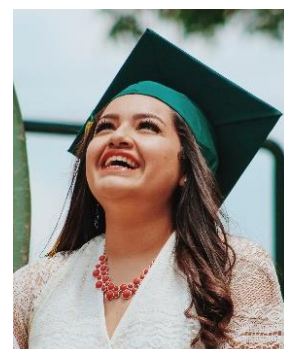




# THE HIGHER EDUCATION PRESIDENTS' COALITION

**STRATEGIC PLAN 2022 – 2027**

**ADVANCING DEMOCRACY AND ENABLING STUDENTS TO THRIVE**



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# LETTER FROM ENGAGE NJ BOARD AND EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

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Dear Friends,

We are delighted to share Engage NJ's five-year plan: **Advancing Democracy and Enabling Students to Thrive**. We have strived for ten years to lead as a higher education presidents' coalition focused on civic engagement in New Jersey. We operated for a decade under the old moniker of New Jersey Campus Compact. As Engage NJ, we look to the decade in front of us and our minds quickly focus on our spheres of influence and shared commitment to graduating tomorrow's leaders.

Over the past year, with invaluable input from the civic leadership committee, strategic planning committee, plus friends from across the state including faculty, staff, students, leaders at other higher education associations, and our board and team members, we have developed a focused plan and pathway for the nonprofit coalition, Engage NJ. To identify our path forward for New Jersey, we have first to acknowledge the position in which we find ourselves.

It is scarcely believable the choices students are facing as the impacts of Covid continue to push many high schoolers off their college pathway. With the added impending storm of climate change weighing ever more regularly on young minds and its connection to the instability of global fossil fuel dependence, planning for a future as a young person is undoubtedly daunting. Yet, what we do in

this decade will determine many young people's choices.

So how does our coalition map its path forward? Indeed, our very purpose must be to collaborate and with urgency to provide knowledge, experience, and hope to the next generation of public servants, executives and influencers. We must develop the motivation in students to become civically literate, encouraging them to accept the responsibilities of active citizenship. We must help students match passion with experience regarding global warming and environmental degradation issues. Finally, we must advance the skills necessary to fill career pathways urgent to this generation's greatest opportunities and challenges.

With Engage NJ, not only can New Jersey's colleges and universities be engines of economic opportunity, but we can also be ecosystems for equality – transforming opportunities for this generation and those downstream.

Next, we lay out our vision for change, the values at its heart, and the same genes that will be expressed through the plan for Engage NJ. This will be followed by the five-year plan, what success will look like, and how we wish to build unbreakable partnerships of shared benefit with you from day one of this next phase in our work.

Sincerely,

**Board of Directors, CEO, & Team**

Michael McDonough  
*Officer*

Sue Henderson  
*Chair*

Saul Petersen  
*Executive Director*

Harvey Kesselman  
*Treasurer*

Rob Boyajieff  
*Officer*

Rochelle Hendricks  
*Officer*

Mark McCormick  
*Officer*

Lamont Repollet  
*Officer*

Steve Rose  
*Officer*

Sarahdjie Monosiet  
*Associate Director*

Amy Wang  
*Accounts Manager*

Ebony Torres  
*AmeriCorps Leader*

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# VISION 2027

## THE HEART OF ENGAGE NJ

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OUR COALITION HOLDS TRUE that when higher education is both an ecosystem for equality and an engine of economic opportunity for each and every student, they will persist and graduate with the competencies and commitments to contribute positively to a resilient democracy and to lead fulfilling lives.

The Engage NJ network of campuses located right across the state – public, private, 2-year, 4-year - is the perfect ecosystem for realizing public purpose pathways to and through college. This is important in ensuring young people see the larger purpose and meaning to persist with their education.



