Montclair State University’s administration is requiring students taking hybrid classes to come to campus this semester, despite ongoing safety concerns due to the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic.

During the previous fall semester, students taking hybrid courses had the choice to stay home if they did not feel comfortable going to campus. However, this spring semester, new rules have been implemented.

Charles Fatolico, a sophomore television and digital media (TVDM) major, expressed his concerns about in-person classes.

“I don’t understand why they got rid of the option,” Fatolico said. “I understand it is not ideal to have students on the computer all the time, but at the same time there is still a pandemic.”

Due to the number of cases reported in New Jersey during the past few weeks, some students are concerned about their safety and being on campus.

Conan Ramirez, a junior TVDM major, also expressed how he is feeling about in-person classes during the pandemic.

“I really don’t feel comfortable at all,” Ramirez said, “I think that due to the pandemic and the rising number of people with COVID-19 in this time period, there shouldn’t be any in-person classes.” The administration says that they are not forcing students to take hybrid courses and they have been clear with their instructions and policies.

Montclair State senior media relations specialist, Andrew Mees said, “We have been clear with instructors and students that [have] hybrid classes require both in-person and online attendance.”

Some students believe that before making any decisions, the university should ask for everyone’s opinions.

“It’s a lack of respect for the student body, not asking us whether we approved of them opening the university and having in-person classes,” Ramirez said. “We are a population of people that are very close together and one person gets sick, you could get a whole building sick.”

Montclair State says that they make decisions regarding the pandemic and students’ safety by following health experts’ guidance and science. Due to this they unfortunately cannot ask the campus community for their opinions.

“The administration cares very much about our students and wants them to be successful,” Mees said. “However, our COVID-19 related decisions must be driven by science and the guidance of health experts.”

Many students think that it is unfair that some people have to complete their major requirements and those courses are only being offered hybrid. With this, the uncertainty of being on campus forces them to push those courses back or take them home because they have no other choice.

Vielka Rodriguez, a junior business administration major, expressed her concerns in having to complete core classes for her major.

“I’m currently taking a hybrid class because even though I wasn’t planning to be on campus, I had no other option,” Rodriguez said. “In order to complete my major requirements, I need to take this course now, which is why I couldn’t adjust my schedule.”

Many students believe they should still have the choice to stay home as they did in the fall semester, even if the courses are hybrid.

Chloe Swift, a TVDM major, expressed how she feels as a college student attending college courses during the pandemic.

“Everyone should be able to make the decision of staying home or take in-person classes,” Swift said. “Montclair [State] has a really broad group of students attending and you have kids from [all] over the state and we have people from different age groups.”

As of recently the university has not sent any new adjustments regarding course methods, but as the COVID-19 cases evolve, so will the administration’s protocols.
Montclair State Community Mourns Loss of First-Year Theater and Dance Student

Olivia Morro was a resident of Dinallo Heights throughout her freshman year of college.

Z.W. Gleason
Assistant Feature Editor

The Montclair State University community is mourning the loss of Olivia “Liv” Morro, a first-year theater and dance major who unexpectedly passed on Feb. 10.

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The same day, the Montclair State student body received an email about Morro’s death, offering condolences and support to those who knew and cared about Morro.

About 20 minutes later, the PA system advised students that they could return to their regularly scheduled duties.

“One of the first weeks on campus she introduced me to her friend group and we stayed up until four in the morning just talking,” Tufariello said. “She was very funny and loud, she was always able to light up a room and make people smile.”

Tufariello believed that Morro was supportive and compassionate.

“She was someone I could talk about anything I was going through,” Tufariello said. “She was there to listen and give me advice about something, and helped me realize it’s okay to go through things, you don’t have to struggle alone.”

The university has not made a statement regarding a memorial or subsequent support meetings held for those outside the theater department.

In lieu of flowers, you can donate to the “Liv” Morro Memorial Fund for the theater department.

“The Pelican” was a resident of Dinallo Heights throughout her freshman year of college.

There was this intelligence about her that really came across in our one-on-one discussions,” Knight said.

“Can I have your attention, please? There is a medical emergency in the building, all students should stay inside their dorm rooms.”

On that night, an announcement was made from the public address system (PA) inside the dorm rooms of Dinallo Heights stating, “Can I have your attention, please? There is a medical emergency in the building, all students should stay inside their dorm rooms.”

Olivia Morro, a first-year theater and dance major who unexpectedly passed on Feb. 10.

Danielle Tufariello, a first-year psychology major at Montclair State, met Morro on the first day of the fall semester.

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Olivia Morro, a first-year theater and dance major who unexpectedly passed on Feb. 10.
Dr. Dawn Meza Soufleris, incoming Vice President of Student Development and Campus Life, will be starting her new position on April 5.

Kelvin Jimenez Michaca

Montclair State Appoints New Vice President for Student Development and Campus Life

Kelvin Jimenez Michaca | The Montclarion

The Montclair • March 4, 2021 • PAGE 3


Karen Pennington, current Vice President for Student Development and Campus Life, will be retiring on April 1, 2021 to ensure a smooth transition. That time period, in April, is at a time Soufleris said it was “to be engaged and be so accessible and be so present in the role that I’m about to take be so accessible and be so present.”

According to an email sent from the office of the President, the search committee was chaired by Donna McMonagle, Vice President for Finance and Treasurer at Montclair State, and included two students: Pauletta Gando-Dunies and Jasmine Metellus, along with other deans, provosts, vice presidents and professors.

Jasmine Metellus, a senior business administration major at Montclair State, was selected by Cindy Meneghin, Director of Student Communications, and got the approval of President Susan Cole to be a part of the search committee.

Metellus said she was looking for a candidate with a “students first” mindset.

“We felt instantly connected with the time [Soufleris] was wearing red and expressing her love for the University,” Metellus said.

Metellus was also looking for a candidate who would be able to relate to the campus community.

“Knowing and acknowledging how intersectionality works for our own individual ways and how it affects us in society is essential especially to this position because we’re in a university that promotes inclusivity and diversity for all to be heard and included,” Metellus said.

She further explained why Soufleris seemed to be just the right fit for the Red Hawks community.

“So having Dr. Soufleris reflect and represent on these principles that we follow ourselves shows the influence it makes on students because we’re able to relate to one another whether as a first-generation student like me or a student that identifies as Latinx, this is the representation that is important for people like me or a student that identifies as Latinx, this is the representation that is important for people like me to see because these are spaces that I wouldn’t see myself in,” Metellus said.

Although Metellus is graduating in May, she is excited to see what comes from Soufleris’ appointment.

Soufleris had been informed by one of her colleagues of the job posting at Montclair State. Soufleris said she was attracted to the university because it was a state school, it was a Hispanic Serving Institute and it had the feeling of family among the university despite its 21 thousand student population.

“My grandmother was from Mexico, my grandpa’s from Mexico,” Soufleris said. “And so to be able to work at a Hispanic serving institution, given my background, was just something that I’ve always wanted to do.”

Soufleris, who has a Ph.D. in Sociology, attended public schooling throughout her life and went through the State University of New York education system. She also grew up in a Hispanic and Irish home.

