Montclair State Announces Mandatory COVID-19 Vaccines for Students in the Fall

Montclair State University will offer the first on-campus vaccine center on Tuesday, April 27, from 8 a.m. to 5:30 p.m.

Kelvin Jimenez Michaca
Staff Writer

Montclair State University President Susan Cole announced via email on Thursday, April 22, that the university will require all students to be vaccinated for coronavirus (COVID-19) for the fall semester.

The mandate requires all students to be vaccinated, except for those who are enrolled in fully remote degree programs or with religious and medical exemptions in accordance with New Jersey law.

Montclair State is among the first few colleges in New Jersey to require students to be vaccinated before returning to campus, along with Rutgers University, Princeton University, Fairleigh Dickinson University and Stevens Institute of Technology. However, according to nj.com, Stevens is the first to require students, staff and faculty to be vaccinated for the fall semester.

In the email, President Cole stated that employees and staff are not yet mandated to get vaccinated.

“Because of the uncertainty of the virus, I will be doing my master’s program for sustainability online, however, I may pop in once or twice to say hi,” Bies said.

“Vaccination requirements are hardly uncommon, as all students had to be vaccinated with MMR, measles, mumps, rubella and hepatitis B,” Bies said. “However, as this is a global pandemic, if the school makes COVID-19 vaccinations a requirement, they should also be responsible in providing said vaccination location on campus that can adequately provide vaccinations to all of those enrolled on campus.”

On April 16, Vice President of Student Development and Campus Life Dr. Dawn Meza Southerlin said in an email to campus residents that a shuttle service would be available to students who wished to get vaccinated. The first one was on April 13, and took students to the Livingston Mall vaccination center. This same service was also available to students on Friday, April 23.

Geraldly Wang, a senior medical humanities and public and professional writing major, has mixed feelings about this announcement.

“My thoughts on Montclair State’s latest announcement about the mandatory vaccines for the students are a bit bittersweet,” Wang said. “On one hand, I am very happy about the fact that Montclair State University has finally started addressing some of the concerns about COVID-19.”

Wang, who is minoring in biology, a former nurse and case investigator, knows firsthand how volatile this topic can be.

“I am sure that there are people with a different opinion about the need for everyone to have the vaccine, but the reality is that this is a very real and very dangerous space to get into an argument with anyone,” Wang said.

Wang is cautious about returning back to campus.

“I have not come to campus since the start of the pandemic and I even plan to not walk despite being fully vaccinated,” Wang said. “I will probably be forced to come to campus in the fall for graduate school, but as much as possible I try to limit my time in crowded locations.”

According to Cole’s announcement, “Already, nearly 4,000 of you have reported on Hawk Check that you have received at least one dose.”

Kaelyn Casallas, a junior public and professional writing major, is in full support of this announcement.

“I strongly support Montclair State University requiring all students to be vaccinated in order to return back to campus,” Casallas said. “In fact, I don’t think they should wait until fall to implement the vaccination rule, why not make it mandatory for taking summer classes on campus as well? As someone who’s taking summer classes, I would definitely feel more comfortable with them enforcing the rule earlier.”

After Casallas’ grandfather passed away due to COVID-19, she has not returned to campus.

“My grandfather passed away from [COVID-19], so my parents forbade me from going on campus so I wouldn’t expose my grandmother who lives with us to the virus,” Casallas said. (continued on Page 2)
Montclair State Announces Mandatory COVID-19 Vaccines for Students in the Fall (continued)

Casallas, who is fully vaccinated along with her family, is planning on returning to campus eventually. Her only hope is that faculty and staff be required to get the vaccine.

“If we’re expected to resort back to in-person learning and come in contact with the [employees], then why shouldn’t they get vaccinated as well?” Casallas said. “I really don’t understand the logic behind that particular rule, but hopefully, they change that in the near future.”

Marlee Kaplan, a graduate student in the speech pathology program, is in her second semester at Montclair State and has only been enrolled in online classes thus far. She agrees with the push to get students vaccinated.

“I think it’s really important that everyone is vaccinated because I just don’t think you can take the next step to have in-person classes and people dorm if the majority of people are not vaccinated,” Kaplan said. Kaplan believes faculty and staff should also be required to be vaccinated, as she did not approve when the news came to her.

“I don’t like that,” Kaplan said. “I think they’re on campus, as much as some other students as well, if not more. Those that are commuting — they’re seeing multiple classes, multiple people and it should definitely be a requirement. I think not only for the safety of faculty but also for the safety of the students. It’s kind of hypocritical, I think, to make students do it and not your faculty and your staff.”

Kaplan is in favor of Montclair State providing the COVID-19 vaccine on campus.

“The more we create possibilities and opportunities to get the vaccine, the more people will get it,” Kaplan said. “It’s awesome that Montclair [State] is doing that. It’s very convenient, especially for those that maybe are not able to get it at home, like those resources aren’t as readily available for them.”

Montclair State students and employees will be able to get the vaccine offered on campus on April 27 from 8 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. Students are advised to be on the lookout for more information regarding this service.

Dr. Soufleris Tackles Challenging First Week

Dr. Dawn Soufleris began her first few weeks as vice president for student development and campus life.

Although Soufleris is new to Montclair State, she comes with plenty of experience. She was vice president of La Salle University and has worked in student affairs for a long time. She felt prepared to work with the frustrated students and was open to discuss the possible changes.

“My biggest piece of sadness in it is that I hate to see when students feel like we’ve made decisions not thinking about their well-being,” Soufleris said. “I will tell you that even before I got here, the well-being of the students and the community is all anybody has been thinking about over the past year.”

Dr. Soufleris handled the situation by speaking directly with a few upset residential students over a Zoom call. The students gave her helpful suggestions of what should be changed and the university is planning to put those ideas into place. One of those suggestions is to have regular town hall meetings, with the first one starting in May. Once the fall semester begins, the university will conduct monthly meetings to address student concerns.

(continued on Page 3)
Resident Students React to Campus Tours

The Montclair State University campus is attracting serious controversy among the residential populace. It was a picture that sparked a thousand words and a residential protest on social media on Sunday.

Orlagh Humphries, a freshman animation major, snapped a picture from their dorm room window of Blanton Hall. The photo shows a massive group of people amassed in front of Sam’s Place, blocking exits and entrances. Humphries shared the post on Instagram with a caption, “Welcome to Montclair State University. A place where the staff pins blame of rising [COVID-19] cases solely on the students living on campus because there is no way it’s their fault.” Humphries’ post gained over 900 likes at the time of writing and sparked a grassroots protest movement built up by the residential students.

“It is hypocritical for the campus staff to claim it’s solely the fault of the students living on campus when they are the ones breaking the bubble by bringing people from off campus inside on tours,” Humphries said.

This was not an isolated incident of residential student frustration. An email sent to all residential students on Sunday morning titled, “Follow Protocols or Else!” reminded all residents that students must “maintain the bubble” and abide by travel restrictions to grocery stores, vehicles and family members’ houses.

Student reactions have swiftly ranged from frustrated Instagram posts to emails sent to the school’s designated coronavirus (COVID-19) response email demanding reforms.

One such email in response to the COVID-19 email and widely shared on social media by freshman psychology major Allison McCann, asked the school why residential students received such harsh treatment.