### OUR VISION

*All NJ graduates possess the competencies for 21st century life and work that transform our democracy so that all people can be engaged, represented, and can lead fulfilling lives.*



### OUR 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.*



### OUR TAGLINE

*To thrive in life and work.*



## AT THE HEART OF WHAT WE VALUE

**SOCIAL EQUITY** - 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 inclusive and effective only when we **COLLABORATE**

Success for us is gauged through the competencies demonstrated by students that lead to **IMPACT IN COMMUNITIES**



## ORGANIZATIONAL COMMITMENTS

### – THE VERY EXPRESSION OF OUR NONPROFIT DNA

*The past year has enabled, or even forced us, to focus on how to express our DNA in how we operate as a nonprofit presidents' coalition.*

- *Our initiatives stand in solidarity with marginalized communities*
- *We amplify historically and legally disempowered voices and lives*
- *We act on matters of urgency, and show intolerance in the face of inaction*
- *The design of our programs and how we hire both express a fundamental commitment to diversity, equity, inclusion, and justice*
- *We are staunchly loyal to providing a podium for social and economic mobility, including by ensuring opportunities for improved life:work balance for the 21st century member of the team*

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## BRIEF OVERVIEW OF THE ENGAGE NJ THEORY OF CHANGE

### 5-YEAR GOAL

*Students graduate from New Jersey's colleges and universities with demonstrated experience and competence in **advancing democracy and thriving in 21st century life and work**.*

### INDICATOR

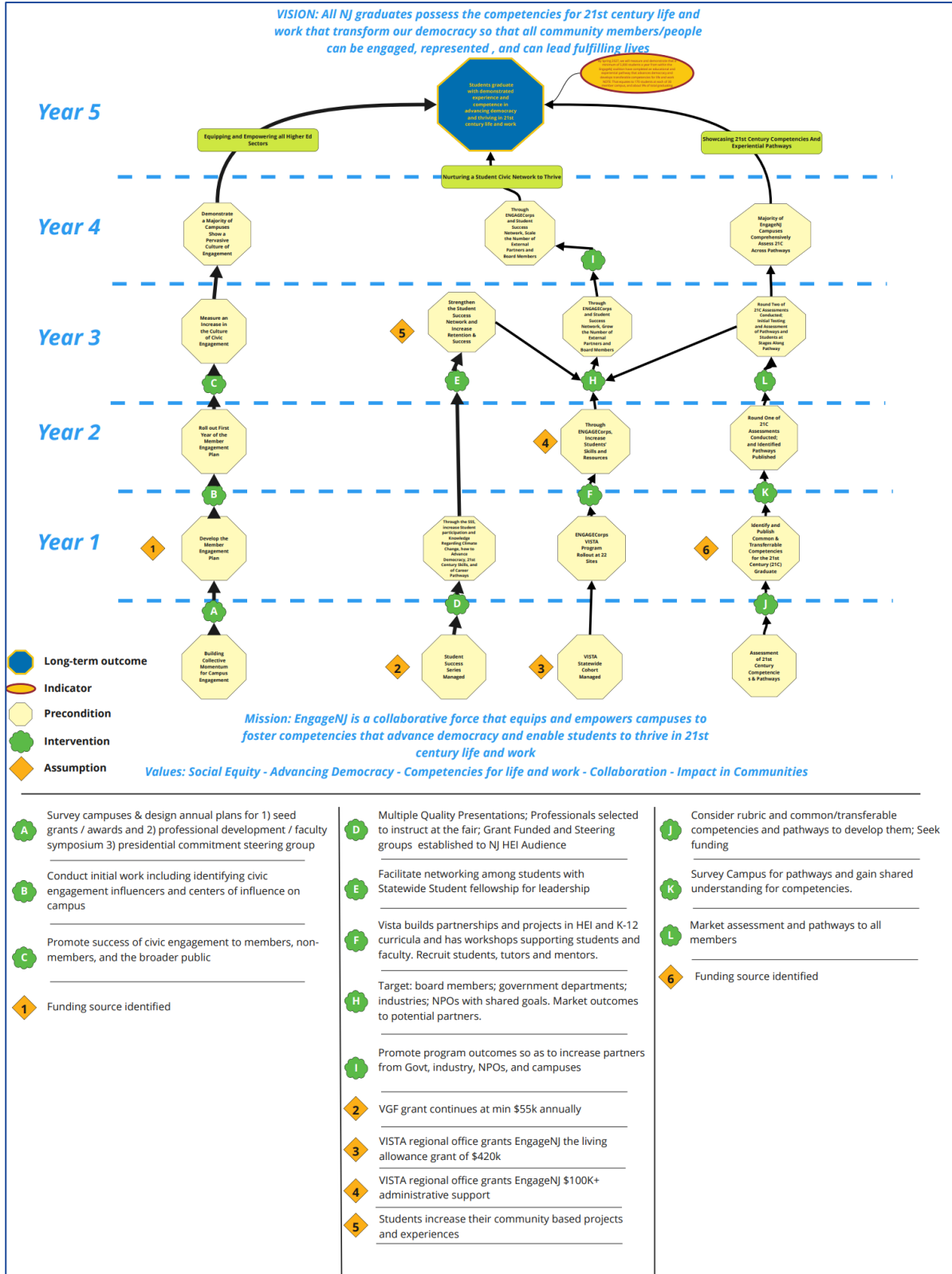
*By AY 2027, we will measure and demonstrate that a minimum of **5,000 students per year** within the Engage NJ coalition have completed an educational **and experiential pathway** that enables them **to advance democracy** and develop **transferable competencies** for life and work.*

