



To: Institutions of Higher Education
From: Office of the Secretary of Higher Education
Date: January 11, 2024
Subject: NJ College and University Step Up Vax Up Contest Open for Student Submissions

The New Jersey Department of Health is collaborating with The Partnership for Maternal and Child Health of Northern New Jersey (PMCH) on a Step Up Vax Up contest for New Jersey college students. Additional information is available at stepupvaxup.com and in the below release.

NJ College and University Step Up Vax Up Contest Open for Student Submissions

Contest by Partnership for Maternal and Child Health of Northern New Jersey offers prizes for digital content promoting vaccine awareness.

NEWARK, NJ (Jan. 3, 2024) — Calling all New Jersey college and university students! This year’s Step Up Vax Up digital contest is now open for submissions through April 2024.

The Partnership for Maternal and Child Health of Northern New Jersey (PMCH) is excited to collaborate with the state Department of Health (DOH) to inspire college and university students to promote vaccination against COVID-19, Flu, Human papillomavirus (HPV), and Meningococcal through digital creativity.

“Step Up Vax Up is excited to again provide an innovative and creative way for New Jersey college students to educate campus communities about the importance of vaccination,” **said Mariekarl Vilceus-Talty, PMCH President and CEO.** “We’re eager to receive this year’s exciting entries and empower more students to get vaccinated and stay healthy.”

Students enrolled in a New Jersey college or university are eligible to participate in the contest. Students can submit digital content in the form of a video (YouTube, Tik Tok, Instagram Reels), podcast, recorded episode, or social media post. **April 30, 2024 is the submission deadline.** Submissions are accepted electronically at stepupvaxup.com/submit.

Cash prizes are awarded for first (\$5,000), second (\$2,000) and third place (\$1,500) student submissions. Three honorable mention prizes (\$500 each) will also be awarded. Faculty and staff are encouraged to support student participation for a chance to receive a \$1,000 School Staff Champion prize.

“This contest is a fun, engaging way for college and university students to leverage digital technology and educate online audiences about vaccine importance,” **said Dr. Tina Tan, State Epidemiologist and DOH Assistant Commissioner.** “The Step Up Vax Up contest creates opportunities to promote vaccination in a creative way and inspire students to help protect others who may not be able to get vaccinated.”

“Having the honor and privilege to participate in Step Up Vax Up has changed not only my knowledge on vaccines, but all the people around me that participated in my documentary or had the chance to view it,” said **Kiera Benson, a 2023 Felician University graduate and two-time contest winner**. “I’m really happy I get to help change the world for the better by this program. I really hope other students will also take this opportunity with pride and hope to make something to help change their lives and everyone around them for the better.”

Visit stepupvaxup.com and follow [@stepupvaxup](https://www.instagram.com/stepupvaxup) on Instagram for more information.