“Why are students paying an exorbitant amount of money to go sit in our rooms and do classwork online if we can’t have guests or go to the grocery store?” McCann wrote.

The initial post made by McCann racked up over two thousand Instagram likes on Sunday. The post, as well as a petition made by fellow freshman psychology major Skylar Willoughby, also spread widely to Montclair State social media circles.

“The last straw was the email they sent out today trying to blame students for a problem that they are making worse,” McCann said. “I had been debating emailing them for a while because of the tours, but that is what pushed it over the edge.”

McCann is organizing regular meetings with fellow students to try and figure out ways to salvage this year.

Willoughby started her petition to Montclair State University on April 12. It gained over one thousand signatures within four hours of its creation.

“I completely understand why Montclair [State] sent out that email about the guest policy due to a rise in COVID-19 cases, but residents are not the only problem,” Willoughby said. “Tour groups and commuters do not get tested and they can roam around campus. They could possibly infect a tour guide who can infect others and we would have no idea until someone tested positive for COVID-19.”

The tour groups are led by the Undergraduate Admissions Student Ambassador program. While the tours require all participants to use masks and limit to “one student and two guests per family (for a total of 12 guests per tour), and tours will be conducted entirely outdoors with the exception of University Hall, College Hall and unoccupied dorm buildings. This is in addition to all of the safety measures previously implemented for on-campus tours to ensure as safe an environment as possible. McCann continued: “We understand the current safety protocols are stringent, but they are meant to protect all members of our community. We want to thank the vast majority of our students who have adhered to them throughout this semester and in the fall. Without your efforts, we would not have been able to remain open and provide the on-campus learning opportunities so many of you wanted.”

Residence Life Backtracks Guest Policy as Resident Students Speak Out

An email from Montclair State University Residence Life reversing their policy about no guests in dorm rooms.

Ryan Breyta | The Montclarion

Important Notice

We Hear You!

You’re speaking and we’re listening. We know you have had concerns over policies and procedures that the University has put in place to keep you safe. We want you to know that we are listening, responding and actively working to make the remainder of this semester a safe and enjoyable home for you, while still doing all that we can to keep this virus at bay! Our actions as a University have always been made to keep our resident students safe and to keep your educational journey on track.

Guest Policy Update

Effective Tuesday, April 13, we will be allowing guest privileges for other residents only between buildings. You will be permitted to have one (1) resident guest, per room or unit, checked in at a time. We will monitor COVID statistics and will alter this policy if we see a spike in

One Week Later: The Town Halls on Resident Life Reforms

Carley Campbell | Staff Writer

Two town halls were held via Zoom to discuss the current situation at Montclair State University on Wednesday afternoon, April 14, and Thursday evening, April 15. These meetings featured important staff members for Montclair State, from the departments of Residence Life to Dining Services. Students had an opportunity to ask questions and learn about changes made to student life during the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic.

Changes including reducing the number of tour groups for prospective freshmen and their families, grocery pick-up and the state of the guest policy were discussed on both nights to build a dialogue with the residential student body in the wake of the petition and social media outrage last Sunday.

For Montclair State Dean of Students Margarree Coleman-Carter, these town halls are a sign of progress to continue building strong relationships between university administration and the student body. “I hope the students who attended left the feeling [like] they were heard, received answers to questions and experienced a better understanding of university operations,” Coleman-Carter said. “The other takeaway was the adoption of a student suggestion to have more town hall meetings to discuss student concerns; we are committed to engaging our students in every way possible and we are doing that.”

Coleman-Carter has seen the school change throughout her 40 years of service. Starting as the director of Webster Hall as a graduate student, she was promoted to dean of students six years ago this July. The notion of students protesting and sending petitions to her office is nothing new because the university encourages students to come forward and share their concerns in order to address them. The Office of the Dean of Students cannot address an issue if they do not know about it.

“There were protests that resulted from situations that have happened in the past with social justice or societal issues that might be going on, students have the right to voice their concerns to acknowledge and show solidarity for important issues,”

Ryan Breyta | Staff Writer

After sending out an email to all residential students on April 11 about not allowing guests in their dorm rooms due to an increase in coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic cases on campus, Montclair State University Residence Life changed their policy two days later after outrage from students.

The policy, which did not allow residential students to have other students living on campus inside their dorm rooms, will now allow campus residents to have one guest in their room at a time. Orlagh Humphries, a freshman animation and illustration major living in Blanton Hall, is one of the many students who spoke out about the policy on Instagram. Humphries’ post criticizing Reslife’s policy received over 1,000 likes and close to 100 comments. They were surprised their post went viral.

“I did not think whatsoever that it would get as much attention as it did,” Humphries said. “I don’t see myself as a very influential figure. I thought because I am a freshman, my opinion would have not been taken seriously.”

Humphries felt the need to speak out about the policy due to their belief that the campus was not following their own COVID-19 guidelines. In recent weeks, Montclair State has held in-person campus tours for prospective students and a retirement parade for former Vice President for Student Development and Campus Life Dr. Ken Pennington.

“They’re breaking the bubble by bringing in random adults for tours. It’s hypocritical, it makes this campus less safe,” Humphries said. “If the campus is so unsafe, why bring them in anyway?”

Humphries was not the only student who spoke out about Reslife’s policy. Richard Steinert-Otoo, a freshman geophysics and environmental urban studies major who also resides in Blanton Hall, worked with Montclair State students to send an email to the new Vice President for Student Development and Campus Life Dr. Dawn Soufleris about their concerns regarding COVID-19 measures on campus.

Steiner-Otoo was shocked by the quick response from the university. “I started reaching out to people I knew already felt passionate about and really outspoken about it [Reslife’s policy],” Steinert-Otoo said. “I made a Google form to survey and get the student’s opinions on how they felt about sort of certain policies. We most definitely were not expecting this quick of a result. We wanted to see some positive change and we were not sure how that change was going to come about, but we’re definitely shocked and thrilled about the results.”

While Steiner-Otoo is surprised about the quick response from the university, he is also grateful that Montclair State has an administration that addresses students’ needs. “We understand that the school has done a great deal to keep us safe,” Steiner-Otoo said. “I’m thankful that we have an administration that is willing to listen and willing to work with us and hear us out and not treat us like we don’t understand what’s going on.

In their email to Montclair State residents on April 13 reversing the guest limitation policy, Reslife reminded all students to continue to take measures to slow the spread of COVID-19 by completing Hawk Check daily, limiting off-campus travel and for students to continue to get vaccinated.

The Montclarion

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“There were protests that resulted from situations that have happened in the past with social justice or societal issues that might be going on, students have the right to voice their concerns to acknowledge and show solidarity for important issues,”
Coleman-Carter said, “For example, we have seen students show concerns about the rising costs of tuition – an important topic. There have been situations that have occurred, but nothing that has brought media attention and/or that wasn’t resolved by working together as a team.” Coleman-Carter knows the upcoming semester holds a lot more questions that will most likely cover more COVID-19 related topics and be discussed at the next town hall, such as the rise of vaccine requirements from colleges across the country. Only time will tell if Montclair State joins the ranks of Fairleigh Dickinson University in the COVID-19 vaccine mandate to receive housing on campus.

The one hope Coleman-Carter has for the student body is that students know the university’s administration is doing everything it can to ensure the safety and security of our campus.