Soufleris recalled a time when a group of first-generation students was surprised to hear that someone with such similar experiences could serve in a position of educational leadership.

“People like us don’t become people like you,” she remem bers the students saying.

“We’re gritty, and we’re tough and resilient and we’ve got dreams of doing things maybe a little different than our families or doing things that will help our families, which gives us a lot of drive,” Soufleris said. “I am beside myself that I am going to a university that caters to first-generation students because you got one right here. I am [a] fully 100% of state-educated soul and I truly believe that state education is just such a value for students.”

Soufleris and Pennington have participated in weekly Zoom meetings to prepare for the transition. That time period, in April, is at a time Soufleris described as a “vibrant month” for universities nationwide, as it comes on the heels of commencement season and the end of the academic school year.

When asked about the best advice given to her by Pennington, Soufleris said it was “to be herself.”

“She’s been so warm and welcoming,” Soufleris said. “I think she is invested in helping me be successful and I’m so appreciative of that. I’ve never had a person in the role that I’m about to take be so accessible and be so engaging and be so honest. And I think that’s only going to help.”
A SNOWY START TO SPRING 2021

Between the snowstorms, the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic and the flu season, Montclair State University has had a rough start to the spring 2021 semester. An exciting and rowdy first day, typically filled with chatter and cheer from students, was instead replaced with the roar of construction machines trying to plow snow out of the walkways and the deafening howl of the mountain wind.

Montclair State has taken initiative to try to have an equal balance of in-person and online classes this semester, but it seems as though many students are choosing to stay in the comfort of their dorms and homes.

On top of the social distancing, Montclair State made the decision to close the restaurants at the Student Center Cafe. Fan favorites, such as So Deli and Panda Express, are taking a break for the semester, taking away from the already muffled atmosphere.
Professor Grover Furr lectures his history of journalism in America students. Furr is one of only a few professors in the College of Humanities and Social Sciences that teaches with the Hawk2Hawk modality, an in-person only course.

Memorial Auditorium has not gotten much use since the start of the pandemic and often sits vacant.

Snow is piled high across the track, burying the west side of campus.

Carley Campbell, a sophomore journalism major, knits before class to help pass the time.
Joe Pawlowski sent me his short story collection, “The Vermillion Book of the Macabre.”

Casey Masterson
Feature Editor

I had “The Vermillion Book of the Macabre” sent to me at the Montclairion office by author Joe Pawlowski. It was an incredible honor, needless to say and I was excited to review the book. Pawlowski provides an interesting read, although it is hardly what I expected.

The Vermillion Book of the Macabre” was published on March 31, 2020. Pawlowski, from what I can tell, is a self-published author and has three other novels. This book is his only short story collection, with 16 stories written in it.

It would be redundant for me to go over every short story, along with what I thought of all of them in a quick succession here. You would get bored reading this and I would get bored writing it. Therefore, I will speak of the book as a whole and highlight certain stories when I feel fit to do so.

The short story collections I have previously read do not usually have interconnected stories. This was something that caught me pleasantly off guard in “The Vermillion Book of the Macabre.” The short stories have shared characters and mostly take place in a town called Hastur.

We are never given a time period for these stories, but my guess is that they are from a book. I do not know if this is a beginning chapter, or if Pawlowski felt the need to fill in some blanks, but this was at least 60% exposition. I will say that the book as a whole is not impossible to understand, but it is not a short story collection. Even though this world may inhabit a shared universe to his other works, I do not think it should actually involve other stories. Novels are novels for a reason; they give the writer far more space to expound their world.

I could have done without the inclusion of chapters from his other novels in a short story collection. Even though this world may inhabit a shared universe to his other works, I do not think it should actually involve other stories. Novels are novels for a reason; they give the writer far more space to expound their world. Not doing this leaves the opportunity for two problems:

1. “His Greatest Battle” was confusing to me. It is not impossible to understand, nor is it badly written. However, I would have been more invested in the battle if I understood who the people on either side were and why they were fighting. This is an exposition that is likely to be found in his book. This could have been left out of the collection.
2. “Little” has the exact opposite problem. It is in all exposition. This is also pulled from a book. I do not know if this is a beginning chapter, or if Pawlowski felt the need to fill in some blanks, but this was at least 60% exposition. I want a story, not explanations leading up to a story.

The other short stories were balanced in their world building. You may need other stories in the collection to build your understanding, but not other texts.

“The Vermillion Book of the Macabre” is marketed as “dark fantasy horror” on Amazon. Dark fantasy is a far more fitting label than horror for this collection.

Do I think the book has some dark moments? Yes. I would not quite call it scary though. The scariest story I can recall is “The Craftsman,” due to its gore, but that is it.

“The Vermillion Book of the Macabre” attempts to cement itself in eldritch horror, but misses the mark. Pawlowski captures the otherworldly aspect expected of fantasy, but does not go so far as to make the reader fear it.

Pawlowski has his own pantheon of pagan-like gods, such as Nebo and Osric. He occasionally mentions Dagon, who I believe is different from H.P. Lovecraft’s character, the same name, as this Da-gon is mentioned to be a priestess of some sort.

Then Pawlowski mentioned the Great Old Ones. You need to earn your eldritch god call outs. They are not just some nebulous beings you can mention when you feel you will get a rise from your reader. The Great Old Ones should be invoked only when used for what they are: endless, all-powerful, existential beings.

They are mentioned in “Weaselbeek” briefly as Justinian calls to his lost lover. The Great Old Ones do not care for our individual strife and they would not appear with the opening of the underworld. They could care less about our human desires as we are nothing but the bacteria on the sidewalk we step over on our way to get coffee.

We are insignificant to them. To suggest otherwise implies a lack of understanding.

With that being said, I do enjoy the pagan pantheon that Pawlowski set up. If there could be more of that, rather than false incantations to the Great Old Ones, I would be happier.

With all of the negative criticism being said, there are two stories that stood out to me: “A Likeness of the Divine” and “The Mask of the Impostor.”

“A Likeness of the Divine” is reminiscent of “The Picture of Dorian Gray.” A woman is gifted a painting by her husband, which urges her to commit crimes. I wish I could pinpoint what it was about this genre that I like. Perhaps it is the switch from Dorian’s evil actions being reflected in his self-portrait? Who can say.

“The Mask of the Impostor” is the best story in this collection because it deals with something so relatable. Do you ever accomplish something, but then go “If only I had done xyz, then it would have been perfect?” This short story is that sensation.

As a person who suffers excessive impostor syndrome, I found this read refreshing. Even the best of us feel like impostors sometimes.

This book was good, overall. I would give it a 5.5/10.

Mr. Pawlowski, if you do read this, do not take my critiques to heart. I was a fun time reading this collection and I am forever grateful to you for wanting to hear my opinion. I cannot wait to read the next one.

‘The Vermillion Book of the Macabre’: Dark Fantasy vs. the Eldritch

Casey Masterson | The Montclarion
As Marissa Di Fulco, a sophomore molecular biology major, was browsing through the clubs and organizations page on the Montclair State University website, she noticed that one club in particular was not available for her to join: a photography club. Ever since she was young, Di Fulco had a love for photography.