The success of Engage NJ will be measured by how campuses in NJ function **as engaged institutions**. The role of Engage NJ will be to bolster existing efforts and partnerships and fill resource or knowledge gaps, both to advance democracy and to ensure all higher ed students can graduate with the tools to succeed. Students will graduate with experiences in advancing democracy and with the capabilities of being successful in their lives and in their work. This is a 5-year journey of transformation, targeting 2027 as the year we achieve depth and scale.

*(see Appendix for Explanation of Terms / Definitions)*



# SIMPLIFIED THEORY OF CHANGE



TO CREATE THIS CHANGE BY AY'27 AND TO ACHIEVE IN OUR MISSION, ENGAGE NJ MUST SUCCEED WITH THREE GOALS AND OBJECTIVES.

# GOAL1: EQUIPPING & EMPOWERING ALL HIGHER ED SECTORS

*Engage NJ will build a higher education civic engagement culture by comprehensively equipping and empowering all sectors*

## INTRODUCTION

Among the coalition of Engage NJ campuses and partners, we have set a goal of committing to equip each public and private higher education institution with comprehensive resources and tools that collectively and over time will show a measurable spread of a culture of engagement.

This is anchored in our longstanding tradition of local solution-building (those closest to the problem are closest to the solution) and on convening and sharing toward a transformative benefit. Engage NJ, is filling a long-established niche of convening across higher education sectors and roles so as to collectively embrace tested programs and ideas in the interest of replication and scale.

Beginning in academic year 2023, we will collectively and inclusively design the various areas of this goal's portfolio by first establishing several volunteer steering groups, assigned based on strict adherence to mutual benefit rather than redundancy or overload. They are:

### I. SNAPSHOT of a Presidential Commitment: The President's Civic Engagement Council

Engage NJ will work with higher education presidents to create a range of commitments to be signed onto each year. One priority for the presidential commitment will be to create and/or share workplans for their campus-based civic engagement council. This is very much in line with recommendations of the Carnegie Classification for Community Engagement, and its purpose includes:

- Creating a **centralized entity to improve efficiency and effectiveness** of the appropriate leadership units, particularly in areas that require strategic coordination
- Ensuring there is **streamlined communication among internal and external stakeholders**, building awareness and legitimacy of university initiatives
- Ensuring there are measurable **points of growth take root across the entire university** and that their numbers are sufficient to represent a perceived culture shift
- Enabling the university to **show cohesion and competitiveness** with targeted funding

## FIVE DISTINCT STEERING GROUPS

- I. **Presidential commitment to a culture of engagement**
- II. **Professional development series for civic engagement staff**
- III. **Faculty symposium on community-engaged learning and scholarship**
- IV. **Awards to promote a culture of engagement**
- V. **Seed grants to promote a culture of engagement**

Within each of the five steering groups, the target for '22 - '23 will develop and roll out a **Member Engagement Plan**, targeting valid indicators of the engaged campus, such as those put forward in 2002 by Hollander, Saltmarsh, & Zlothowski, and are still valid to this day, including:

