

"As an EngageCorps alum, I was able to grow professionally and continue my journey with Engage NJ. Now, as a manager, my goal is to equip my VISTAs with transferable skills, a strong network, and a sense of civic fulfillment by providing them with the resources, support, and opportunities they need to thrive."



"Your program has provided us with invaluable human capital. The VISTA members have brought energy, dedication, and expertise to our organization. They've not only managed the day-to-day operations of the food pantries but also developed sustainable systems that will continue to benefit our community for years to come. By focusing on capacity building, your program has empowered us to create lasting change."

**Kayla Taylor, Coordinator of School-Based Food Pantries and Family Resource Centers at Mercer Street Friends Community Schools**

"The best part of this position is being able to interact and inspire students to become involved in the communities and to follow their aspirations. In those moments, I know my efforts are really making a difference. If you are interested in becoming an Engage NJ VISTA, I would recommend doing so. It is a fantastic opportunity to hone in your career goals while serving your community in unforgettable ways."

**Middlesex College Community Resource Center VISTA (2024-2025)**

113

SCHOOLS AND SOCIAL SERVICES NOW BETTER RESOURCED TO FIGHT POVERTY AND INEQUALITY



1,800

STUDENTS KEPT IN SCHOOL THROUGH 1-ON-1 TUTORING

822

VOLUNTEERS RECRUITED AND MANAGED

37,000

POUNDS OF FOOD PROVIDED TO COMBAT HUNGER

20

ENGAGECORPS VISTAS SERVING AT HIGHER EDUCATION AND NONPROFIT ORGANIZATIONS



9,700

CASH OR IN-KIND RESOURCES LEVERAGED

473

STUDENTS WITH INCREASED JOB PREPAREDNESS



[Host a VISTA](#)



[Become a VISTA](#)





# MLK DAY OF SERVICE

The MLK Day of Service project reflects Engage NJ's innovative approach to community building. In the 2024-2025 grant cycle, **9,108 volunteers** participated in **52 service projects** nationally, collectively contributing an approximate **18,000 hours of service**. Key impacts included around **200 bags of clothes** recycled and donated, **2,000 bags of supplies** for school children, and **10,000 meal-kits** made for those in need worldwide.

Through partnerships with over **50 universities** across **11 states**, this initiative ensured that efforts were both inclusive and sustainable, reaching underserved communities in New Jersey, Pennsylvania, New York, Delaware, Maryland, Washington D.C., North Carolina, Indiana, Washington, Idaho, and California.



[SOS DATABASE](#)



**26 (AND GROWING) PAID  
AND INCENTIVIZED  
STUDENT OPPORTUNITIES  
FOR SUCCESS!**

Beyond a single day, this project inspires year-round engagement. Surveys showed that an estimate of **2,000 students** pledged to continue serving over the course of the year, demonstrating the ripple effect of this work. Engage NJ's leadership in mobilizing cross-state collaboration proves that Dr. King's dream thrives in collective action.

# STUDENT PROGRAMMING - CONFERENCES, INTERNSHIPS, FELLOWSHIPS

## THRIVE

Engage NJ's Thrive Conference 2025 brought together close to **150 students, nonprofit leaders, and professionals** for a day of learning, collaboration, and inspiration. Held on February 26th at Middlesex College, this year's event centered on equipping attendees with tools to drive sustainable impact in their communities.

The conference featured **17 dynamic presentations** led by students with experience in volunteerism, civic engagement, nonprofit management, education, and much more. Attendees also participated in the Opportunity Fair, the portion of the event where students could engage with over **14 different nonprofit, business, and government organizations**, fostering meaningful connections across sectors. With **85% of surveyed participants** reporting they left with **"actionable strategies"** for their work, Thrive 2025 proved its role as a catalyst for change.