“In high school, I took some photography classes,” Di Fulco said. “I loved that, because we got to work with film cameras and develop the film.”

With this in mind, Di Fulco decided to take matters into her own hands and start a photography club so students who share the same passion and love for taking pictures can come together. Luckily for her, the process was simple.

“There were some documents I had to fill out from the webpage from Montclair State,” Di Fulco said. “I just followed the checklist. I had to attend a couple of meetings, but it was a pretty smooth procedure.”

The process is well organized and sectioned into three parts. On the clubs and organizations section of the Montclair State website, students are able to click on a link to start their own organization. There is a checklist on how to become an organization and then three sets of paperwork that needs to be filled out: a charterment packet, a class II/IV constitution and a presentation for charterment.

Once that is complete, the student(s) must then complete the Student Government Association (SGA) “Life After Charterment” 10 point checklist. This includes creating a unique email for the club, attending an SGA 101 event, filling out forms for Engage, attending financial training as well as utilizing Engage 101.

Once the organization was approved by the SGA, Di Fulco prepared for the start of her new organization.

“We will have friendly photo contests and challenges,” Di Fulco said. “We’ll have guest speakers come in whether they be photographers and discuss their work or just photography in general.”

Di Fulco also wants to hold gallery events where members can showcase their work to the public.

“With that, the public can have the opportunity to purchase the photos that they like, and a portion of the funds raised from the gallery events will either go to a charity on campus or another charity the club decides upon,” Di Fulco said.

Mike Peters, faculty advisor of the club as well as the Montclair State photographer, is very excited about the start of the club.

“I’d like to see students really just think more deeply about making images,” Peters said. “That’s the direction that I’m going to push them in and we’ll be exposing them to the work of a lot of good photographers who...paved the way over the decades.”

The photography club is open to anyone, no matter what their skill level is. Fortunately for the students whose skill levels may be low, this club will help improve their skills and will teach them the tips and tricks to taking better photos whether it be on a digital camera or a cell phone.

“We’re going to start from scratch,” Di Fulco said. “Whether that be how to use a camera, we’re just going to teach it right from the beginning or even like Photoshoot, that too.”

For students who are thinking of joining the club, Di Fulco encourages them to join and know that the club will be fun and educational.

“I want everyone to feel like they are really a part of it and that there is a lot of ways they can participate,” Di Fulco said.

Juan Ocampo, a sophomore film major, is beyond excited for the new club to begin in the spring.

“This club is past due,” Ocampo said. “I do not understand what took so long for the creation of this club in a school whose motto is ‘It’s All Here.’”

Ocampo is most excited to meet new creatives looking to learn more about the opportunities a camera has to offer.

“I first started to get into film via photography so I personally have a strong connection towards this field,” Ocampo said.

Ocampo also helped spread the word about this club by sending out flyers through the @networkmsu23 Instagram account, which helped the club gain a lot more members.

The club’s first meeting will take place on Zoom on Wednesday, Feb. 17 at 3 p.m. To join, students can contact Marissa Di Fulco at difulcom1@montclair.edu as well as the other board members.

Faculty Advisor - Mike Peters: petersm@montclair.edu
Vice President - Youssef Dimian: dimiany1@montclair.edu
Treasurer - Stephane Arango: arangos1@montclair.edu
Secretary - Heidi Raedisch: raedischi1@montclair.edu
Every Crisis Has a Turning Point to Recovery, Let’s Make Sure It’s Now

Two weeks ago, an email from Dr. Karen Pennington, Vice President of Student Development and Campus Life, was sent out to all students, faculty and staff informing the Montclair State University community of the sudden death of Olivia “Liv” Morro. She was a freshman theater and dance major who was found dead in her dorm room in Basdolle Hall in Dinallo Heights.

The email included the phrase, “Foul play is not suspected,” then went on to provide contact information about the university’s Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS) and encouraged students and employees needing emotional support and struggling with mental illness to seek help.

Too little, too late.

The university’s response to this tragedy has been far too halfhearted. The email’s casual title “Sad News” and its staccato, formal tone downplayed the horrific incident that occurred. And this is not the first less-than-stellar response to a student death by the university. Just this past December, a student in the film program passed away at their home in Pennington, New Jersey. The only members of the university informed and offered solace were those within the film school, as a Zoom meeting was held to offer resources for support. No announcement was made by the university administration.

During the summer of 2019, an incoming junior died by suicide. No announcement was made by the university administration nor were students, faculty and staff informed of the memorial service held that upcoming semester.

If the university takes such an interest in the mental well-being of their students, they would inform us about our available resources frequently and without any reason other than to make those services known, not only after tragedy strikes.

Now the university community is being sent frequent emails about the importance of mental health such as the encouragement of students to participate in the Healthy Minds Study as well as one sent from Red Hawk News telling us “Your Mental Health Matters!”

We know our mental health matters. What is being done to make sure we can do something about it?

Sending out emails accomplished nothing.

CAPS continues to be drastically understaffed and underfunded and has not been able to keep up with the demands of university students seeking help. In 2019, The Montclarion reported on the many shortcomings of CAPS, including an inadequate staff-to-student ratio. This is in addition to how group therapy sessions quickly reach capacity and limit the participation of new students and an insufficient number of one-on-one therapy meetings each semester.

It is understood that the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic has taken a toll on Montclair State’s finances and a recovery from that sudden downturn has yet to occur, but the crisis of mental health within the university’s student body is not receiving the attention it requires and this crisis should be taking back seat to no other. It is a matter of life and death.

The COVID-19 pandemic has added fuel to the fire of the mental health crises, plaguing people particularly in the college age range. Even before the pandemic, nearly 40% of college students experienced a significant mental health issue and of those affected, only 2/3 sought treatment.

Discussion of mental illness and the many different forms it exists through is far too sparse, amongst both students and administration alike.

While college students today are perhaps the most aware of these afflictions than their generational predecessors, the ratio of illness-to-aid clearly remains out of balance.

It is understood that talking openly about a deeply personal sickness is not something that comes easy to most and ignoring the problem, despite its potentially fatal consequences, is much easier. However, a fundamental change is required and no reform of that magnitude comes with silence and no change can be made without support from those responsible for allocating resources for that change.

Olivia Morro’s death must not remain in vain, but instead be a turning point in finally providing help to those who need it and remove any remaining stigma around doing so.

You are not alone. Please talk to someone about how you feel.

Campus Voices:

How has the COVID-19 pandemic affected your mental health?

By Brielle E. Wyka

“This pandemic has impacted my mental health because I feel like I’m stuck. There’s nowhere you can go, or when I do go out I’m always thinking about taking precautions. And I’m always thinking about other people too because I have high-risk family members and so do my friends. That’s why I have my job at CHA now because I can encourage people to wear their masks and things like that because it’s important.”

-Janeena Peniro-Deniz Acting Graduate Student

“This pandemic has affected my mental health because I work in the theater. I think my mental health took a hit of a toll. I had my ups and downs.”