- a **Mission and leadership style** that builds a culture of engagement, including through speeches and resource allocation
- Clear **campus-community reciprocity** and avenues of open access for community partners to campus resources, hiring, and purchasing
- Clear methods **for incorporating community-engaged teaching** into the university experience
- Articulated definitions and criteria **for regarding community-engaged teaching and scholarship**, and ongoing methods for developing faculty in community engagement
- Building **competencies in students from a variety of backgrounds** and along a variety of pathways

## YEAR ON YEAR OBJECTIVES

### ACADEMIC YEAR '23

Objective: Develop the Member Engagement Plan

### ACADEMIC YEAR '24

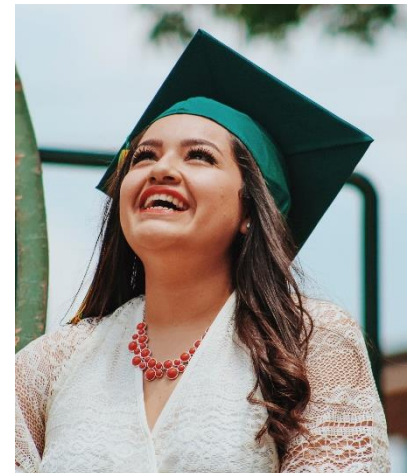
Objective: Roll out First Year of the Member Engagement Plan

### ACADEMIC YEAR '25

Objective: Measure an Increase in the Culture of Civic Engagement

### ACADEMIC YEAR '26

Objective: Demonstrate a Majority of Campuses Show a Pervasive Culture of Engagement



## WE WILL STRIVE TO:

- **Gain full presidential commitment** to an agreed charter and course of action
- **Award annual seed grants** to member campus teams based on indicators of the engaged campus
- **Design annual awards** that bring recognition to civic leaders' efforts and impacts with respect to the engaged campus
- Provide ongoing **and targeted professional development** based on expressed campus need



- **Convene faculty annually** through statewide symposia to demonstrate teaching, research, and impact for the social good

#### **SUCCESS WILL BE MEASURED BY**

- The number of campuses, faculty, staff, students, community partners, and presidents active with measurable elements of the Member Engagement Plan
- In order to target a level of the pervasiveness of this work across the state, we will benchmark success relative to the number of campuses engaged being greater than 30

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## GOAL 2: SHOWCASING 21ST CENTURY COMPETENCIES AND EXPERIENTIAL PATHWAYS

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*Engage NJ will showcase the increasing number of students graduating with 21st century ("21c") competencies that are developed through a range of high-quality community engagement pathways and are transferable to behaviors of the engaged citizen and skilled worker*

### INTRODUCTION

Among the coalition of Engage NJ campuses and partners, we have set a goal of identifying and then showcasing a set of competencies that are developed through a range of high-quality community engagement pathways and are transferrable to behaviors of the engaged citizen and skilled worker.

Beginning in academic year 2023, we will convene a taskforce to spend the first several months developing a deep understanding of these transferable competencies. We will consider such questions as:

- What characteristics of an engaged citizen are similarly useful to those being sought by employers across a variety of sectors?
- What behaviors that advance democracy are also behaviors that address the biggest struggles of this generation, such as fighting against the impacts of climate change in marginalized communities?

### WE WILL STRIVE TO:

- Gain clarity on 21C competencies
- Develop a 21C rubric and assessment method
- Consider programs advanced by Engage NJ and also those occurring across campuses in identifying pathways to develop 21C competencies

#### **SNAPSHOT: Possible 21st Century (21C) Transferable Competencies**

There is certainly no shortage of work in surveying employers on knowledge and skill gaps, to climate change education practices, to research on attributes of the engaged citizen, that point to a common portfolio of knowledge and skill, including:

- Consensus-building, or working across difference
- Critical thinking
- Effective communication and active learning
- Creativity, and
- Leadership

Right from the get-go, we will integrate industry voice and recognition of these students' pathways – thereby enhancing the range of career opportunities and intrinsic motivation of students to persist

## YEAR ON YEAR OBJECTIVES

### ACADEMIC YEAR '23

Objective 1: Identify and Publish Transferable Competencies of the 21st Century (21C) Graduate