“We heard the students voice their concerns through social media and petitions, and I think the university was responsive,” Coleman-Carter said. “We heard you and we are actively working to improve the last few weeks of the semester. We adjusted decisions previously made to support a safe and enjoyable home for you. The bottom line is that everything implemented was to keep our students safe. We want to be able to get through the last five weeks of the semester safely.”

#FocusRacialJustice: School of Communication and Media Symposium Emphasizes the Importance of Diversity in Media

The School of Communication and Media at Montclair State University held the second “Symposium on Racial Justice and Media” on April 15. The event featured leaders from the media industry who discussed a wide range of topics, including current news stories, the portrayal of race in the media, and the future of discussions around diversity and inclusion.

Dr. Tara Conley, an assistant professor of transmedia storytelling, began the discussion by emphasizing the importance of diverse perspectives in storytelling. “I want to acknowledge that this conversation is taking place during a difficult time for oppressed communities,” she said. “I want to acknowledge that this conversation is taking place during a difficult time for me, too.”

The panelists consisted of professionals from various media backgrounds, including Dr. Eddie Glaude Jr., Vickie Burns and Anthony Smith. Glaude is the chair of the department of African American studies at Princeton University, a columnist for Time Magazine and an MSNBC contributor. Burns is a news executive and media strategist who has worked for NBC, Tribune Media and Scripps. Smith is an Emmy-nominated sports documentary producer and director.

The event was hosted by Dr. Tara Conley, an assistant professor of transmedia storytelling. Conley acknowledged that the conversation is taking place during a difficult time for oppressed communities. “I want to acknowledge that this conversation is taking place during a difficult moment when we’ve lost yet another Black American, Daunte Wright in Minnesota, all while the Derek Chauvin trial is still ongoing and literally moments before streaming, I just found out about [Adam] Toledo, a 13-year-old boy who was shot and killed by police in Chicago last month,” Conley said.

In addition, Asian and indigenous communities across the country are confronting violence. Conley acknowledged the importance of diverse perspectives in storytelling. “It seems to me that what we have to figure out is how to shift the center of gravity of our stories,” Glaude said. “What can we bring into view that might disrupt a set of assumptions about who we take ourselves to be, about what’s important, about what matters?”

The panel discussed the phrase “defund the police,” which has made national headlines and sparked fierce debates. It was originally offered as a solution to decrease police brutality and corruption, but some argue that decreasing funding to the police will only make these issues worse. Burns noticed that defenders of “defund the police” tended to be younger people who were attempting to develop a message for their movement. “There’s been a lot of conversation about whether or not that phrase was effective and my perspective was the gap on that was possibly generational and each generation gets to define their message and their movement,” Burns said. “What was so impressive about last summer after George Floyd was the multicultural nature of the people, the young adults, who came out into the street and I was impressed by how informed they were.”

Smith encouraged students watching the panel to not be afraid to speak up and share their perspectives. “To the students out there, no matter what background they are, if you are representing a minority in a room and your voice is a diverse voice in a room, speak up.” Smith said. “That is your job, to speak up and to be heard and to represent a different perspective.”
Dr. Cortni Borgerson enjoys working very closely with lemurs in Madagascar, such as this bamboo lemur.

Dr. Borgerson enjoys working very closely with lemurs in Madagascar, such as this bamboo lemur.

Montclair State Professor and National Geographic Explorer Shares Her Passion for Madagascar

Zoe Nolz
Staff Writer

Like many other professors, Dr. Cortni Borgerson, 36, an assistant professor of anthropology, enjoys traveling to campus and lecturing students on a subject about which she is passionate. But unlike most Montclair State University professors, Dr. Borgerson is also an anthropologist, conservation biologist and National Geographic explorer who has done fieldwork in Madagascar for over 15 years.

Borgerson shared that her love of the outdoors and interest in primates inspired her to go into anthropology.

“I wanted to be outdoors,” Borgerson said. “When you’re excited about animals, including primates and conservation and protection, anthropology is the perfect discipline to be in because you get to study the animal itself, the human behavior that actually is leading to the threat and status of the animal and then how to work with people to find solutions to that connection.”

In addition to being a professor, Borgerson is a National Geographic explorer and researches in Madagascar where she examines how hunting endangered species affects human health. She had tremendous enthusiasm in her voice as she talked about her experiences in Madagascar.

“I love it there. This is the 16th year that we’ve worked in Madagascar and I fell in love with it right away,” Borgerson said.

“So we lived there full time, up until I came here to Montclair two and a half years ago and now we spend half of the year there and it’s amazing.”

She explained most of her work takes place in the northeast part of Madagascar, which looks like a tropical rainforest, but the south looks more like a desert.

“The ecological diversity is huge, the biological diversity is huge and the people are fantastic; it’s a really wonderful welcoming place to work,” Dr. Borgerson said.

Borgerson has been working on the sakondry project, an insect indigenous to Madagascar, where she works to improve food security, as well as protect lemurs. She helps to supply this insect for people to eat in Madagascar instead of hunting lemurs.

“Hunting in Madagascar is driven primarily by food security,” Borgerson said. “So, when we were looking for different alternatives to the lemurs what kept coming up in our surveys all the time is this bug. They’re really good. It was definitely one of the first insects I’d ever eaten. But it

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truly does taste just like bacon.”

However, the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic has affected Madagascar and her work.

“I was in Madagascar last March when the borders closed,” Borgerson said. “We were in the rain forests and we had a 13-hour notice that we had to get out of the country, or we couldn’t get out. We had to hustle and we almost didn’t make it out.”

Borgerson explained that although she is grateful her team is still in Madagascar, it is hard for her to be away from there during a time like this. “Part of the fun of doing fieldwork is being there and talking to people, so I’m looking forward to going back,” Borgerson said. “But it’s not just how COVID-19 has interrupted our ability to do work there... it’s really affected the lives of the people that are there. Child mortality is very high in general, but right now, it’s even more so.”

While Madagascar is a huge part of Borgerson’s life and she is eager to get back, she received years of education to be able to do the work she does. She earned a B.A. from Case Western Reserve University, a Ph.D. from the University of Massachusetts and a postdoctoral fellowship from Harvard University. Borgerson enjoyed all of these learning experiences and the knowledge they brought her.

“I started at Case [Western Reserve University] in biological anthropology and evolutionary biology and then went to Massachusetts,” Borgerson said. “If you look at the majors, they shifted over to this public health perspective... the institutions themselves are fantastic. [At] Harvard I did something that we called ‘ghost docking.’ This is when you’re a postdoc but you’re not there. I lived in Madagascar the entire time... that was a really lovely opportunity to just move to Madagascar.”

As much as she loves being a researcher and explorer, Borgerson is passionate about teaching. “Where else can you geek out about something you really love for hours on end with a truly captive audience?” Borgerson said.

Not only is Borgerson a researcher, explorer and professor but she is also a mother and I could see the admiration in her eyes as she showed me pictures of her two children. “One is 10 and one is seven, and they both grew up in Madagascar,” Borgerson said.

She explained how her kids enjoy spending time in Madagascar. “They’ve got a foot in each world,” Borgerson said. “Kids there, they all play together across all ages... they can just go for five hours and collect seashells and find crabs and just be kids, swim in the river.”