**NATHAN REILLY**  
**CAMPUS SUPPORT MANAGER**

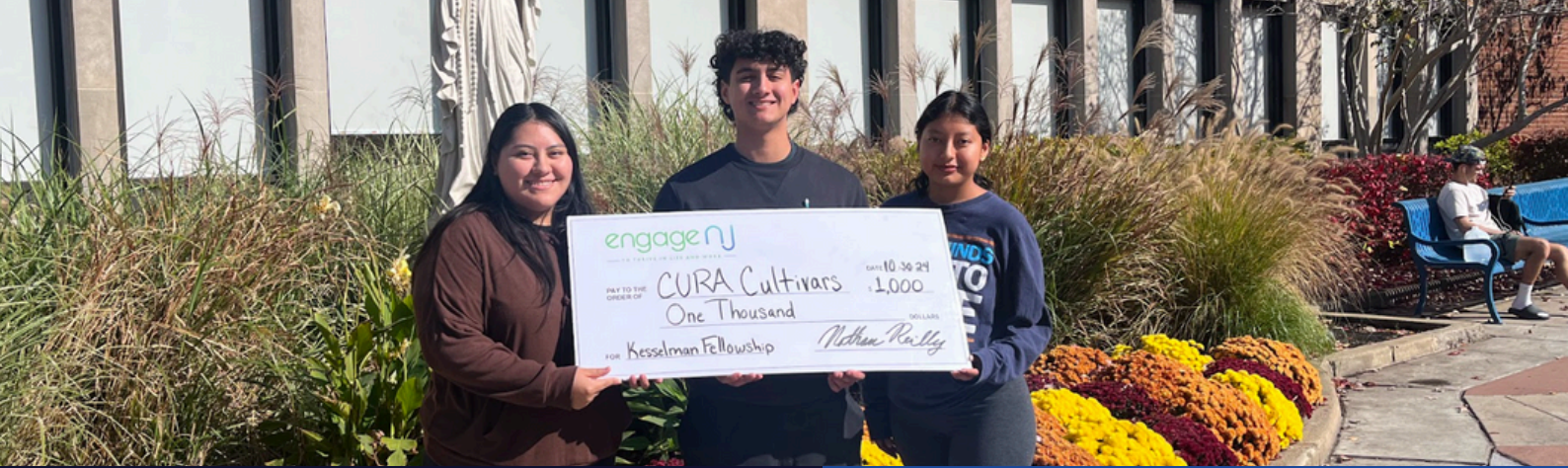
*"Engage NJ has opened up all new experiences for me in terms of learning about the nonprofit world, developing ideas for professional review, and making connections through New Jersey's higher education system. As a former EngageCorps VISTA, I'm proud to continue the work of bringing civic engagement to students across the state."*

## INTERNSHIPS

Engage NJ Interns are students from all across New Jersey's higher education system who want to **enhance their professional, career-building experience** through working with a federally-recognized non-profit. Currently, there are **3 interns** working with Engage NJ.

[Meet Our Interns!](#) 





# KESSELMAN FELLOWSHIPS

**The Kesselman Student Fellowship is an initiative to empower teams of students to work on local community projects.** The fellowships are so named to honor **Dr. Harvey Kesselman**, former president of Stockton University, long-serving board member of Engage NJ, and a staunch advocate and change-agent for the advancement of human rights across the Garden State.

This year, **4 groups of students were awarded \$1000** each to plan, enact, and gather data for their projects. The selected projects focus on animal welfare and urban environment stewardship, food knowledge and access, food insecurity and food bank patrons, and protests on college campuses.

[Student Programming Promo](#)



## *The 2024 Kesselman Student Fellowships Students*

**Project Name:** Pioneer Paws  
**School:** William Paterson University  
**Team Members:** Ariel Vallejo and Jaden Moreno  
**Impact:** 500 hours of service caring for animals, 300 hours of service fundraising for animal welfare, 100 feral cats spayed/neutered/vaccinated, 50 feral kittens rehabilitated and placed in foster care

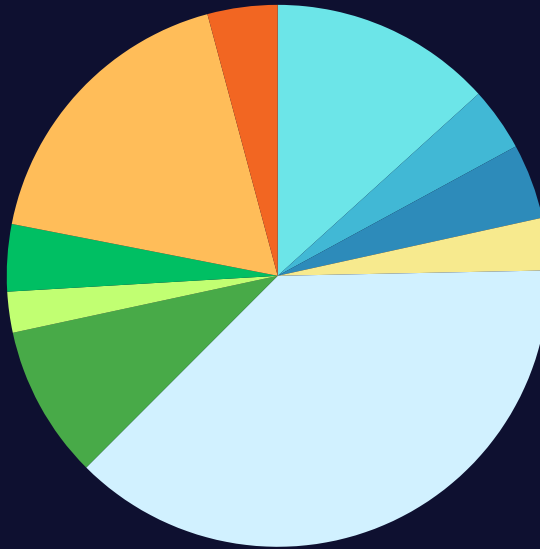
**Project Name:** Native and Medicinal Plant Knowledge of Immigrant Populations in Jersey City  
**School:** St. Peter's University  
**Team Members:** Maraya Cruz, Justin Capin, and Catherine Saldana  
**Impact:** 80 participants surveyed, cultivation of an urban hydroponic farm, 160lbs of greens donated

**Project Name:** Prevalence of Food Insecurity in Urban Cities  
**School:** Kean University  
**Team Members:** Jacob Donahue, Joshua Kwashie, Adoko Akue, and Jasmine Mosier  
**Impact:** 400 households fed, 55,000lbs of food donated, weekly medical/food supply drop-offs at migrant farms