-Neriah McKnight Family Science & Human Development Senior

“This pandemic has affected my mental health a lot because with online school it is a lot harder and gives me a lot more anxiety which has been difficult to cope with and try to figure out how to work around that and still get good grades and be able to try my hardest while not being super stressed out about thinks I can’t control.”

-Hope Zaborowski Nursing freshman

“The pandemic has affected my mental health not as much as one would think. I know a lot of people are struggling a lot more than me and I acknowledge that, but in a broader sense I know everyone is not sure what’s going to happen. And I never knew what was going to happen, so now we’re all in this together.”

- Chris Griffin Communication & Media Arts freshman

-Neriah McKnight Family Science & Human Development Senior

- Hope Zaborowski Nursing freshman
**Two Scoops of Price Gouging**

**CARLEY CAMPBELL**

If there is anything certain about the college experience, it's that you will spend a good deal of it eating ice cream. It is no surprise that college students go for a pint of ice cream when given the option.

But where could one get a carton of ice cream? While Freeman and Sam's occasionally offer ice cream, there is only one spot to buy it on campus. The Blanton Hall C-Store, a former roommate of Which Wich and practical standby for any resident student, is where one could buy a pint of Ben and Jerry’s. While the issue at hand may seem petty, the circumstances surrounding it reflect its significance.

At the Blanton C-store, one pint of Ben and Jerry’s costs $6.39. At first, this seems trivial. One could easily leave campus and go grocery shopping. After all, Target sells the same pint for $4.59 and Stop & Shop sells it at $3.50. While this is just simple comparison shopping, that does not leave much of an option for residential students.

With the new waiver policy complicating something as simple as a trip to the grocery store and turning it into a bureaucratic mess, it makes it extremely difficult for a student to leave campus to get a pint of ice cream at a reasonable, affordable price.

What about delivery apps? Grocery delivery apps like Instacart and Shipt can run up extremely high prices for anyone looking to get just a pint of a frozen treat. While DoorDash and Uber Eats offer store delivery at convenience stores like 7-Eleven, the costs are anything but.

Ice cream is a luxury good. It offers no real nutritional value. That much is true. Plus, the university needs to sell goods at prices that ensure a profit. After all, it would make sense that things on campus are a bit overpriced as long as someone could get paid a better wage. Convenience stores are also notorious for overpriced goods in small quantities. But the issue is that there is no real option for students beyond the overpriced options on campus, Amazon or delivery apps.

Given residential students’ depend-ence on both the book store and the C-Store for goods like snacks and toiletries, the university holds the power to increase prices for common, usually lower-priced items. Sure, students can buy online and have it shipped via Amazon, but not everyone can afford to buy in bulk or pay fees to get something as simple as a bar of soap or a couple rolls of toilet paper. Even so, Amazon lockers do not accept shipment of perishable goods.

It is unfair to assume that students can carry on with Sam's Place and Freeman alone. There are things people need that you can’t readily find in a place like Sam's. Not everyone living on campus has a meal plan or a car to get food. Furthermore, the convenience store is meant for convenience and not buying in bulk. But it is the need to buy things to live, things that work within dietary restrictions and traditions that people need ready access to.

It's inconvenient to overcharge a student who depends on Flex Dollars and other small items they bring with them to college because once those run out, the options that remain are far and few between.

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**Our Divided House Needs Repair**

**EKATERINA ZELENIN**

As a Christian I have certain reservations about moral liberties, which is why I vote conservatively when it comes to the economic market.

However, when riots broke out as a result of George Floyd’s murder, many businesses and private properties were destroyed by rioters. This began a series of rather unfortunate events in which those who suffered from the riots turned away from the Black Lives Matter movement, while advocates who were passionate towards racial equality found themselves with even more opposition than before.

Likewise, with the loss of President Trump to current President Biden, insurrectionists broke into and attacked the U.S. Capitol, which only brought more harm to the situation.

And what do the two parties and media do when these things happen? They promote the hatred.

Every story, every article and every speech was about the gore, the violence and the death. News channels like CNN and Fox News immorally pointed fingers at one another. Politicians started throwing terrorist accusations at both groups whilst distancing themselves from the blame.

And who in the end suffered? The people. People who lost property, people who got arrested and people who got expelled from universities and fired from their job.

But can we blame the rioting public? Can we really hold them accountable when every outlet is throwing the other party under the bus? You turn on CNN to allegations of Trump and Republicans being part of the Ku Klux Klan. You turn on Fox News to allegations of the Democrats using the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic as a means of controlling the public. Both networks are using their platform for nothing more than harmful propaganda.

 Whatever happened to encouraging independent thought? Was this country not built on diverse views and opinions? How did we get so black and white or, more accurately, red and blue? It is up to our generation to comprehend that we are a house very much divided and we are inheriting walls that will not stay up. If we stop listening to what the media reports as their so called truth and instead seek out the truth ourselves, we can find the many similarities between our goals as fellow citizens, the university holds the power to set policies that will help us prosper as a nation united.

Then, maybe, our walls will not come crashing down.

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**Ekaterina Zelenin is in her second year as a contributing writer for The Montclarion.**

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Subscription Required: A Criticism in Satire

Hey, what should we watch tonight, guys? You feeling a movie or something? I really want to watch “Coming to America” so I can be ready for the sequel. Great, it’s on Hulu!

Wait, what? “Watch with Live TV?” What does that even mean? I got Hulu so I wouldn’t have to pay for cable.

Okay, you guys pick something else. I’ll go grab us some snacks. Let’s see, we got popcorn, potato chips, pretzels, all good. Ooh, Dibs! I haven’t had Dibs in ages.

Wait, what’s this on the boxes? “Upgrade to Nestlé+ and Kellogg’sOn to enjoy these delicious treats.” Well, that’s inconvenient. Maybe we can just get a pizza.

Is pepperoni okay with everyone? Cool, let me place the order. Oh! “Get pepperoni access when you subscribe to Little Nemo’s Hotbox for just $0.39 per pepperoni slice.” I guess we’ll just do plain.

Have we picked a movie? Seriously, there’s nothing good on? Fine, let’s play Monopoly so I can get some sweet catharsis from bankrupting all of you. I can’t help but feel like I forgot to do something. Oh well.

Does anyone know if Dave is coming? He mentioned something about not subscribing to the insurance tier that lets you drive more than 10 miles, so I don’t know if he’s getting a ride or something.

I feel kind of strange all of a sudden. I think I’m gonna lie on the couch, just let me know when it’s my turn.

Where’s that pizza? Oh, good timing, it just got here. Mel, can you get it?

Is Mel in the bathroom? She was literally just here. I hope she isn’t trying to use the toilet because I couldn’t afford to enroll in that penalty-free flush plan after the trial period ended. It hasn’t been fun, and I think the hemorrhoids are permanent at this point.

Okay, bad news everyone. I forgot that produce is reserved for the first 100 million national subscribers each month, so there’s no tomato sauce on the pizza. It’s basically cheesy bread, but that’s still fun!

Sweet Jesus! Mel, is that you? What happened to your skin? Did you not get your medication or something? What do you mean it’s “exclusive for new shoppers” now?

