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It takes
**MORE THAN
BOOTSTRAPS**
to succeed



More Than Bootstraps Announces Second Class of College Student Leaders

PASSAIC, NEW JERSEY – July 26, 2021 - [More Than Bootstraps](#) (MTB), a New Jersey non-profit organization, has selected five college students from Passaic, New Jersey, to help the organization achieve its mission to help first-generation, low-income students access and succeed in higher education.

The new MTB College Student Leaders for the 2021-2022 academic year are **Lizbeth Coliente** (*Passaic County Community College*), **Amall Elmeligy** (*William Paterson University*), **Melissa Reyes** (*Dartmouth College*), **Amelia Reynoso** (*Passaic County Community College*), and **Ashley Rodriguez** (*Felician University*).

They join returning Leaders **Michelle Contreras** (*William Paterson University*), **Dhruvi Rana** (*Wesleyan University*), and **Rogreka Clayton** (*William Paterson University*).

MTB employs a near-peer mentoring model to build a community of success. The MTB College Student Leaders, all graduates of the Passaic public schools, work with High School Fellows from Passaic and guide their younger peers through the college search, application, and assimilation process. The MTB College Student Leaders, working as a mentoring cohort, in turn strengthen their own college-going identities and improve their chances of success in higher education.

The MTB College Student Leaders are participating in an intensive summer training program, learning from experts from across the country about imposter syndrome, financial aid, under-matching, and stereotype threat. The training also focuses on relationship-building, networking, and coping skills as the new College Student Leaders take on the responsibility of empowering their younger peers while continuing to balance the demands of work, school, and family responsibilities.

In 2021-2022, MTB is more than doubling in size to serve 23 first-generation students. The MTB High School Fellows for 2021-2022 academic year are rising juniors Jacquelin Arteaga, Yessenia Garcia, Giselle Belen Gomez, Jasmin Hernandez, Yoselin Hernandez, Joana Molina, Roselyn Munoz, Rachelli Soliz, Alyssa Tentle, and Diana Torres. These new Fellows will join returning rising seniors Jennifer Angel, Marisol Coliente, Ashley Delgado, Abigail Huitzil, and Catherine Librado, who are completing their second year as Fellows in the MTB Program.

All students in the MTB program receive stipends, laptop computers, and access to emergency resources.

“At More Than Bootstraps, we are cognizant of the [free tuition fallacy](#). Even students with full tuition scholarships face enormous expenses in order to attend college. MTB gives first-generation students a small stipend so that they have some time and space to come together as a mentoring community and empower each other on the higher education journey,” said Audrey Fisch, president of More Than Bootstraps.

As one High School Fellow described her experience in the program:

“More than Bootstraps has really impacted me socially and academically. I learned about so many things I didn't know about getting ready to apply to college. Most of my questions about college have been answered by tasks we do for the program. Some were difficult but I learned from each task we got to do especially with help of my mentor. I'm excited for the next few years of my life attending college. Not only did MTB helped me academically but socially as well. Before I was so shy [and] bad at public speaking. But as I worked with MTB I talked a lot more and spoke out more. Soon that fear of speaking has become less apparent. I'm proud to see my progress as a mentee here in more than Bootstraps. And I hope the next high school fellows enjoy and see how helpful More Than Bootstraps is.”



Participants in 2021 Leader Training Program session held at the Boathouse Cafe in Passaic, New Jersey

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