Borgerson finds exploring Madagascar to be challenging yet extremely enjoyable and rewarding and she will always be passionate about the process.
Herbert Barr never considered opening his own brewery but now wants to stand as a role model for other people.

“I’m sure the first guy that remembers the day he got the keys to the building. Jones is head brewer and has been experimenting with beer flavors for over 10 years, which left Barr as the honorary taste tester. Hackensack Brewing Company prides itself in its wide range of beer styles like saisons, IPAs, fruity beers, beers with milk sugars and more.

One famous beer called “Parking Lot PILz” is a light and clean, easy-drinking beer with the perfect amount of foam and also my personal favorite. “The name is kind of a reference and ode to the tailgating culture we grew up with in this area,” Jones said. “We wanted to make a beer that you could crush in a parking lot before a game or a concert.”

Peace, love, beer. This is the message Hackensack Brewing Company wanted to share with their community. With a taproom decked out in string lights and local music memorabilia as well as offering several unique craft beer flavors, the intention was to simply bring people together and have a good time.

There are over 100 craft beer breweries in New Jersey and Hackensack Brewing Company sits as just one of three Black-owned breweries in the state. This alarming disparity in brewery ownership also translates across the country. According to a survey done by the Brewers Association, 88% of brewery owners in the U.S. are white while just 1% are Black.

Barr sometimes recalls a tense shift in the atmosphere when walking into other breweries with his race, background or sexual orientation. One of his goals was to make sure that everyone that walked through his front doors felt welcomed, no matter their race, background or sexual orientation.

“When you're an entrepreneur, one of the main things you need is access to capital,” Mann said. “They might not have a credit score, or they might have a lower credit score than their white counterparts.”

Besides low finances, marketing has also discouraged many people of color from entering the craft beer industry. In the late 1960s, many large beer companies began advertising to young white males while malt liquor targeted African American customers.

“With advertisers’ heavy emphasis on malt liquor, their higher alcohol content and cheaper prices, many people of color became attracted to popular brands like Colt 45, Country Club and Champale. Malt liquor companies even recruited celebrities like The Commodores and Snoop Dogg to sell their product.

“It was this aggressive marketing tactic that was done towards them and ignored all the offensive stereotyping they were doing,” Mann said.

As a longtime resident of Hackensack, Barr wanted Hackensack Brewing Company to become integrated with the community. Barr sometimes recalls a tense shift in the atmosphere when walking into other breweries and remembers an uncomfortable feeling. One of his goals was to make sure that everyone that walked through his front doors felt welcomed, no matter their race, background or sexual orientation.

“It’s a melting pot of everybody right now and I think when you look around our taproom, it represents the neighborhood,” Barr said.

Barr and Jones’ friendship started while living in the same apartment building. Jones is head brewer and has been experimenting with beer flavors for over 10 years, which left Barr as the honorary taste tester. Hackensack Brewing Company prides itself in its wide range of beer styles like saisons, IPAs, fruity beers, beers with milk sugars and more.

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Even in the most unsuspecting places like a craft beer taproom, underlying tones of racial discrimination are being revealed. But places like Bronx Brewery, which is a prominent voice known for its focus on diversity and equity in the industry, are starting to offer internships and apprenticeships to young people looking to get involved.

“We want to be role models for anybody out there that wants to start a brewery and anybody who thinks that I can’t do this,” Barr said. “All of this starts with just being out with your family and your friends and enjoying a beer.”

A hopeful road lies ahead and in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, Fresh Fest Beer Fest is an annual beer festival geared towards increasing diversity in the industry. Hackensack Brewing Company is proof that anything can be accomplished with a lifelong friendship, a dream and a passion for beer.
College students all over the country have tried to keep themselves busy during the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic, whether it be by picking up a new hobby, reading a new book or binging all the Marvel Cinematic Universe films. However, Montclair State University junior family science and human development major Alyssa Bussanich decided to start her own baking business to keep herself busy while following one of her passions.

Bussanich started baking at the age of 11 because she watched the show “Cake Boss” on TLC with her family all the time. She loved watching New Jersey’s own Buddy Valastro create his detailed cakes and wanted to make her favorite treats in the kitchen just like he did.

Despite being so young, Bussanich excelled in the kitchen. Her passion began when she successfully baked her first batch of chocolate chip cookies. Since starting with a basic cookie recipe, Bussanich now has 10 years of practice and experience in the kitchen which has allowed her to attempt and successfully master some very detailed and difficult desserts from America and beyond. This includes her take on the Montclair Bread Company classic, Nutella-stuffed donuts. Bussanich makes all her dough from scratch and fries them one at a time to ensure they are cooked to perfection.

“My proudest creation was when I successfully made the Croatian cookie Lozi,” Bussanich said. “I’m Croatian, so my grandma was able to help teach me how to make them the first time and I was so proud when I made them on my own.”

Bussanich first knew she had a talent for baking when her high school foods teacher constantly complimented her baked goods. Because of the support in her classes, she had the confidence to bake desserts for all her family functions since the age of 15. Since starting her baking journey, Bussanich has considered attending culinary school once she graduates from Montclair State, potentially in a different country.

Along with her professional-level cookies, she offers multilayer mega cakes, cake pops and donuts at special request. Her prices range from $20-$50, depending on the type of dessert and quantity one would like to order. All of her products are made to order and can be for any theme or color scheme.

Bussanich conducts all of her business through her Instagram account, @bakedbybuss, where more examples of her products and extraordinary talent can be seen. Due to the pandemic, Bussanich offers contact-free pickup for all of her orders to ensure customer safety. She hopes to continue the success of her business through the summer months ahead and has plans to launch specialty graduation products just in time for commencement.

Montclair State Student Follows Passion and Creates Baking Business

Samantha Bailey
Assistant Feature Editor

Alyssa Bussanich poses with some of her baked goods. Photo courtesy of Alyssa Bussanich

Montclair State Student Follows Passion and Creates Baking Business
EDITORIAL: No Spring In Our Step

In the weeks leading up to winter recess, the Montclair State University administration announced a revised academic calendar to inhibit the risk of a coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak on campus as residential students planned a return to their dormitories. An extension of winter break brought the beginning of the spring semester to the second week of February. Meanwhile, the end of the spring semester shifted to the last week of May and finally there was complete removal of the annual, week-long spring break.

Many other New Jersey universities decided to implement similar semester schedules. The idea of providing a single day off from coursework, known as a mental health day, became a popular possibility. The concept behind a mental health day is to provide students with the opportunity to use an open day to catch up on coursework, pick up an extra shift at their job or just to relax and decompress in the midst of yet another eerie semester.

Montclair State must have figured that wasn’t necessary. Following the sudden death of a Montclair State student on campus earlier this semester, the university community has been sent emails from the administration promoting mental well-being and resources through which to seek help. A survey was sent out to all university students as part of the Healthy Minds Study, a research campaign designed to gather data for dealing with mental health awareness and improvement.

Now, weeks later, as students continue on with their coursework and extracurricular activities, focus from the administration seems to have migrated elsewhere. It is understood that the academic calendar had already been set in place before the semester began. However, a sudden change similar to one implemented this time last year in response to the COVID-19 outbreak exemplifies the university’s ability to affect a change in schedule as slight as one day off.