### ACADEMIC YEAR '24

Objective 1: Round One of 21C Assessments Conducted; and Identified Pathways Published

### ACADEMIC YEAR '25

Objective 1: Round Two of 21C Assessments Conducted; Initial Testing and Assessment of Pathways and Students at Stages Along Pathway

### ACADEMIC YEAR '26

Objective 1: A Majority of Engage NJ Campuses Comprehensively Assess 21C Across Pathways



This goal of showcasing 21st century competencies and experiential pathways resonates with "College Civic Learning", whose signatories include:

- American Council on Education
- College Promise
- American Association of Colleges & Universities (AAC&U)
- Middle States Commission on Higher Education
- ETS
- and many more

The College Civic Learning Shared Commitment reads,

*We must rally to build public recognition that, just as civic learning is a core purpose for postsecondary education, it also builds essential workforce skills. Teamwork, communication, problem-solving, critical thinking, and engagement across differences are the real-world skills that build both better democracies and creative economies. Investing in democracy learning expands economic opportunity as well.*

While there certainly are categories of knowledge and practice that are distinct to specific areas of work, it is the development of competencies that are actually transferable between,

say, the voting rights activist, the climate change education intern, or the water quality engineer, that are of most benefit to this goal.

### **SUCCESS WILL BE MEASURED BY**

- An ongoing goal of continuous improvement and increased engagement in competencies assessment and identification of various experiential pathways, as follows:
- 3 targeted annual rounds of assessments of 21st-century competencies
- 2 targeted rounds of pathway identification and refinement
- A minimum of 15 Engage NJ campuses showcasing the pathways and developed 21st-century competencies of its graduating cohort
- If we assume that approximately 50,000 students will graduate from the predicted 30 Engage NJ member institutions, then we expect to be pulling from a proportion of a total pool of 25,000 students minimum among the 15 members

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## GOAL3: NURTURING A STUDENT CIVIC NETWORK TO THRIVE

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*Engage NJ will establish a statewide network of students capable of success in life and work through a series of innovative programs, events, partnerships and sustained funding*

### INTRODUCTION

Among the coalition of Engage NJ campuses and partners, we have to act transformatively - what we collectively advance must be ecosystems for equality AND engines of economic opportunity, transforming opportunities for this generation as well as those downstream.

We will continue to grow the various events and initiatives that collectively build students' networks and opportunities for success.

### THRIVE STUDENT CONFERENCE AND FAIR

Since 2020, we have hosted an annual student conference and opportunity fair called THRIVE. In the build up and during this day-long event, students actively build their networks and relationships with fellow changebuilders of tomorrow. The event connects students with other college students who are interested in taking their education out into the community and develop the skills to make communities better at fighting inequality and injustice of all forms – from food insecurity, to covid impacts, to racial justice, to climate change, to opportunities for a meaningful career pathway.

The Opportunity Fair builds skills literacy and exposes students to professionals from various sectors. Students work on translating volunteerism / service / community engagement into the appropriate language and format so as to put students' best foot forward in interviews, networking, and other professional settings.

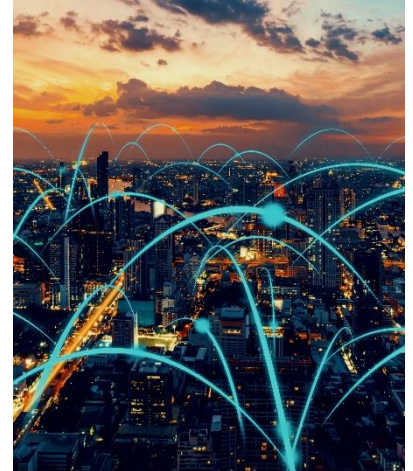
### THRIVERS & STUDENT OPPORTUNITIES FOR SUCCESS (SOS) DATABASE

Thrivers are students graduating college this year and are mapping out their Next Steps. Thrivers are ready to show they have years of experience sharpening their SOFT SKILLS through volunteering and working together to find solutions for today's challenges. At each college and university here in New Jersey, there are literally hundreds of students who are



gaining real-world experiences that develop essential soft skills over time. This happens when students volunteer in community settings and get involved in things like service learning that connects students' education to real-world challenges. Thrivers are featured on the [www.engagenj.org](http://www.engagenj.org) website and is updated annually for promotion to recruiters.

