

NJ State Assemblyman Jamel C. Holley (District 20), New Jersey City University, Class of 2002; Kean University, Class of 2006

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“The first,” “the youngest,” “the most” are superlatives defining New Jersey State Assemblyman Jamel C. Holley, a New Jersey City University undergraduate alumnus and Kean University graduate alumnus. His goal is to embrace a public service career that would be defined by yet another superlative – “the best,” specifically “the best” at helping others.

In 2002, Jamel earned his B.S. in criminal justice from New Jersey City University (NJCU) and followed that in 2006 with an M.A. in public administration from Kean University. He was the *first* in his family to go to college.

In 2001, before he even finished NJCU, Mr. Holley was appointed by New Jersey’s deputy majority leader to serve as chief of staff. That appointment earned him as the *youngest* chief of staff in the State of New Jersey for any of New Jersey’s 120 Legislators.

On November 2, 2004, Mr. Holley at the age of 25 won the seat of councilman in the Borough of Roselle, and, by doing so, he earned the designation as the *youngest* councilman in Union County. In November 2011, Mr. Holley became Mayor Holley, and became the *youngest* mayor ever elected in Roselle’s 117-year history.

Most recently, in January 2015, Assemblyman Holley was appointed to fill a seat in the New Jersey General Assembly representing the 20th Legislative District (including the municipalities of Elizabeth, Hillside, Roselle, Union). By doing so, Mr. Holley became the *first* African-American to represent the 20th Legislative District in the New Jersey State Legislature.

Assemblyman Holley describes himself as a *most* passionate supporter of New Jersey’s public education system (K-16), because he never would have acquired all the professional superlatives without “the amazing educational support.”

“I was raised by a single parent – actually single grandparent (the late Yvonne Holley) – household. I have gotten where I am today thanks to the public education ... My grandmother relied on the public-school teachers, administrators, and even the crossing guards to help instill good values in us and grow up feeling cared for,” he said.

“When it was time for college, a public university was the only place I considered. Thanks to an EOF (Educational Opportunity Fund) and TAG (Tuition Aid Grant) support, I had opportunities I never dreamed of. I know others have said this over the years, but the EOF program was so vital – very impactful not only for the fiscal support, but also in the emotional support,” said Assemblyman Holley.

Assemblyman Holley attended NJCU, when the school transitioned from “college” status to “university.” “To get a great education, to open all sorts of doors, and to have a productive life, you



do not have to go to an Ivy League school. I gained so much academically – and culturally – at NJCU. The education from my coursework was terrific, and living in Jersey City with all of its cultural advantages was an added benefit to my education Roselle, where I grew up is not a city. Exploring life in Jersey City was a real eye-opener for me – it allowed me to grow,” he said.

Assemblyman Holley is still “growing” thanks to his ongoing connections with NJCU. “I love the mission of the school with its emphasis on accessibility, affordability without compromising excellence. Its Debt-Free Promise Program eliminates the need for students to take out loans to cover the cost of tuition and fees. In addition, NJCU is an invaluable anchor in the community by providing intellectual and cultural resources to the residents and corporations of the (non-matriculated) general public. I am working with the NJCU Institute of Dispute Resolution on legislation for New Jersey businesses,” he said.

In addition to being a part-time legislator, Assemblyman Holley is director of Public Works for Irvington Township. His master’s degree in public administration from Kean University gave him the skills and knowledge to do his municipal public works job, as well as his job of representing those residents living in his legislative district.

“But Kean University was so memorable to me because of one teacher – Dawood Farahi, the current president of the university. Dr. Farahi as a teacher was the most inspiring mentor I have ever had,” said Assemblyman Holley.

“I love both of my jobs – and both of the institutions that gave me the tools to do what I love *best* – help people improve their lives.”