Common misconceptions of remote schooling during the COVID-19 pandemic downplay the toll it takes on students and fail to take into account the complete loss of social interaction and other important qualities of college life once enjoyed by students.

Regardless of the setting of student coursework, it is still a full semester’s worth of coursework. Whether it is being done remotely, in a socially distanced classroom or a hybrid, the two, the vast majority of students are taking course loads upwards of 15 credits; the same amount they have been earning each semester up until now.

However, meeting up with friends to grab lunch in between classes or going out on a weekend night is not an option anymore and these outlets for unwinding and relieving stress are lost. A single day off to hit the reset button and do whatever you want is entirely doable and necessary. College years are supposed to be a time in one’s life to be enjoyed and to grow in. Sitting at home on a laptop all day does not accomplish that. Coursework is absolutely important, but there is more to the college experience.

The removal of spring break to curb the risk of a virus outbreak is completely understood, but we have now had three semesters taken away from us through no fault of our own. The least we deserve is a brief opportunity to get our minds right.

If we had a regular spring break, how would you have spent it?

By Joni Mae De Los Santos

“…If I had a spring break, I honestly would have really focused on my studies. I’m really trying to progress within my understanding of politics, so I would really focus on that.”

- Kevin Bernard
Political Science
Junior

“I’d probably want to go on vacation somewhere or even go home for the week.”

- Madison Trimino
Communication & Media Arts
Freshman

“I would have given myself a week off from school mentally because I’m drained right now. I would have gone home too as well.”

- Mackenzie Kangro
Elementary Education
Sophomore
Virtual Resentment and Returning to Schools

By Pitchers, Not Analytics Experts

The score is 5-4, bottom of the ninth, two outs, runners on second and third base, game seven of the World Series.

Here’s the payoff pitch. It’s a ground ball up the middle, the shortstop fields it, he throws, Out! Ballgame over! World Series over!

But here comes the manager and he’s challenging the call. The umpires huddle. The crew chief puts on a headset and talks with the umpire in the tech box. We all wait, watching the replay over and over, but it’s clear the throw beat him. What’s taking them so long? The headset is off, here they come. Safe?

One more run does it. Up steps the designated hitter, a 250-pound meathead who can swing a bat really hard and do nothing else on a baseball diamond. He’s played ball as a position player all season, but those awkward, lanky pitchers in the batter’s box are no good for ticket sales.

Here’s the first pitch, line drive into left field. The runner scores. World Series over. The home team wins. Good for them, I guess.

What was once a sport driven by romance and democracy has been overtaken by analytics and a thirst for dollar signs. All of the rule changes implemented to “improve” the game of baseball only include improvements of financial revenue, not what needs improvement the most.

The issue of fan engagement and out-fielder limits him to playing first base.

Perfect Games Are Made

The Montclarion • May 6, 2021 • PAGE 11

Virtual Resentment and Returning to Schools

By Pitchers, Not Analytics Experts

Your strong, stocky player may hit you 30 home runs in a season, but his poor defense limits him to playing first base.

A pitcher who can throw triple dig- its, change speeds and work both sides of the plate might get you two hits all season, but his advancing the runner with a well placed bunt gives your lead- off hitter a chance to knock him in.

A pitcher who can overcome a missed call by an umpire, or an offense that can rally after one, is what makes a great team. These are all fair and possible in baseball.

That purity is why we watch. Your team has to get a player from home plate all the way around the bases more times than the other team: your nine players against their nine players. You either score more runs than the other team, or you do not.

In a world where deeply intricate complexities render our minds angry and tired, an easily digestible ballgame helps us unwind.

Baseball is a simple game, but all of the changes forced upon us are making it anything but.

Brooke Alvine, a senior communication & media arts major is in her second year as opinion editor for The Montclarion.

Designated hitters will most likely take over National League lineups come next season in order to produce more extra-base hits and avoid subjecting fans to watching so-called unathletic pitchers swing the bat.

If a fan’s attention span is so short that they are unable to watch and enjoy a game from first inning to last, their interest broken with a sacrifice bunt, a lack of home runs or uncertainty of time consumption, then baseball is not for them.

Baseball will never be perfect, but MLB marketing experts and analytics experts must realize there remains value in imperfection.

Brooke Alvine, a senior history major is in her first year as co-chief copy editor for The Montclarion.

As my re- maining time at Montclair State University is slowly dwindling down to weeks and days, it has served as a time for reflection on my entire aca- demic experience but especially on my time as a student teacher this past year. I expressed my concern for teaching in-person due to the coronavirus (CO- VID-19) pandemic back in late August before the beginning of my teaching ex- perience.

I can firmly say with all I have seen in my own time student teaching and talking with other student teachers, my opinion on virtual schooling with the current state of COVID-19 has shifted entirely.

I believe at the time of my last artic- le on this topic it was a serious dan- ger to be teaching in person. Now, with May fast approaching and vaccinations rapidly increasing, our teachers and students desperately need to return to schools in person.

The Center of Pedagogy at Montclair State University has taught me many things in my 2 ½ years within the teacher education program, but one of the most important lessons I have learned is as teachers, our central focus is to serve our stu- dents. They are our main priority in all cases no matter what.

I have seen my own students and those around me suffer severely, both emotionally and socially, from over a year of virtual schooling. While it was meant to keep both students and teach- ers safe, online learning simply cannot continue without permanently hurting the development of our students and their invaluable education.

I have witnessed this damage first- hand with students in my class who have seen the same people on screen day after day, but still do not know each other's names or truly feel connected to their classmates. As a teacher, I have strived to form those bonds with my students. It hurts me to see them so isolated from their own peers, some of whom could have ended up being great friends under the circumstances of a normal school year.

I talk with my students regularly about their weekends or what they want to share with the class about their lives. When some speak about their sports tournaments or trips with family and friends, it makes me wonder why we are virtual at all anymore. If our students can be safe in other public spheres, why can our schools not actively work to en- sure their safety without compromising their physical and mental well-being?

There are many who still have con- cerns regarding COVID-19, which I completely understand. I contracted COVID-19 back in February and al- though I was fairly sick for a couple of days, fortunately, I recovered. Liv- ing in fear of the unknown is one thing and last year we were all living in the unknown. But now, with hard data and facts showing the recovery rate of this illness for people of all ages and larger numbers of people getting vaccinated, we do not have to live, teach and learn in that same fear.

While I can’t go back and change my virtual student teaching experience, I can use it as a tool to work with. I strive to make up for lost time within my physical classroom next year. Teach- ers in the same position as me are yearning for the next school year, where we can see our students in the hallways and truly be the in-person educators we always dreamed of and have studied hard to become.

I may never get to see my current students in person or share this expe- rience with them physically, but they have taught me more than they will ever know. I am grateful for the experience I did have and feel prepared to have a classroom of my own, but there will al- ways be a part of me that resents what could have been, or should have been made possible.

Our students are struggling. If we do not get them back in the classroom, their lacking interest might become one that shapes their entire adolescence and not just a single year of college, like mine.

Brooke Alvine, a senior history major is in her first year as co-chief copy editor for The Montclarion.

Perfect Games Are Made

By Pitchers, Not Analytics Experts

Your strong, stocky player may hit you 30 home runs in a season, but his poor defense limits him to playing first base.