My head really hurts. Whose dog is that? Who brought the dog? What do you mean there’s nothing there?

Dana, have you always had an extra set of eyes in your nostrils? Randy, are your fingers thousands of tiny mice? Is it my turn in Monopoly yet?

Oh God, I know what I forgot. I didn’t renew my Concrete Reality, copyrighted property of Google and Epic Games, subscription. I’m so sorry you guys, I really am. Hang on to the nearest piece of furniture while it still exists.

You know, I’m glad we all got together tonight. The world is a crazy place right now and I really needed to see my friends. No matter what basic necessity these overgrown corporations try to indebt us into next, I know there’s one thing they can’t slap a subscription price on: friendship.

What’s that, Dana? Amazon just did that? I can’t say I’m surprised. Dang, the pizza is cold.

Maddye Belov-Boxer, a junior English major, is in her first year as assistant opinion editor for The Montclarion.
Have a thought about on campus or off campus matters? Write for Opinion!

Email:
montclarionopinion@gmail.com

Room 2035, School of Communication and Media in Upper Montclair, NJ, 07043

Parking and Fees

Campus Activities
Richard Colson Baker, better known as Machine Gun Kelly (MGK), is a lanky, blonde, tattoo-covered rockstar. He has released five studio albums in his career after rising to popularity following a controversial rap fight with Eminem in 2018.

Although the singer has made acting appearances in films such as “Bird Box” and “Nerve,” I never expected him to be the director of his own musical. “Downfalls High” is a 49-minute musical drama which MGK shot and directed over the course of four days alongside friend and fellow musician, Mod Sun. The short film shows a modern punk love story drawing obvious similarities to the iconic 1970s film “Grease.” Furthermore, MGK performs songs from his most recent album, “Tickets to My Downfall,” in between scenes to carry the plot along.

The film features Fenix, played by Chase Hudson, a quiet and mundane teenager and Scarlett, played by Sydney Sweeney, a popular teenage girl surrounded by minions dressed in pink sweaters. The pink visuals supposedly reference the Pink Ladies of “Grease,” while Fenix represents Danny Zuko. The unlikely pair fall in love and it seems that the film is over before it even begins. While the storyline is encapsulating, it feels overly rushed. Some interactions between Fenix and Scarlett seem forced with glimpses of deadpan humor. As soon as I started getting invested in the two main characters, everything plummeted and crashed.

However, MGK and his production team carefully designed each set, keeping small details and symbolism in mind. The film commences with Fenix trapped in a deserted psychiatric hospital wearing a pink straitjacket, reminiscent of a scene directly from a horror movie. Within a few seconds, MGK is playing his first song from the album called “Title Track.”

MGK performs “Kiss Kiss,” from inside his van with Travis Barker and sings “Drunk Face” in an abandoned pool. One of his more popular songs from the album, “Bloody Valentine,” is performed from a cheap stage with paper hearts hanging in the background. In a stark contrast, “Concert for Aliens,” shows people vomiting into toilets in a room covered in graffiti.

As MGK sings about heartbreak and loneliness, montage scenes of Fenix and Scarlett’s brief relationship pass by on the screen. A memorable scene shows Scarlett kissing Fenix on the sidewalk with a plastic bag over his head. It was unexpected, oddly heartwarming and left me wishing they had delved more into these types of scenes.

In the midst of all the montages and chaos, something tragic happens. Without spoiling anything, I will admit that I cannot feel that much pity for the outcome, as I was not that attached to the characters. This is one of the downfalls of “Downfalls High.”

The most enjoyable part of the musical was MGK rocking out with his electric guitar and singing with surprise guests such as Trippie Redd, Blackbear and Iann Dior. His unique vocal range and cynical outlook on life has always drawn me to his music.

While the film has its flaws, it is impressive, cheesy at points and delivers a thorough synopsis of the album. MGK’s traumatic past gives him the inspiration for his music and it is evident that his emotional performances are a way to let go of those experiences.

After watching, I grew to love MGK’s music even more because of the characters, storyline and visuals combined that gave “Tickets To My Downfall” a meaningful and memorable purpose. As merely the first visual piece Machine Gun Kelly has directed, we can only hope to see more projects like “Downfalls High” in the future.
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Megan Lim
Assistant Entertainment Editor

Deservingly earning a spot in Net-flix’s daily Top 10 rankings, the final installment of the “To All the Boys I’ve Loved Before” trilogy delivered fans two hours of nonstop warm, fuzzy feelings and smiles just in time for Valentine’s Day.

Directed by Michael Fimognari and produced by Matt Kaplan, “To All the Boys: Always and Forever” premiered Friday, Feb. 12.

The film is the goodbye letter that fans needed to properly send off the dyna-mic duo of hopeless romantic Lara Jean Covey, played by Lana Condor, and the charming athlete Peter Kavinsky, played by Noah Centineo. Having successfully navigated their way through an initially fake relationship, mixed feelings and infidelity in the first two films, the couple now faces senior year and the anxiety-inducing feat of having to go to college without one another.

“To All the Boys: Always and Forever” takes on the most realistic plotline of the series, making it all the more enjoyable and hard to get away from. This is especially true for those who are able to relate to the excitement and pressure that comes along with the college admissions process and new beginnings.

Aside from the driving question of whether Lara Jean and Peter will attend college together, what makes the film satisfyingly authentic is the fans’ knowledge of the real-life chem-istry shared by Condor and Centineo. The two actors have openly shared the connection they developed while filming, which translates effortlessly to the cinematic romance they are tasked to portray.

The duo’s obvious fondness of one another leaves viewers wondering what they will miss more: the pairing of on-screen Lara Jean and Peter or off-screen Lana and Noah.

Those who closely follow Centineo are especially able to see how his personality shines through his role, making it pleasantly questionable whether Centineo is acting as Peter or simply enjoying his time with Lana and the cast.

The on-camera team consists of actors like Janel Parrish from “Pretty Little Liars,” Ross Butler from “13 Reasons Why,” Anna Cathcart, Madeleine Arthur, John Corbett and several others who contribute to a plausible, tight, knit family that undergoes their own growth and development in the film. Their roles and increased screen time do not detract from the central focus of Lara Jean and Peter’s relationship, but instead serve to create an intimacy among the characters that fans cannot help but want in on.

Also enviable is the vast amount of traveling done during the shooting of the film. Shot at tourist hotspots in New York City, New York and Seoul, South Korea, the characters experience a positive culture shock as they visit universities, cartoon-like cafes, renowned bake shops and other places that often make it onto people’s bucket lists.

These locations, in combination with Lara Jean’s unparalleled wardrobe, the set’s use of strikingly vibrant colors and the introduction of K-pop music provided the unbeatable aesthetic that all three installments of the trilogy relied on in with from the start.

The visual appeal of “To All the Boys: Always and Forever” is so memorable that it fortunately makes the less than smooth editing of the film easier to forget.

Having to adapt author Jenny Han’s over 300-page novel into a cinematic experience is understandably a challenge given the story’s many changes in setting. With a snap of a finger, viewers find themselves wondering how the characters made their way from South Korea to home to New York and back again. The choppy flow of events is enough to momentarily derail attention before viewers are once again roped in and consumed by the sweetness of Lara Jean and Peter.

