



My name is Precious Bedell. I am the Assistant Director of Community Outreach for the Rochester Education Justice Initiative (REJI). REJI is a new program of the University of Rochester which is dedicated to fostering higher education opportunities for incarcerated and formerly incarcerated people in the greater Monroe County, New York, area.

REJI is looking to connect with formerly incarcerated people in and near Monroe County who wish to complete their bachelor's degree or even pursue an advanced degree. We are especially interested in reaching people who had substantive college experiences while incarcerated—whether they wish to continue their educations personally, or whether they might have wisdom and know-how as to how best to build a pipeline from prison to college in our region.

We have resources to support people who want to continue their education at the University of Rochester, and we are also building relationships with other area colleges and universities, with the goal of providing debt-free higher education opportunities for formerly incarcerated students.

As we are a new organization, we are figuring it out as we go along to an extent. Given the challenges that the Covid-19 pandemic has created for institutions of higher education, this process could be choppy. But, as a first step, we would simply be eager to connect.

If you would be so kind as to help us identify students in your alumni network who meet the qualities and interests mentioned above, we would appreciate it immensely. Thank you for your time and assistance in this matter.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Precious Bedell".

Precious Bedell, MA, CHW
Assistant Director of Community Outreach



Justice Fellows

On a more local scale, REJI will work to build the infrastructure and capacity to better support formerly incarcerated scholars in Monroe County as they continue their studies after being released from prison.

At present, no institution or organization exists to create higher educational opportunities specifically for formerly incarcerated students in the Rochester area. We will work with other local academic and social institutions to establish a program to support and coordinate resources for formerly incarcerated students seeking to continue their educations—whether that means completing a degree started in prison or advancing to a bachelor’s degree, full time or part time.

Through community outreach and collaboration with other area colleges and universities, REJI will work to provide welcoming opportunities for returning citizens to become students on the UR campus and the campuses of other area colleges. We have established relationships with faculty and administrators at Monroe Community College, Genesee Community College, Nazareth College, the Rochester Institute of Technology, St. John Fisher College, Medaille College, and Cornell University. Precious Bedell, our assistant director of community outreach, is the founder of the Turning Points Resource Center, a local organization that provides support to returning citizens and to families with people incarcerated. Through Precious we are networked into the local reentry-services community including the Monroe County Reentry Taskforce, SMART (Safer Monroe Area Reentry Team), Judicial Processing Commission, and Center for Employment Opportunities (among others).