*The SOS Database is a curated and searchable list of student awards, paid internships, stipended programs, and other incentivized projects. This is made available for free on [www.engagenj.org](http://www.engagenj.org) website and is updated annually by the Engage NJ team.*



## YEAR ON YEAR OBJECTIVES

### ACADEMIC YEAR '23

Objective 1: Increase Student Participation in the AY'23 Student Success Series (SSS)

Objective 2: Through the SSS, increase Student Knowledge Regarding Climate Change, Knowledge of how to Advance Democracy, Knowledge of 21st Century Skills, and Knowledge of Career Pathways

Objective 3: ENGAGECorps VISTA Program Rollout at 22 Sites

### ACADEMIC YEAR '24

Objective 1: Increase Student Participation in the AY'24 Student Success Series (SSS)

Objective 2: Through the SSS, increase Student Knowledge Regarding Climate Change, Knowledge of how to Advance Democracy, Knowledge of 21st Century Skills, and Knowledge of Career Pathways

Objective 3: Through ENGAGECorps, Increase Students' Skills and Resources

### ACADEMIC YEAR '25

Objective 1: Strengthen the Student Success Network and Increase Retention & Success

Objective 2: Through the SSS, increase Student Knowledge Regarding Climate Change, Knowledge of how to Advance Democracy, Knowledge of 21st Century Skills, and Knowledge of Career Pathways

Objective 3: Through ENGAGECorps, Increase Students' Skills and Resources

Objective 4: Through ENGAGECorps and Student Success Network, Grow the Number of External Partners and Board Members

## ACADEMIC YEAR '26

Objective 1: Strengthen the Student Success Network and Increase Retention & Success

Objective 2: Through the SSS, increase Student Knowledge Regarding Climate Change, Knowledge of how to Advance Democracy, Knowledge of 21st Century Skills, and Knowledge of Career Pathways

Objective 3: Through ENGAGECorps, Increase Students' Skills and Resources

Objective 4: Through ENGAGECorps and Student Success Network, Grow the Number of External Partners and Board Members

## ENGAGECorps:

In early 2022, we were awarded one of the largest AmeriCorps VISTA grants in New Jersey's history. Over the next five years, *ENGAGECorps* will focus on developing college students' 21st century skills for life and work, increasing high school completion and college access, increasing college students' overall health, and educating developing minds about the human impacts on climate change in our most marginalized communities.

Through *ENGAGECorps*, twenty-two (22) AmeriCorps Members will serve full-time for at least one year at higher education institutions beginning this Fall, collectively providing nearly 40,000 hours of capacity-building work in these areas.

*ENGAGECorps* members will focus on several student success strategies as laid out below. Engage NJ member campuses are eligible to apply for between one and four *ENGAGECorps* Members.

ENGAGECorps members will focus on several strategies based on each campus's particular priorities in supporting students getting to and through college, including by:

- Becoming a Changebuilders campus that develops 21st century skills through students solving community-engaged projects together in teams
- Building institutional capacity to join the growing number of community resource centers designed to tackle food insecurity, mental health, and other challenging factors in determining student persistence

### ENGAGECorps SNAPSHOT:

**April '22 Op-Ed in NJ.com by Board Member President Lamont Repollet and Engage NJ CEO Saul Petersen entitled, "*Higher Ed Can Help Make NJ's Climate Change Curriculum Happen*"**

New Jersey's first-in-the-nation climate change curriculum, spearheaded by First Lady Tammy Murphy, is a necessary and bold initiative that integrates lessons on climate change throughout K-12 education. It offers an opportunity to teach a new generation of students about the real dangers of climate change so that we can move quickly to create sustainable ways of life that will restore a healthy planet. But let's be clear, no teacher or school or district or government policy can do this alone. Higher education must step in to help.