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Baseball will never be perfect, but MLB marketing experts and analytics experts must realize there remains value in imperfection.

Brooke Alvine, a senior history major is in her first year as co-chief copy editor for The Montclarion.
Thumbs Up

Montclair State University women’s soccer team wins NJAC Championship

COVID-19 vaccines begin distribution on Montclair State campus

Food&Wine.com names New Jersey best pizza state in U.S.

Thumbs Down

Montclair State University men’s soccer loses in NJAC final to Ramapo College

Hester Ford, oldest woman in U.S., dies at age 115 (or 116)

Gun violence continues to ravage U.S. with shootings in Indianapolis, Long Island and beyond
Have a thought about on campus or off campus matters?
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Campus Activities
‘The United States vs. Billie Holiday’ Shows A Different Side of the ‘Strange Fruit’ Singer

Mya Whyte
Contributing Writer

“The United States vs. Billie Holiday” premiered on Hulu on March 18. The Hulu original film depicts legendary musician, Billie Holiday, throughout her musical career and personal life.

This biopic mainly focuses on Holiday’s ongoing battle with the government over her iconic song “Strange Fruit.” It stars Andra Day as Holiday, who is nominated for best actress at the Academy Awards for her role as Billie Holiday.

“The United States vs. Billie Holiday” has become one of the most highly-acclaimed movies of the year for its grim, yet accurate portrayal of reality for Black people, especially in the 1940s.

Director Lee Daniels emphasizes the discrimination towards the Black musician on and offstage. This is shown through her husband and manager’s attempts to hinder her continuous speech regarding lynching as well as her being denied access to an all-white hotel, despite her level of fame.

This film is a message to society that Black people have suffered from racism in such a dramatic yet powerful way. It left me comparing the parallels between Holiday’s experience and the racial issues that are still present today, which the increasing importance of the Black Lives Matter movement has highlighted.

Though the film centers around her experiences with racism, it finds the perfect balance between that and other aspects of her life to show that she is much more than a musical activist who puts her life on the line for the sake of human rights.

Holiday’s emotions are not shown through her words but rather with her actions. The film strongly dissects the relationship between her emotions and drug addiction. She does not express anything besides anger, leaving her to cling to heroin as not only a way to cope with the pressures of her life, but as a gateway to convey her emotions towards her entourage. She also uses the drug as a way to be intimate with her love interest Jimmy Fletcher, played by Trevante Rhodes.

Viewers see that without heroin, the singer is in shambles while everyone around her watches.

Day embodies the role of Holiday and she emulates the icon’s soothing tone along with her lively mannerisms when performing. This makes viewers watching at home feel the same sweep of emotions the audience in the film feels when she is onstage. For someone acting in her first major role, Day brilliantly captures the persona of the singer and gives an honest depiction of an artist grappling with pressure but determined to make a difference in the world.

She gives her all when imitating the emptiness Holiday possessed while in distress, yet somehow manages to still be the heart and soul that inspires Black people to rally behind her in support. The film lets Holiday’s singing speak for her emotions, whether she is hiding her sadness to put on a good show or her anger when she performs the song “Strange Fruit.” Seeing her perform as the late singer is truly the best part of the film.

Daniels uses captivating warm and vibrant colors to light up each scene, bringing out the essence of the 40s for Black people. He colorfully represents the glamorous yet lively nightlife at jazz clubs and brightens up the scenes when Holiday performs. He successful captures how dazzling she is in her expensive dresses and signature updo hairstyles.

“The United States vs. Billie Holiday” overall does an incredible job presenting Holiday’s story but fails in telling her past throughout the remainder of the film. It only allows one moment from her past to be shared as the writing focuses too much on the present and not enough on exploring her childhood. They could have elaborated more on her life prior to fame.

Although the film missed telling the beginning of Holiday’s life, viewers will still remember the many ups and downs the singer faced throughout her life beyond her song “Strange Fruit.” They will also be reminded of the injustices Black people have endured throughout history and continue to endure today.
‘Godzilla vs. Kong’ is the Legendary Monster Brawl We’ve Been Waiting For

Alex Centeno
Staff Writer

“Godzilla vs. Kong” is available on HBO Max.

Warner Bros. Pictures released the epic monster clash that lives up to its heavy-weight hype, showing us what a king is to a god.

The fourth film in the MonsterVerse franchise, “Godzilla vs. Kong” is a sequel to “Kong: Skull Island” and “Godzilla: King of the Monsters.” It serves as the perfect love letter to fans of Kaiju (monsters), mecha (robots) and anime.

Although I’m not a traditional fan of Godzilla or King Kong, I am well aware this work pays good homage to the classic films, and the focus on both Godzilla and Kong is greatly appreciated. The rivalry between them is straightforward, which is how a monster feud should be.

My only gripe with this film is that it doesn’t recap what happened in its prequels as it should have. Some of the references regarding the lore within the MonsterVerse might be confusing. It’s basically mandatory to watch the other films in order to understand the events happening in “Godzilla vs. Kong.”

This film is meant to provoke minimal thinking, as a villain’s nefarious plan is introduced and then immediately thrown away when action is shown. It surprisingly made the entire movie enjoyable when it became evident that these choices were intentional. What’s intriguing and may be taken for granted is though the writing might seem sloppy, director Adam Wingard compensates by showing a fantastic, action-packed brawl while subtly incorporating story arcs through the monsters rather than the human characters.

Based on how these story arcs are displayed, the film feels like an intriguing sequel for both Kong and Godzilla. Godzilla is on a rampage to be the only alpha while also learning how to be friends with other monsters, especially the ones that won’t bend a knee, such as Kong who yields to nobody. Meanwhile, Kong is shown to have a good relationship with humans as he looks for a new home.

I appreciate how Kong is presented to have a more heroic role. Godzilla has a much bigger media history, while Kong has previously been shown doing the same thing over and over again such as climbing the Empire State Building. Seeing Kong with a more original role is an improvement.

The human characters are interesting to watch. However, there are some that lack the intrigue factor. For example, Josh Valentine, portrayed by Julian Dennison, is very obnoxious.

The better characters, such as Madison Russell, played by Millie Bobby Brown, and Nathan Lind, played by Alexander Skarsgård, have roles in which they develop connections with the monsters.

The cinematography that displays Kong and Godzilla is well done. Most monster movies from the 20th century were good, but the motion picture wasn’t real enough to display giant monsters. They all looked like walking action figures the size of buildings, especially Mechagodzilla.

Something I had an incredibly tough time imagining was how Mechagodzilla, the antagonist, would be incorporated into a live-action film. A monster that is the machine version of Godzilla sounds silly, but this movie makes it work.

This crossover film is a much better adaptation than the original 1962 “King Kong vs. Godzilla,” which lacks the proper fundamentals of both characters, such as the size difference from their own respective films.

One of the best things about the film, without giving away spoilers, is that there is a definitive winner in the end. It doesn’t end with a tie like most monster films have.

Overall, “Godzilla vs. Kong” is a fun movie to watch two legendary monsters fight. It is available on HBO Max, but this is definitely a film worth watching in theaters.

