

Mehdi Husaini
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Dear Monmouth University Community,

I hope you and your families are all safe and healthy during these strange times. Even as circumstances have changed, I am proud to know the Monmouth community continues to stick together and exemplify the values we hold dear. It is an honor to be considered among some of my high-achieving peers of the Class of 2020 as a finalist for this year's Outstanding Student Award.

My time at Monmouth has prepared me well for my next stage in life; this fall, I will begin my journey to becoming a doctor as a Dean's Scholar at Robert Wood Johnson Medical School. My leadership experiences over the last few years have been transformative, and I am confident that my contributions to Monmouth will have a lasting impact.

Serving as President of the Student Government Association last year will continue to be one of my crowning achievements at Monmouth. Not only did I represent the student body at Board of Trustees meetings; oversee a group of passionate individuals navigate more than \$1 million in club funding requests; or help plan campus-wide events like Homecoming and The Big Event; I was able to improve campus culture by helping usher in new initiatives. This included involving SGA in diversity and inclusion work; collaboration with MUPD to promote student safety; and improving organizational transparency and communication with the student body.

I am most pleased with the success of one of these initiatives, The Nest, Monmouth's on-campus pantry for food-insecure students, which was started during my term as President. I have been able to take over as manager this year to increase our visibility, collection efforts, and collaboration with other groups like the Department of Athletics, the School of Science, and our local food banks. During my time managing The Nest, we have collected over 2,000 pounds of food and \$8,000 in donations, and have provided hundreds of meals to students.

The Nest and our fight against hunger at Monmouth have been influential beyond our campus — this year's efforts have inspired other colleges in New Jersey to create their own pantries and investigate food insecurity on their campuses. Currently, The Nest is still operating during the COVID-19 pandemic to provide food and toiletries to students nearby or living on campus in these unparalleled times, a decision I am extremely proud of.

Being active in the Honors School has also meant so much to my personal development. Last year, I completed my thesis on brain cancer motility as a student in Dr. Kubera's lab, a process that allowed me to immerse myself in biology beyond the classroom. I have been able to present this work in various regional and national conferences and was awarded second place for my poster presentation at the National Collegiate Honors Council conference two years in a row — one of the first Monmouth students to do so. In my sophomore year, I was elected President of the Honors School Association (HSA), where I was able to help gather valuable feedback from students in multiple ways throughout the year. I then had the unique opportunity to advocate for my peers' perspectives as the student representative on the search committee for our new Honors Dean.

I always tell the story of how I originally did not want to come to Monmouth — my mom nearly had to drag me to campus for a visit, raving about how it was close to home and how the small school would allow me to make meaningful connections with peers and faculty. Looking back as a graduating senior, I can honestly tell you I have never been more proud to be wrong.

I would like to thank each and every one of you for your contributions to students like me at Monmouth. I am a firm believer in the idea that any endeavor of creative leadership is not the achievement of just one person, but the result of many; the successes I have enjoyed over the last four years and the preparation for my future in healthcare are only as great as the people that helped guide me. I sincerely appreciate the faculty, administration, and staff that make Monmouth the place I have grown to love. I am grateful for the profound effect you have had on me from the moment I set foot on campus as an 18-year-old kid, and look forward to the next chapter in my life.

Sincerely,

Mehdi Husaini
Class of 2020