We need to develop large-scale K-12 and higher education partnerships that lean into, support and harness the potential of the new climate change curriculum. These partnerships would collaborate on programs for teacher training, in-class support, and project-based work for high school students mentored by higher ed faculty. We already have the framework for these partnerships. We can leverage existing higher education coalitions such as Engage NJ to bring school districts, higher ed and other constituencies together toward a common purpose and mutually beneficial impacts. At the same time, these coalitions would ensure that students from all backgrounds are included in this initiative.

- Supporting efforts to expand or deepen the impact of tutoring and mentoring programs that are designed to increase high school completion and college access
- Developing or expanding institutions' efforts focused on climate change and environmental stewardship, including by providing crucial supports to neighboring districts' implementation of the new K12 climate change education standards

## SUCCESS MEASURED FOR THE STUDENT SUCCESS NETWORK

Given the range of interconnected efforts in Goal III, success will be measured by a variety of indicators, including:

- The successful empowerment and activity of a Student Success Steering Group – advising on and maximizing student involvement in the conference, fair, Thrivers, Changebuilders, and more
- Development and expansion of a student civic fellowship
- Reported increase in Student Knowledge Regarding Climate Change, Knowledge of how to Advance Democracy, Knowledge of 21st Century Skills, and Knowledge of Career Pathways
- Annual increase in use of 21C competencies in professional environments

## SUCCESS MEASURED FOR ENGAGECorps

Given the four cohorts of VISTAs working toward impact in Goal III, success will be measured by a variety of indicators, including:



- Campus and community-level increases in 21st century skills, increased resource access for food and health insecurities, increased # of students mentored, and increased knowledge and experience with climate change

Across the board, we will utilize goal III to raise industry awareness of the activities and competencies of these students with an intended outcome of:

- Building a wider array of industry partnerships
- Diversifying funding sources
- Diversifying board membership
- Scaling Engage NJ programs

## APPENDICES

### Engage NJ Strategic Planning Committee

#### Co-Chairs:

- Sue Henderson, President, New Jersey City University (Board of Directors)
- Rob Boyajieff, Key Market Lead, Higher Ed, Siemens Smart Infrastructure (Board of Directors)
- Saul Petersen, Executive Director, New Jersey Campus Compact
- Steve Rose, President, Passaic County Community College (Board of Directors)

#### Members:

- Vivian Lanzot, New Jersey Institute of Technology (Civic Leadership Committee)
- Charlotte Quigley, Middlesex College (Civic Leadership Committee)
- Krystal Woolsten, Montclair State University (Civic Leadership Committee)
- Gionna Del Purgatorio, Changebuilder Program Coordinator and Drew Alum, Drew University
- Jake Farbman, New Jersey Council of County Colleges
- Allison Fitzgerald, Biology Professor, New Jersey City University
- Thyquell Halley, Student and Changebuilder Program Scholar, New Jersey City University
- Elizabeth Matto, Research Professor, Eagleton Institute of Politics, Rutgers University
- Sarahdjie Monosiet, Associate Director, New Jersey Campus Compact
- Ebony Torres, Changebuilder Leader, New Jersey Campus Compact

## ENGAGE NJ 2021 - 2022

MEMBER INSTITUTIONS (19)	CIVIC LEADERSHIP COMMITTEE/LIAISONS
<p>Drew University</p> <p>Essex County College</p> <p>Hudson Co Comm College</p> <p>Kean University</p> <p>Middlesex College</p> <p>Montclair State University</p> <p>New Jersey City University</p> <p>NJ Institute of Technology</p> <p>Passaic Co Comm. College</p> <p>Princeton University</p> <p>Raritan Valley Comm. College</p> <p>Ramapo College</p> <p>Rowan University</p> <p>Rutgers University-Newark</p> <p>Rutgers New Brunswick</p> <p>Stockton University</p> <p>The College of New Jersey</p> <p>Union County College</p> <p>William Paterson University</p>	<p><b>Amy Koritz,</b> Drew University</p> <p><b>Amy Michael,</b> Rutgers University- New Brunswick</p> <p><b>Bryan Murdock &amp; Krystal Woolsten,</b> Montclair State</p> <p><b>Charlotte Quigley,</b> Middlesex County College</p> <p><b>Diane Hill</b> Rutgers University-Newark</p> <p><b>Awilda Colon &amp; Erin O’Hanlon,</b> Stockton University</p> <p><b>Donna Minnich Spuhler &amp;</b> <b>Maribel Rodriguez,</b> William Paterson University</p> <p><b>Jodi Bailey &amp; Rob Quinones,</b> NJCU</p> <p><b>Rick Brown &amp; Eddie Seavers,</b> Ramapo College</p> <p><b>Lori Moog,</b> Raritan Valley</p> <p><b>Brittany Aydelotte,</b> TCNJ</p> <p><b>Demond Hargrove,</b> Union County College</p> <p><b>Trisha Thorne,</b> Princeton University</p> <p><b>Vivian Lanzot,</b> NJIT</p> <p><b>Rochelle Hendricks,</b> Rowan University</p>