As for whether people can expect to see a continuation of Lara Jean and Peter’s story in the future, the actors say it is unlikely.

“I feel content,” Centineo told Girl friend magazine earlier this month. “I think of all the ways to say goodbye to a character, I think the way that we’ve done it in the third film, it feels good to me.”

While it may not feel good for fans to say goodbye to the “To All the Boys I’ve Loved Before” trilogy, they can take consolation in the third film’s success in closing the journey.

Top Picks to Stream

Valentine’s Day

“10 Things I Hate About You” on Disney+

If you’re yearning for a cheesy romant-ic comedy and some 2000s nostalgia this February, then “10 Things I Hate About You” is the perfect movie to watch. It follows the classic bad boy and nerdy girl plot, but has enough of its own person-ality to be worth the watch. Kat, the nerd in question, has quick comebacks and in-sults that make you want to find an enemy. She provides humor and a saving grace for those who are single this Valentine’s Day. There are surely enough cheesy moments to fill that rom-com need that arises every Feb. 14.

The film was inspired by Shakespeare’s “The Taming of the Shrew,” so if you read the play or the Sparknotes in high school you can feel smart while watching on to the similarities and hints from the original play. “10 Things I Hate About You” has the humor, heart and Heath Ledger needed to smile on a snowy day.

- Rose Kershner
Social Media Manager

‘The Notebook’ on HBO Max

“10 Things I Hate About You” is the perfect movie to watch. With February being the month of love, why not check out a Nicholas Sparks film? Notorious for melting people’s hearts with his novels that ultimately become films, some of Sparks’ best work is available to stream today.

“The Notebook” is a 2004 classic starring the talented Rachel McAdams (Allie) and heartthrob Ryan Gosling (Noah), that is sure to make you laugh, cry and smile all at the same time.

Set in a flashback to the 1940s, viewers follow an epic love story as it comes together, falls apart and comes together again. With its monumental time jumps and enduring plot twists. “The Notebook” is the perfect movie to watch this February, or any month.

Streaming now on HBO Max, be sure to check out this groundbreaking love story, even if you’ve already seen it 100 times.

- Sam Nungesser
Entertainment Editor

Lara Jean (Lana Condor) and Christine (Madeleine Arthur) snap a selfie in New York City.

Peter Kavinsky, played by Noah Centineo, sharing a dance at the prom with Lara Jean, played by Lana Condor.

Lara Jean (Lana Condor) and Christine (Madeleine Arthur) in closing the journey.

Photo courtesy of Netflix

Photo courtesy of Netflix

Photo courtesy of Netflix

Photo courtesy of Netflix

Photo courtesy of Netflix

Photo courtesy of Netflix

Photo courtesy of Netflix

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Photo courtesy of Netflix

Photo courtesy of Netflix

Photo courtesy of Netflix
WMSC Students Nominated For 12 National Awards

Sam Nunsgesser
Entertainment Editor

Look out college radio, because Montclair State University’s very own station, WMSC, has been nominated for 12 national awards by The Intercollegiate Broadcasting System. The Montclarion Entertainment Editor Sam Nunsgesser caught up with student nominees Kaya Maciak, a junior communication and media arts major and WMSC program director; and Josh Tirado, a senior television and digital arts major with a concentration in audio and sound design and WMSC station manager, to discuss their nominations.

What awards were you nominated for?

Maciak: I’ve been nominated for Best Business Director (Office Manager) in the Nation. The official WMSC news-letter was nominated for Best Station Blog, which is a project I pitched and founded back when I was office assistant in my second semester of freshman year. The very first editions contained 15 pages of content that I composed on my own.

Tirado: I have been nominated for Best Radio Show, Best Voting Editor, and WMSC station manager.

How did you get involved with WMSC?

Maciak: The former Morning Buzz producer encouraged me to attend a general meeting in my first semester of freshman year. I felt overwhelmed and definitely was nervous, but I pushed myself and the rest is history.

Tirado: On my first tour of [Montclair State] my guide pointed out that there was a radio station and the rest is history. It was the first and only club I sought out and joined my first semester.

Can you talk a little bit about the work you’ve done for WMSC?

Maciak: I started as a team member of the digital marketing team in my first semester of freshman year where I was responsible for creating posts for all of our social media platforms at least once a week. I assisted in the social media coverage of the 2018 election night for WMSC.

Tirado: I was approached by the office manager at the time and was asked if I was interested in becoming office assistant. The idea of creating a bridge between the general members and student management and getting to plan events thrilled me, so I jumped at the opportunity.

There I planned several events like the Valentine’s Day Bake Sale, a Harry Potter-themed banquet and made an effort to collaborate with other organizations on campus like the Student Recreation Center for Friend’s Day. After one semester of being office assistant, I was promoted to office manager. I volunteered as office manager for a year, where my daily responsibilities consisted of leading the newsletter, drafting press releases for events, planning and executing events and secretarial work to maintain organization within the station.

Also during my time as office manager, I volunteered as a social media coordinator for The College Radio Foundation, running their Instagram account to promote World College Radio Day and College Radio Day. I also served as a student correspondent for the events between WMSC and The College Radio Foundation task force.

Just this semester, I was promoted to program director and immediately started my role during winter break. I started training by scheduling shows for our winter session for hours on end every single day until I was confident with the programming software we use, which is NexGen.

How has being a part of the radio station impacted both your college and professional experience?

Maciak: College radio really was the first extracurricular activity I joined in college before I understood the professional experience I would gain from my time here. It started out as a hobby for me, being like a safe haven for me to enjoy the things I like [such as] creating content and talking on-air.

Tirado: It’s been fun. It’s been cool. Before joining, I didn’t really know how to even edit audio and now that’s my major and what I do for a living. I’ve also received many opportunities from the station [such as] being able to represent college radio in the United States at a conference in the United Kingdom [and] earning scholarships from my participation in radio as a whole. The station has shaped my life immensely.
How has working during the pandemic impacted the WMSC experience this year? How do you feel about the overall work given the circumstances?

Maciak: The pandemic has been harsh on college radio stations nationally and internationally. Many college radios either seized their operations or had to close down. This was a reality that we faced in the beginning of the pandemic, not truly knowing where the future would take us.

Thanks to the support of the School of Communication and Media, Chief Engineer Adam Goldberg and our General Manager Anabella Poland, we were able to continue operating remotely during the pandemic when other stations couldn’t. Students were able to maintain some sense of routine and continue their involvement at the station [even] when things weren’t looking so bright. Our members persevered with us during such a difficult time and it really shows through the content that we publish.

What went through your head when you found out you’d been nominated for a national award?

Maciak: It honestly took me a full 24-hours to process the nomination. It’s been a very difficult period for me personally and my family during the pandemic and my involvement in radio grounded me and motivated me to continue evolving professionally. This nomination was emotional for me and my family because it was good news that we haven’t received in a long time.