Photo courtesy of Warner Bros. Pictures

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Top Picks to Stream

Best of April Edition

‘Moxie’ on Netflix

Director, actress and producer Amy Poehler brought a heartfelt comedy to life last month. “Moxie” tells the story of a 16-year-old girl named Vivian, played by Hadley Robinson, who is inspired by her feminist mother Lisa, played by Amy Poehler, to start a girl revolution in her high school by starting Moxie, a zine that shreds the sexist environment within her school that no one seems to speak up about. Throughout the film, Vivian and her friends teach very important lessons.

One must watch the film if they truly crave the act of justice being served. During the near two hours, viewers go through many emotions that will inspire their own feminist revolution to fight against the patriarchy. “Moxie” is a must-watch film and is currently available to stream on Netflix. Check out the full review on The Montclarion’s website.

- Anandaji Cruz Rosario
Staff Writer

‘Tread’ on Netflix

Even if you’re not a fan of documentaries, “Tread” is too bizarre and harrowing to be overlooked. “Tread” documents one man’s quiet unraveling and thunderous revenge on a small mountain town, where neighbors seem to be close only in terms of proximity to each other’s yards.

Full of contradicting accounts, intrigue and a slow build to an incredible catharsis, “Tread” is a far cry from other true crime streaming offerings in the best possible way. You will find yourself watching it twice: once for the action and again for the nuanced commentary it offers, all the while cursing the menacing sounds of people who lived through the story. If you’re looking for a truly unique movie in the realm of truth that is stranger than fiction, “Tread” is available to stream on Netflix. Check out the full review on The Montclarion’s website.

- Maddye Belov-Boxer
Assistant Opinion Editor

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Photo courtesy of Netflix

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Photo courtesy of Warner Bros. Pictures
Montclair State Department of Theatre and Dance Hosts Virtual Festival of Fall 2020 Performances

While the experience was different, James comments on Montclair State for allowing it to happen, despite there being no live audience.

“Someday in the future, when the pandemic is long behind us and someone asks them what they did during it and how they coped, they will all have quite a story to tell and how their time at Montclair State was instrumental in making it happen,” James said. “Nothing will ever alter that amazing personal experience.”

Other featured productions, such as “We Are Proud...” directed by Debbie Saivetz, an associate professor of theatre and dance, were filmed completely on Zoom. The show follows a group of actors struggling to tell a complex and difficult story regarding the first genocide of the 20th century.

“As an ensemble of theater makers, we had to tell this story in a medium different than that for which it was intended,” Saivetz said. “All aspects of production had to be changed to suit the Zoom medium and to tell the story in a two-dimensional space that’s neither theater nor film.”

Jocelyn Creekmur, a senior theatre studies major and cast member of “We Are Proud...” discussed the difficulties of needing to take up more roles than simply being an actress when it came to putting on a Zoom production.

“Having to act and play as a lighting designer, sound and set designer, making sure my lighting was perfect, being heard and making sure I had all of the right backgrounds for each scene was quite the task,” Creekmur said. “Although it was a challenge for me and the cast, the production team held our hands through every step and through every rehearsal. It was very helpful and less overwhelming to have someone on screen helping me put up a green screen or hanging up extra lights in my space.”

Nayale Quimis, a senior acting major, starred in “An Enemy of the People” as Hovstad. The show was also featured in the virtual festival.

“When the world is still healing from a pandemic, being able to work on a play either way was super helpful in my own personal healing as a person and artist,” Quimis said. “We all wish we could act in person again, but it was a wonderful experience to be able to work on a project that I love, using a format that will keep people socially distant and safe.”

As for the future of these types of online performances, plans are already moving forward for the next season.

Maxine Steinman, an associate professor of theatre and dance, who created two pieces for Fall Dance 2020—“A Measure of Quarantine,” which was inspired by the current pandemic, and “Masquerade Madness,” which revolved around the idea of a masked ball—believes the virtual format will continue.

“Our live performance is the goal and there is really nothing like the sensation you get when seeing [a] performance live onstage, but I feel that dance film is what is happening now and it will continue alongside of live performance,” Steinman said. “I also feel that digital media will be a huge part of live performances in the future.”

Peter Flynn, an associate professor of musical theatre and director of “Working,” gives credit to the students, who pushed through the challenges to create an excellent production.

“Each and every student artist involved is a rock star, seriously,” Flynn said. “Their determination, passion, dedication, talent and enthusiasm made this show possible.”

More information on how to stream the final shows can be found on the Peak Performances website.
José Rodriguez on the set of “Major Problems.”

Dillon Hoffman | The Montclarion

Student Artist Profile: José Rodriguez

José Rodriguez (left) and Andreas Loizou (right) act in “Major Problems.”

Photo courtesy of Mike Sano

As an asthmatic, Rodriguez has faced challenges similar to those described by Andreas Loizou, who also acts in “Major Problems.” Loizou described the experience of working with Rodriguez, saying, “José Rodríguez is one of the most engaging people on set. He has a great energy and is always willing to help others.”

Rodriguez has had to adapt to these challenges by taking certain precautions, such as using an oxygen tank. Despite this, he remains positive and is always looking for ways to improve and learn. His determination to succeed is evident in his work as a performer and writer, and his commitment to making his own opportunities whenever they arise.

This can-do attitude is what sets Rodriguez apart from others in the industry. He is driven by his love for performing and media arts, and is always looking for new challenges to push himself. His work in “Major Problems” and other projects is a testament to his talent and dedication. With a positive mindset and a never-give-up attitude, Rodriguez is bound to succeed in his career in the entertainment industry.
Brockhampton Keeps the Ball Rolling with ‘Roadrunner: New Light, New Machine’

Thomas Neira
Editor-In-Chief

Brockhampton has returned with their latest studio album, “Roadrunner: New Light, New Machine,” which features some of the collective’s most seamless and mature work to date, all while maintaining the creative and experimental spirit that earned them a following in the first place.

I’ve reviewed the last two Brockhampton albums for The Montclarion, “Iridescence” in 2018 and “Ginger” in 2019, so it seemed fitting that I review the band’s last project to be released during my time at Montclair State University as this is my final semester.

Brockhampton begins this album with the track “Buzzcut,” a fast-paced and electrifying hanger. This album opener is reminiscent of other attention-grabbing opening tracks, like “Boogie” on “Saturation III” or “New Orleans” on “Iridescence.”

Group leader Kevin Abstract takes the vocal reins on this one, beginning his rap verse with an immediate infectious energy that is impossible to ignore. “Who let the dope boys out,” Abstract shouts. “Thank God you let me crash on your couch.”

The second verse is taken by rapper Danny Brown, one of the numerous featured artists included on the album. Brockhampton isn’t known for including many featured artists on their projects, but that has seemingly changed on this record.

Some other prominent features include rappers ASAP Ferg and ASAP Rocky on the track “Bankroll,” a song with haunting backup vocals and a guitar plucking instrumental. Ferg steals the show here, delivering a rapid first verse that sets up the tone for the rest of the track. “Count On Me” essentially is to “Roadrunner” what the track “Bleach” is to Brockhampton’s third album “Saturation III.” It contains numerous uncredited features, such as a short, solid opening verse from ASAP Rocky.

A deep-voiced delivery in the second verse by SoGone SoFleXy and a third and final houncy rap verse from Brockhampton member Matt Champion. But the song’s most prominent similarity to “Bleach” is the upbeat, poppy chorus, made up of a harmony between Brockhampton member Jabari Manwa, Ryan Beatty and pop star Shawn Mendes. Mendes has long been connected to Brockhampton after being referenced by Abstract in the 2017 track “Star” so a collaboration between the two has been a long time coming but still unexpected nonetheless.