## EXPLANATION OF TERMS / DEFINITIONS

**5,000 STUDENTS PER YEAR** – By 2027, we predict membership in Engage NJ at 30 higher education institutions (HEI). In order to arrive at a 2027 estimate of 5,000 students graduating with competencies to thrive, we use the following:

- 30 HEIs represents a majority, around 60% of total, or NJ HEIs
- Just over 88,000 students in total graduated from 48 HEIs in 2021
- Therefore, just over 50,000 students will graduate from Engage NJ institutions by 2027

If we capture and showcase competencies developed by 10% of the graduating cohort, this equates to a total of 5,000 students with demonstrated competencies to thrive

**ADVANCING DEMOCRACY** – how we act each day in support of equal representation and equal rights under a constitutional democracy or democratic republic.

- How we act and organize must ensure that political institutions represent us, actively seek to listen and respond to us, and look like us as Americans
- How we work each day must appreciate and have empathy for our different histories as equal members of society

One simple example that is immediately within our sphere of influence but that can lead to organizing at a broader scale is to gather Daily Acts of Democratic Engagement –stories prompted by questions like, “How are we a part of the American story?”

**THRIVING IN 21ST CENTURY LIFE & WORK** – This generation of young people have every right to anticipate invigorating, stimulating, healthy, active lives. Despite the obvious barriers, and there are many, our work in educational and civic entities must always be to learn, respond, and adapt to the times so as to equip and empower students with the skills and networks to help them thrive. As we learn more about the role of creativity, consensus-building, and other skills associated with a successful career and an actively engaged citizen, our work can be more focused and successful in advancing these goals

**TRANSFERABLE COMPETENCIES** - Among the coalition of Engage NJ campuses and partners, we have set a goal of identifying and then showcasing a transferable set of competencies that are developed through high quality community engagement and are transferrable to behaviors of the engaged citizen and skilled worker.

There is certainly no shortage of work in surveying employers on knowledge and skill gaps, climate change education practices, and research on attributes of the engaged citizen, that each point to a common portfolio of successful attributes, including:

- Consensus-building, or working across difference
- Critical thinking
- Effective communication and active learning
- Creativity, and
- Leadership

While there certainly are categories of knowledge and practice that are distinct to specific areas of work, it is the development of competencies that are actually transferable between, say, the voting rights activist, the climate change education intern, or the water quality engineer, that are of most interest to the coalition.

**EXPERIENTIAL PATHWAY** – Students have different experiences with quality, depth, and duration of activities and projects that take students beyond the walls of the institution and into communities. There are therefore many different paths to growth and experience that can lead to the thriving college graduate. Notably, though, it is the feedback loop of applying effort to a real community issue, especially in groups and by working on projects, that builds awareness and efficacy.

## **ENGAGED INSTITUTIONS**

In defining how to demonstrate appropriate criteria as an engaged institution, the 2023 Carnegie Classification for Community Engagement outlines how an engaged campus partners systematically with its identified communities “for the mutually beneficial creation and exchange of knowledge and resources in a context of partnership and reciprocity. The purpose of community engagement is the partnership (of knowledge and resources) between colleges and universities and the public and private sectors to enrich scholarship, research, and creative activity; enhance curriculum, teaching, and learning; prepare educated, engaged citizens; strengthen democratic values and civic responsibility; address critical societal issues; and contribute to the public good.”

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