Tirado: [II] keep it real with you, it wasn’t the excitement that I felt. I’ve been submitting for awards since my freshman year and I’ve created so many things that I loved and I thought were amazing that haven’t received nominations. Even though it may not seem like it, that definitely creates an amount of stress and anxiety.

Last semester was brutal for me with the amount of work that I forced upon myself. It seriously made me reconsider my priorities in life and put me in a rut. So this nomination means a lot to me and my future career path and I hope it can revitalize my passion for all that I do.

What are your future hopes for WMSC?

Maciak: I truly hope that WMSC expands and we recruit more students in the next couple of years. WMSC welcomes students from all majors and colleges and diversity, equity and inclusion are core values and utmost priorities at the station. We want to see our WMSC family grow to reflect all the amazing talent we have right here on our campus.

Tirado: Right now I hope we can go back to being in the studio, so no other programming director has to go through so much work and has the time to be a proper programming director [who can] curate content and make fun, innovative programs.

What would you tell incoming members that hope to go on the same path as you?

Maciak: The amount of work you put in determines the amount of knowledge, experience and opportunities you will gain out of your involvement. You have the support and resources to bring in new initiatives and projects to the table and you ultimately pave your own legacy at the station.

Tirado: (Laughs) I would question their sanity. But in all honesty, this experience is what you make of it. There are so many opportunities available, all you have to do is put the effort in.

The winners will be announced during a virtual conference from March 2 to March 6.
‘The Little Things’ Misses the Mark Big Time

Despite the Oscar-winning star power the filmmakers assembled, “The Little Things” ultimately fails as a film in more ways than one.

“The Little Things” is a neo-noir thriller written, directed and produced by John Lee Hancock, best known for directing the 2009 film “The Blind Side.” It stars Rami Malek, Denzel Washington and Jared Leto, all of whom have previously won Academy Awards in acting.

The film takes place in Los Angeles in the early 1990s and focuses on the Los Angeles County Sheriff’s Department’s search for a serial killer targeting women. The lead detective, Jim Baxter, played by Rami Malek, enlists the help of deputy sheriff Joe “Deke” Deacon, played by Denzel Washington, to help as the current case possesses similarities to a past case when Deacon was lead detective.

As for the other two leads, Leto is known for over-preparing for some of his roles and this is one of them. He seems too into character for such a blunder of a film, but his dedication is still admirable and makes him the most interesting character to watch.

The film relies too heavily on Washington's famous Denzel attitude, the classic one-liners, his roles and this is one of them. He is still as fun as ever, his charm and the classic cop drama tropes are all still present, but due to the dialogue of “The Little Things” being as cliche as thousands of similar movies, I think it’s safe to assume that this is not an accurate representation.

The writing is so insincere that it does not really feel like a cop movie at all. It feels like someone who is a big fan of crime thrillers tried their best to recreate their best imitation of one, but the end prove they really know nothing about the subject.

The editing is another horrendous aspect of the film, especially the first 30 to 45 minutes. There were so many unnecessary cuts that it actually made me dizzy. Once I realized how bad the editing was within the first five minutes, I somewhat stopped focusing on the plot of the film and focused all my attention on looking for as many odd and untime-ly cuts as possible, and I found way too many. The distracting cutting also led to blatant continuity errors which I normally overlook in any other film, but found too much though as I was just happy the film ended at all.

There seems to be no real message to take away, things just sort of end, and I am also unsure of what Hancock was trying to convey to viewers with this film. There seems to be no real message to take away, things just sort of end, and I cannot complain about that too much though as I was just happy the film ended at all.

John Lee Hancock, best known for directing “The Blind Side,” and the filmmakers assembled, “The Little Things” ultimately fails as a film in more ways than one.

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The film relies too heavily on Washington’s famous Denzel attitude, the classic one-liners, the classic cop drama tropes and cheesy cop conversations and expressions. One scene I recall in particular involves Detective Baxter and Deke speaking about the case on a bridge at night when Baxter asks Deke if he believes in God. To this Deke replies that he does but sometimes he feels like God does not care.

If I had a nickel for every time I have seen a cop drama or thriller where there is a conversation pertaining to the possible existence of some sort of deity or higher power, I would most likely be a rich man right now.

The writing does not necessarily get better after this. I am not an expert on how members of law enforcement actually communicate with each other, but due to the dialogue of “The Little Things” being as cliché as thousands of similar movies, I think it’s safe to assume that this is not an accurate representation.

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The distracting cutting also led to blatant continuity errors which I normally overlook in any other film, but found to be extremely bothersome in this case.

Fortunately, the frequent cutting significantly died down in the final two thirds of the film, but by then the damage had already been done.

And if that were not enough, the plot of the film itself is such a drag. The events unfold at such a slow and unexciting pace that I am finding it difficult to label this movie as a thriller.

There is all this focus on the detectives investigating one sole suspect when there are millions of people living in the entirety of Los Angeles that you would at least hope the ending is exciting. I spent all this time watching this film (and nearly falling asleep at one point) just to end up with an unsatisfying conclusion.

I am also unsure of what Hancock was trying to convey to viewers with this film. There seems to be no real message to take away, things just sort of end, and I cannot complain about that too much though as I was just happy the film ended at all.

“The Little Things” is set to leave HBO Max on Feb. 28 as part of Warner Bros. Pictures plan to release all of their 2021 films on the streaming service for a month each, but if I were one of the Warner Bros., I would heavily consider withdrawing it sooner.

Denzel Washington plays Deputy Sheriff Joe “Deke” Deacon. Photo courtesy of Warner Bros. Pictures

Jared Leto plays Albert Sparma, the main suspect of the case. Photo courtesy of Warner Bros. Pictures

Thomas Neira
Editor-in-Chief

Denzel Washington plays Deputy Sheriff Joe “Deke” Deacon. Photo courtesy of Warner Bros. Pictures
The Montclarion

“In America, the President reigns for four years, but Journalism governs forever.” – Oscar Wilde

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Upcoming Red Hawk Games

THUR 3/4
Women's Volleyball at New Jersey City University
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Men's Basketball vs. William Paterson University
4 p.m.

Women's Swimming and Diving vs. Kean University and The College of New Jersey
4 p.m.

Men's Swimming and Diving vs. The College of New Jersey
4 p.m.

Women's Basketball vs. Rutgers-Camden
7 p.m.

SAT 3/6
Women's Swimming and Diving vs. The College of New Jersey
10 a.m.

Men's Swimming and Diving vs. The College of New Jersey
5 p.m.

Men's Ice Hockey at William Paterson University
5:30 p.m.

SUN 3/7
Baseball at Cabrini University
12 p.m., 3 p.m.

Men's Ice Hockey at William Paterson University
5:30 p.m.

MON 3/7
No games

TUES 3/9
Women's Volleyball at Kean University
7 p.m.

Red Hawk Recap

Red Hawks Men's Basketball: 67
New Jersey City University: 58

Red Hawks Women's Basketball: 67
New Jersey City University: 58

Red Hawks Men's Basketball: 69
New Jersey City University: 58

Assistant Sports Editor

Coach Harvey Earns Her 300th Victory Against Kean

The win also makes it four straight victories for the team.

