



**FOR MORE INFORMATION:**

Jackie Ruegger  
jruegger@monroecollege.edu  
914-740-6455

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**Monroe College Launches Institute for Civic Engagement and Social Justice to Provide Civics Education, Social Justice Programming, Mentorship and Community Outreach**

*Bronx Community Leader Michael Blake to Lead Institute as Newly Appointed Visiting Social Justice and Civics Fellow*

*Institute's First Program, a Semester-Long Course on Civics and Social Justice, Starts this Week for 200 Bronx High School Students*

**BRONX, NY, February 2, 2021** — [Monroe College](#), a recognized leader in education and social mobility for first-generation students, today announced the launch of the [Institute for Civic Engagement and Social Justice](#). Bronx community leader and former New York State Assemblymember Michael Blake will help lead the Institute as Monroe's inaugural Visiting Social Justice and Civics Fellow.

Residing within the College's School of Criminal and Social Justice, the Institute will serve as an education and empowerment center to give Black and Latino students valuable knowledge, resources, and mentorship to serve their communities through civic engagement. Its mission is to increase political literacy and engagement among New York City high school and college students and help them find their voices. More than 90% of Monroe's enrollment is Black or Latino; the College is among the top three colleges in New York State graduating Black and Latino students.

"The Institute will serve as a home for students seeking to learn about our political process and their role in advocating for social change," said Marc Jerome, President of Monroe College. "They will learn the fundamentals of civics, hear from visiting lecturers on matters of social injustice, and perhaps be inspired to enter public service and become community leaders themselves."

The Institute's first program for high school students is set to start this week, with more than 200 students from 29 high schools across the Bronx taking part in a virtual dual enrollment course titled, "**Social Justice, Government, and Civic Engagement**." The class will be held remotely on Tuesdays and Thursdays from 2:30 pm to 3:30 pm. Students passing the free course will earn three college credits transferrable to the higher educational institution of their choice. Jerome and Blake will co-teach the class. Guest lecturers will include social justice advocates and those in public service.

Blake, an ardent advocate and respected champion for communities of color, is exceptionally suited for the role as Visiting Fellow. Prior to his tenure as New York State Assemblymember, he served in the Obama-Biden administration as the White House Associate Director of Public Engagement and Deputy Associate Director of the Office of Intergovernmental Affairs, where he coordinated outreach to the African-American, Minority and Women Business Enterprises and state and county elected official communities. Blake has also served as Vice Chair at Large of the Democratic National Committee. He was the first Black man elected to DNC leadership since Ron Brown, helping lead efforts to mobilize millennials, communities of color, among other work.

Blake noted: "Being born and raised in The Bronx and a lifelong witness of the continual excellence of Monroe College, it is an honor to continue my commitment to empowering our young people by serving as the Inaugural Visiting Social Justice and Civics Fellow. At this critical moment in history, Monroe will train these students to be the next generation of civic and social justice leaders."

The Institute's programming will be strengthened by the impressive roster of civil rights advocates and elected officials who will serve on an Advisory Board currently being empaneled. Interested individuals may contact Dean Guylaine Harrison at [gharrison@monroecollege.edu](mailto:gharrison@monroecollege.edu).

Among the Institute for Civic Engagement and Social Justice's programs and initiatives:

**Expanded Academic Offerings at Monroe:** The College now offers a minor in Civic Studies for majors such as criminal justice, human services, public health, and business. Monroe plans to offer a certificate in Civic Engagement and Leadership, which would be obtained by taking an additional six credits beyond the 18 credits required by the minor.

**The Civic Scholars program:** Academically gifted students will be invited to participate in rewarding internships with local elected representatives or pursue meaningful, hands-on service experiences by committing 250 service hours across the academic year to assist local government agencies and nonprofit organizations as they work to address pressing community needs.

**Voter Education and Registration Drives:** Improving Black and Latino voter education, registration, and mobilization is a key goal of the Institute. Opportunities to meet candidates and discuss important issues at the local and national levels will be created.

**Speakers Series:** The Institute will organize and host several events throughout the year. Guest speakers will be invited to speak and engage in conversation with their peers, with students, and with the public on pressing issues of the day.

**Leadership Mentoring:** The Institute will also provide students with a keen interest in public service the opportunity to partner with appropriate civic and political leaders willing to serve as mentors to the students. Such one-on-one work would help activate students' interest in civic engagement and observe public service leadership skills in action.

### **ABOUT MONROE COLLEGE**

Founded in 1933, Monroe College is a recognized leader in urban and international education. The College is proud of its innovative programs to increase college access, affordability, and completion outcomes, especially among first-generation students.

Monroe educates close to 7,000 students each year, offering Certificate, Associate, Bachelor's, and Master's degree programs from New York campuses in the Bronx and New Rochelle, as well as in the Caribbean nation of St. Lucia. Students may also pursue degree programs through Monroe Online.

Programs are offered through Schools of Allied Health Professions, Business & Accounting, Criminal and Social Justice, Education, Hospitality Management, Information Technology, and Nursing, as well as through its King Graduate School. Liberal arts and continuing education programs are also available. For more information and admissions criteria, please visit <http://www.monroecollege.edu>.

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