**Project Name:** Fostering Community Through Campus Protest  
**School:** Kean University  
**Team Members:** Nefertiti Nzameyo, Bryan Ocas, and Holly Van Ness  
**Impact:** Findings pending publication in academic journal, accepted to present findings at National Communication Association Conference



# ENGAGE NJ FY'25 EXPENDITURE



**\$48,000 Per Member Campus Invested in Personnel, Programs & Awards**

\$624,000 Total Invested in NJ Campus Personnel, Programs & Awards

\$170,000 Awarded to Campuses Nationwide as Part of National MLK Day of Service Program

**\$127,188 Operating: Personnel**

**\$ 36,331 Operating: Office, Travel, & Governance**

**\$ 42,917 Student Programming Grant: Program Management**

**\$ 29,922 Student Programming Grant: Conferences and Fellowships**

**\$362,000 VISTA Grant: Providing Campuses Full-Time Personnel**

**\$ 87,490 VISTA Grant: Providing Campuses Full-Time Personnel**

**\$ 23,360 VISTA Grant: Personnel Training, Events & Technology**

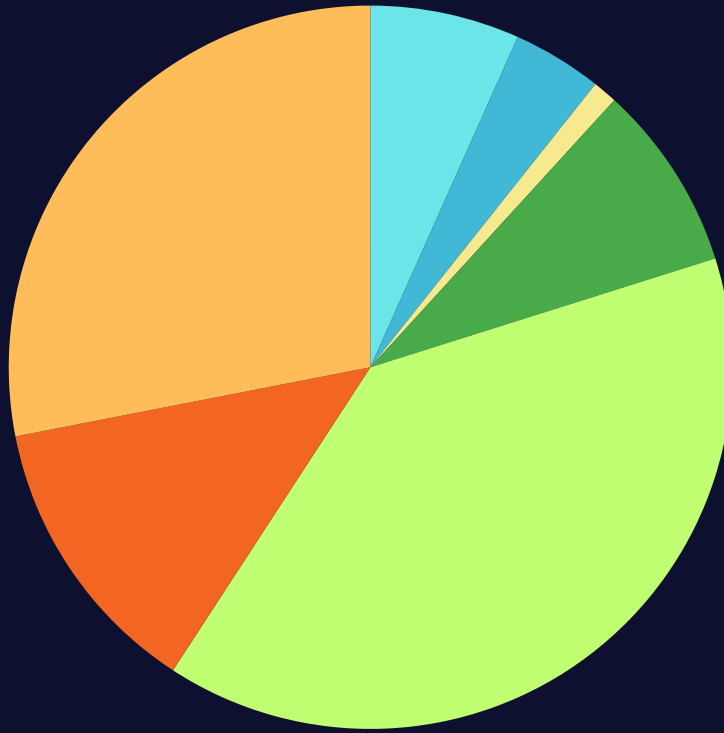
**\$ 38,313 National MLK Day of Service Grant: Program Management**

**\$ 170,000 National MLK Day of Service Grant: Awards to Other States**

**\$ 40,000 National MLK Day of Service Grant: Awards to NJ Campuses**

**\$ 957,521 TOTAL**

# ENGAGE NJ FY'25 REVENUE



**\$ 65,000 Membership**

**\$ 39,000 In-Kind - Office & Event Space**

**\$ 10,640 Sponsorships & Donations**

**\$ 81,280 Student Programming Grant**

**\$380,000 VISTA Grant for Full-Time Campus Personnel**

**\$124,000 VISTA Program Fees**

**\$273,070 National MLK Service Grants for Awards  
to Campuses**

**\$ 972,990 Total Revenue**



# COMING SOON!

**Public Service Students (PSS) Corps** will build adaptable skills for a thriving New Jersey workplace through widescale student community engaged experiences in local communities – **BECAUSE PUBLIC SERVICE IS JOB TRAINING** – PSS Corps will make make sure students can **Live** in New Jersey. **Work** in New Jersey. **Succeed** in New Jersey!

**Campus Resource Centers (CRC) Consortium** will expand basic needs services beyond food pantries to impact students' health, persistence and success.



## WHAT'S NEXT?

**APPLY** FOR UP TO \$3,000 FOR A 9/11 GRANT  
**APPLY** FOR FULL-TIME PROGRAM PERSONNEL  
**APPLY** IN FALL FOR UP TO \$5,000 MLK GRANT  
**JOIN** AN ENGAGE NJ STEERING GROUP

**MAKE SURE YOU'RE A MEMBER OF ENJ**

## KEEP IN TOUCH

- [WWW.ENGAGENJ.ORG](http://WWW.ENGAGENJ.ORG)
- [INFO@ENGAGENJ.ORG](mailto:INFO@ENGAGENJ.ORG)
- 1 NORMAL AVE, MONTCLAIR, NJ 07043