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The Red Hawks women's basketball team poses with head coach Karin Harvey after the game.

Photo courtesy of Julia Radley

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Men’s Lacrosse Season Preview

The team hopes their experienced roster can win the conference

Matt Orth
Staff Writer

After a sudden end to their 2020 season, the Montclair State University men’s lacrosse team is looking to come back into the fray, with a vengeance in a new environment changed by the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic.

The 2019 season for the men’s lacrosse team was more than decent; a winning record of 10-7, a 6-1 record at Sprague Field and a win in the conference tournament against Kean University. Unfortunately, their season ended in the conference semifinals against Stockton University. It was a tough break for the team, but in retrospect, they should be very proud of that season.

As 2020 rolled around, the Red Hawks got off to a hot start, winning the first four games of the season. All of the games except the first against DeSales University were close, but a win is a win and the team was in a huge momentum swing to kick off the new year.

The next couple of games did not go their way, as they lost to Ursinus College and Stevens Institute of Technology at Sprague Field. However, not even at the midway point of the season, the unthinkable happens.

The COVID-19 pandemic began to spread throughout the country and due to the uncertainty around it, many of our usual ways of life began to shut down, including athletics ranging from professional leagues, all the way to Division II sports.

After the New Jersey Athletic Conference (NJAC) shut down sports for the rest of the semester, the Colonial States Athletic Conference (CSAC) followed suit. The day before the team’s game at Hartwick College, the announcement was made that all athletics were suspended until at least April 3, 2020.

Even though last semester had no competitions or tournaments, practices still went on at Sprague Field and workouts began to commence at Panzer Athletic Center. The Red Hawks were back at work, prepping to hopefully start another season without any more interruptions and while staying safe from COVID-19.

After countless hours put in on and off the field while having to anxiously wait for new updates regarding the sport, the CSAC made an update at the end of November announcing that winter sports would not be played through the month of January.

But finally, on Feb. 7, the CSAC made the official announcement that the lacrosse season will be played during the Spring 2021 semester while following Return to Play guidelines and all other rules set out by local health officials and the NCAA. At long last there is a season to look forward to, but throughout these tough times, the lacrosse team has made some strides in and out of the sport.

Christian Boyle, junior midfielder for Montclair State, is confident that this season will not end like last season and that he will make the most out of the opportunity.

“This year I’m gonna take in every day and enjoy just the ability to play each day,” Boyle said. He also recognizes the COVID-19 restrictions in place but does not see that as an obstacle.

“The COVID restrictions can be a hassle sometimes but if it’s what we have to do in order to play and actually have a season, then I’m all for it,” Boyle said.

Not only is Boyle looking forward to the upcoming season, but he is also yearning to play with his friends and fellow teammates and play for a championship. The Red Hawks return a number of talented players from last year, including sophomore attack Tyler McCreery and senior goalie Matthew McLaren.

“I am extremely confident in my squad this year because we return a lot of experienced guys and everyone’s ready to go all out since, if not all of us, lost a season last year,” Boyle said.

Campbell Donovan, the student manager of the lacrosse team, lays out the team’s goals very concisely in terms of what they want to accomplish.

“Our goals are to win the CSAC and make a run in the NCAA tournament,” Donovan said. “So, it’s about the little things and ultimately doing the right thing on and off the field.”

It was a long time coming, but with the spring semester in full swing, the basketball season being a success so far in the NJAC and the football team prepping to begin their season as well, the lacrosse team can jump into the competition soon and resume their passion once again. Even with the protocols in place and a likely shortened schedule, it is going to be a fun season for men’s lacrosse.

The men’s lacrosse team huddles together to go over the next play.

Photo courtesy of Sunah Choudhry
Montclair State Men’s Baseball Hopes to Build Off 2020 Success

Red Hawks hope to compete well in a tough NJAC Conference

By Dominick Caccavella
Contributing Writer

Nearly a year has passed since the Montclair State University baseball team’s season was canceled due to the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic. Although the past year has been filled with unfortunate circumstances and uncertainty, second-year head coach Dave Lorber believes the adversity has brought his team closer.

“The guys have responded fantastic and haven’t missed a beat,” Lorber said. “They all realize this is something completely out of their control. Our family mentality and our togetherness as a group has helped us get through it. We’re excited about what’s ahead and hopefully playing games.”

Last season the Red Hawks started off at 8-4, which included a two-game sweep of SUNY Cortland, who were ranked 25th in the country, and five straight wins before the remainder of their season was canceled. The team was coming together well and just starting to unlock some of their potential as a group. While it hurts to lose a season due to circumstances beyond their control, the team rests confidently knowing that better things are coming.

“Last year was the first block put in place of how we should play, what our expectations are and how good we can be when we put it all together,” Lorber said. “We’ve got a lot of those pieces back and we’re excited to continue that forward momentum.”

Those pieces include a few players who are looking to build on their great starts from last year. Senior infielder Hayden Reyes batted a team best .474 along with 10 runs scored and 10 RBIs in just 11 games. Senior infielder Joe Norton and junior first baseman Peter Cosentino also posted strong numbers. Norton batted .320 with eight RBIs and Cosentino hit .349 along with a .455 on-base percentage. The lineup will also be looking for production from players like senior catcher Anthony Guarino and freshman outfielder Mike Murphy.

Their pitching staff will lean on the experience of fifth-year seniors Brian Reiss and Sean Lewandoski along with sophomores Ben Levine and Patrick Cuccurullo, who have some experience as freshmen last season. The bullpen will also feature senior Justin Silva and junior Alec Benzinger.

The Red Hawks are also looking to build on their brand of exciting, pressure-filled baseball that Lorber brought with him in his first season at Montclair State.

“At the end of the day baserunning is offense,” Lorber said. “Everyone wants to talk about hitting, but there's more than just hitting. You need to find ways to score runs and baserunning is one of them. We want to have a relentless approach to causing mayhem and pressure. It's definitely a big part of what we want to be.”

The players have bought into Lorber's coaching style, including Cosentino.

“Coach Lorber really put into our heads the proper mindset we need in order to win games,” Cosentino said. “Everything he shows us, he always explains why we’re doing it and why it works. When we execute the things he talks about, it leads to us winning games.”

The Red Hawks will need to be sharp throughout the season if they want to reach their goal of being at the top of the New Jersey Athletic Conference (NJAC). The conference is filled with talent from top to bottom with no easy victories on the schedule. Every game is against a quality opponent with coaches who will have their teams well prepared.

Lorber spoke about the team's expectations heading into the upcoming season.

“Our expectation is we only need to do most of the time you usually win. We want to get ourselves back in the NJAC tournament and once you're there anything can happen.”

After a year full of unfortunate circumstances, it is clear that the baseball team is excited and grateful for this upcoming season. For some of these players, it is the longest stretch they have ever gone without playing baseball and they are looking forward to getting back in the swing of things.

Cosentino spoke about how he feels to be back with his teammates.

“Just going to the field, seeing the guys and all the coaches has been amazing,” Cosentino said. “I love just even being able to go outside and be around people. I can't wait for us to get started.”

Photo courtesy of Montclair State Baseball