

Celine Powell

Spring 2021

Dear Monmouth University Community,

I hope you and your families are all safe and healthy during these challenging times. Despite all the changes that we had to adapt to, I am proud to know that as a community we continued to work hard and stayed dedicated. It is an honor to be considered among some of my high-achieving peers of the Class of 2021 as a finalist for this year's Outstanding Student Award.

Monmouth University holds a special place in my heart because it gave me the opportunity of a lifetime that I never imagined. Growing up on an island is not as fun as it may seem. Most people believe that we relax on the beach and have no struggles because of what could go wrong in paradise. I grew up on a farm with my mother, sister, and two brothers. We barely had enough money to attend primary school (1st-6th grade) and the high school of your choice was an option if you had a lot of money to pay the fees and purchase the text requirements. I have always dreamt about moving to America and becoming a journalist. I applied to different colleges throughout New Jersey because I wanted to stay in the state. Monmouth was the only school that understood my circumstances of being an independent student without any parental information and they saw potential in me which was all I needed to stay positive.

The support that I have received from Monmouth's Educational Opportunity Fund, my professors, staff, and other employees on campus shaped me into the person I am today. I have received countless opportunities that truly allowed me to positively contribute to the future of the university and its students. I served as the President for three organizations one of which I took the initiative to create a lasting impact for future Monmouth Students. I am a first-generation student and I believed that the University has a lot of students with this identity that are scared to ask for help because of the stigma surrounding it based on societal perceptions. I wanted students to feel comfortable and understand that as a community we lift each other to become the best version of ourselves through the help of mentors, faculty, and staff members who want to see us succeed.

Monmouth has given me the opportunity to give back to the community both locally and globally. I volunteered to become a mentor through the Big Brother Big Sister Foundation partnership with Asbury Park High School to work one on one with a high school student who faced many adversaries in his home and school life. Through the Global Experience Program, I was able to represent Monmouth's core values as a student volunteer to Haiti in January 2018, Guatemala 2019, and as a student mentor to Haiti in January 2020. Through Participating in these trips, I learned not only the importance of what we were

doing to serve these countries, but also the sustainability behind our actions that allowed those communities to benefit from our work and how the people positively influenced my life to continue giving back to those around me. Through working with New Student Orientation as an Orientation Leader in 2018 and Student Advising Mentor in 2019, I was able to serve the student body and assist in the transition of first-year students to demonstrate the love, support, and resources Monmouth has to offer while being a positive mentor. Being active on campus has taught me different lessons and values that added to my personal development to find my identity.

I would like to thank each and every one of you for your contributions to students on campus to see the best in all of us and for pushing us to reach our goals. I appreciate the faculty, administration, and staff that make Monmouth feel like a second home filled with love and support. Thank you for believing and for seeing the best in me when I had doubts and much uncertainty about my future. Monmouth has prepared me for the next chapter in my life and that I will forever be grateful for.

Sincerely,

Celine Powell

Class of 2021