

Stockton Team Wins ‘Up to Us,’ National Competition to Engage Students on Federal Debt

Students to Meet with President Clinton, Chelsea Clinton in Fla. March 6-8

For Immediate Release; with photos, captions on [flickr](#)

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Galloway Township, NJ - Students at Stockton University won the nationwide competition, “Up to Us,” and will travel to the Clinton Global Initiative University (CGI U) this weekend in Florida to receive the top \$10,000 prize.

“Up to Us” pitted students from 44 colleges and universities to run the most thought-provoking, fun and effective campaign informing students about the long- and short-term impacts the federal debt will have on their lives - and getting them to take action.

“Among the pillars of a distinctive Stockton University education are community engagement and global perspectives, which prepare our students to succeed and to shape a better world,” said President Herman Saatkamp. “The five students on the Stockton ‘Up to Us’ team engaged the whole community and have now earned national recognition for their work. We could not be more proud of them.”

Team leader Angelo Bechara said the group worked hard to make a significant impact on the Stockton community. “The national debt crisis isn't the most appealing topic to college students, but our team put on fun events and incorporated a learning component alongside the fun,” he said.

“We are thankful for the Stockton students, faculty and staff for being so supportive,” added Bechara, a sophomore from Egg Harbor Township who is double majoring in Political Science and French. “Our success would not have been possible without them.”

Bechara said the team plans to donate \$5,000 of the prize to the student body in the form of scholarships and a thank-you celebration, and split the remainder among the five core team members.

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The other members of the team are: Louis Chevere, of Galloway, a senior Economics major; Maryam Sarhan, of Somers Point, a sophomore majoring in Political Science with a pre-law concentration; Brad Ross, of Westfield, a senior majoring in Sustainability and Victoria Muraoka, of Millville, a freshman Psychology major.

President Clinton and Chelsea Clinton will host the eighth annual CGI U meeting on Friday, March 6 to Sunday, March 8 at the University of Miami in Coral Gables, Fla.

The Stockton team edged out competitors from many larger institutions, including Yale University, Carnegie Mellon and University of California, Berkeley. This was the second year in which Stockton students competed and the competition almost doubled - from 23 schools last year to 44.

The main event on Stockton's Galloway campus was "My Two Cents Day," held Feb. 12 in the Campus Center. Participants wrote down their "two cents" on a huge graffiti wall, which the team then took to the office of Congressman Frank LoBiondo, R-2nd.

Students also had their photos taken in a photo booth provided by Starshield Entertainment, which were then tweeted as part of the national competition. Organizers tracked the university with the most tweets and added to the team's points, Bechara said. "My Two Cents Day" also included games, giveaways, trivia quizzes, special appearances and live performances.

The campaign is sponsored by the Clinton Global Initiative, the Peter G. Peterson Foundation and Net Impact, a nonprofit with over 50,000 students and professionals in 300 chapters aiming "to drive transformational change in the workplace and world."

Jeff Wakeman, director of Student Development, will be traveling to Florida with the students. Stockton's "Up to Us" team was supported throughout the campaign by advisers Craig Stambaugh, associate dean of Students, and Laurie Griscom, director of Events Services and Campus Center Operations.

According to information provided by the CGI U:

- The meeting will bring together more than 1,000 innovative student leaders to make [Commitments to Action](#) in CGI U's five focus areas: Education, Environment and Climate change, Peace and Human Rights, Poverty Alleviation, and Public Health. Through the [CGI University Network](#), [The Resolution Project](#), and other opportunities, over \$900,000 in funding opportunities will be available to select CGI U 2015 students to help them turn their ideas into action.
- Student attendees will have the opportunity to attend plenary sessions, working sessions, and other special events covering topics across CGI U's five focus areas and allowing them to network with their peers, build skills, and identify potential partnerships. University representatives, topic experts, and celebrities will join students at CGI U to help them gain the skills and knowledge needed to take action on their commitments. During the last day of the meeting, attendees will take part in a Day of Action in the local community.

For more information on the program, visit itsuptous.org

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About Stockton University:

Stockton University, New Jersey's Distinctive Public University, offers an outstanding interdisciplinary approach to graduate and undergraduate education in liberal arts, professional studies, the health sciences and graduate and continuing studies.

On Feb. 18, 2015, Stockton celebrated its new designation as Stockton University, which highlights Stockton's academic achievements and growth as an institution of higher learning. Stockton is among the Top 10 public Regional Universities of the North, ranked at #9 by *U.S. News & World Report* in its 2015 edition of "America's Best Colleges."

Stockton's main campus in Galloway, NJ is located on over 2,000 acres in the Pinelands National Reserve. Stockton will open the Island Campus on the oceanfront in Atlantic City, with limited summer sessions and more classes beginning in Fall 2015. The Stockton-Island Campus offers a world-class facility with 1.73 million-square-feet of space, including over 850 rooms, or over 1,600 residential spaces, available to students.

The university also has instructional sites in Ocean and Cape May counties, at the Carnegie Center in Atlantic City, and in Hammonton in western Atlantic County.

For more information on Stockton University, visit Stockton.edu.

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