The best song on the album is “Windows,” which is also the longest track at just over six minutes. This is the only song on the album to contain contributions from all six main Brockhampton vocalists: Abstract, Champion, Dom McLennon, Merlyn Wood, Joba and Bearface. The track also features SoGone SoFleXy on the opening verse and producer-turned-vocalist Manwa on the chorus yet again.

The end result is an album highlight reminiscent of a classic Brockhampton “Saturation” trilogy track, giving each member the opportunity to showcase their vocal and lyrical abilities. The long run time might turn casual listeners away, but I promise you are going to want to stick around to the end to hear Bearface’s finest rap verse to date.

The album also benefits from creative production sprinkled throughout the project. The tracks “The Light” and “What’s the Occasion?” are the group’s attempts at paying tribute to their rock influences, featuring rap verses played over heavy electric guitar instrumentation. The song “Chain On” featuring JPEGMAFia benefits from a simplistic bouncy, electronic, bubbly beat that supports JPEGMAFia’s and McLennon’s lyric-heavy verses.

The song “Dear Lord” is an interesting one for the band, as the two-minute track is mostly made up of a chorus of voices, led by Bearface, harmonizing and pleading to God to help out someone they know in need. The song is done mostly a cappella, made up of voices and snaps until the final thirty seconds, when the choir is joined by a gentle keyboard. This track is most different from the rest on the album, creating a euphoric listening experience that truly presents Bearface’s talents.

A gripe I have with “Roadrunner” is that we don’t hear enough of all the members. While there is plenty of Joba and Abstract on the album and the features are some of the highlights on the project, it comes at the expense of limited time for the other equally talented Brockhampton vocalists.

McLennon is arguably the best lyricist in the band, Wood has a fun, infectious energy that notably rubs off on the other members, Champion’s contributions have been responsible for some of Brockhampton’s most recognizable tracks and Bearface’s R&B-like vocals and emotional songwriting make him to Brockhampton what Frank Ocean was to Odd Future. While we didn’t get enough of the rest of the members, their roles here are still memorable enough to let this issue slide.

Abstract said on Twitter that there will be one more Brockhampton project releasing this year, which will be the group’s last. As a longtime fan, I hope this isn’t the case as this project may be their strongest since the “Saturation” trilogy.

But if it does turn out to be true, the maturity and development each member has shown since the band’s break through four years ago proves they will do just fine whenever they go in their own directions. I, for one, will be looking forward to listening to each of their solo records in the future.
"In America, the President reigns for four years, but Journalism governs forever." – Oscar Wilde

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Women’s Basketball Has Season To Remember

Despite NJAC title game defeat, the team has plenty to be proud of.

The Red Hawks quest for a New Jersey Athletic Conference (NJAC) Championship was put to an end on April 3 as they suffered a 64-60 loss to New Jersey City University in the title game. Montclair State finished the season 8-2 and 6-0 in conference play. They have now lost back-to-back conference championships and have not won the NJAC since the 2017-18 season. Despite losing the big game, the Red Hawks can still look back on their season and see many positives.

Outside of the first and last games, the Red Hawks looked unbeatable. The team was top-ppled over by Salisbury University in their home opener as they lost by 25 points. Senior guard Taylor Brown recalls that first game at home. “The feeling we had after being beaten on our home court right off the bat [made us] angry and hungry to want to do better and beat every team we came in contact with,” Brown said.

Brown was one of the key players to the Red Hawks’ success this season. She led the Red Hawks in scoring, rebounding and blocks per game. For her spectacular season, Brown was named NJAC Player of the Year and was selected to the All-NJAC First Team. “I can’t even explain the feeling I get when I think about it, it’s such an honor,” Brown said. “I think that the dedication that my teammates and coaches gave up for us to play was incredible and I owe it all to them.”

Joining Brown in NJAC honors is freshman guard Kendall Hodges, who was named second-team all-conference. She led the team in assists and steals per game.

In a year full of uncertainty, the Red Hawks showed off their determination and passion for the game they all love. To get beat the way they did in their first game and then turn around and not lose again until the championship demonstrates Montclair State basketball’s heart and soul.

The Red Hawks were forced to quarantine three different times throughout the season. Some players even thought the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic restrictions might have helped the team in the grand scheme of things.

Sophomore guard and former NJAC Rookie of the Year Nickie Carter thought the team has grown closer than ever. “Regardless of what happened, I have learned a lot this season. And since we had to spend so much time together because we couldn’t really see anyone else, our relationships improved a lot,” Carter said. “The players and coaches were able to create bonds that will last a lifetime and it played a huge factor in the Red Hawks success this season.”

Montclair State had a total of five players who averaged at least eight points per game, which led to them to rank second in the conference in scoring. The Red Hawks prided themselves on the defensive end and it showed. They ranked first in defense by only allowing 54 points per game.

In the first round of the NJAC tournament, the Red Hawks defeated Rutgers-Camden by a score of 101-37. It was a historic night for them, as the team scored its most points ever in an NJAC tournament game and also hit 14 three-pointers, second most in the program’s history.

The Red Hawks have had a season to remember, especially with it being one of the most chaotic ones in program history. The adversity and amount of difficulties that they faced was unlike any other year.

Although their championship aspirations were crushed in devastating fashion, the Red Hawks should be proud of the season they had during a global pandemic. This team is going to be even hungrier next year as they look to reclaim the NJAC title.
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Reality Strikes Red Hawks Men’s Basketball: What Happened and What’s Next

A recap of the men’s basketball team’s 2021 season

The Montclair State University men’s basketball team was eager to face New Jersey City University (NJCU) in the New Jersey Athletic Conference (NJAC) semifinals after losing two straight games to them to end the regular season at 5-3.

After preparing and practicing for the game, the worst of news came in the day before; someone on the team tested positive for coronavirus (COVID-19).

Due to privacy, the extent of this event cannot be revealed, but the damage has been done.

COVID-19 tests were done to all players and staff in the days before this game and everyone tested negative for the virus. But Thursday morning, a member within the organization came back positive, and reality set in for the men’s basketball squad.

“We got the guys together on Zoom and express to them the situation,” head coach Justin Potts said. “This group has responded to every situation all year, they handled this the right way and it was unfortunate but it was also something we knew going into the season that could have happened at any moment.”

With the COVID-19 pandemic still going strong over a year later, one of the most heartbreaking ways to upturn any sports season is someone being affected by the virus, whether it leads to game postponements, cancellations or in this case the end of the road in the playoffs. However, this situation did not bring Potts down, as he knows how unpredictable the virus can be.

“It’s the way the virus operates,” Potts said. “I know it was a disheartening situation for the guys, but the positive was we got through 68 practices and six games, and these guys got a chance to grow together and be around each other. We’re much better off than the alternative of not doing anything this season.”

These days, it can be hard at times to get that positive mindset going, but for Potts and his team, that is all they were doing. They analyzed the weaknesses throughout the season, worked on them and embraced the strengths which led them to a most successful season within the pandemic.

Red Hawks junior guard Myles Mitchell-White discussed how the players were able to thrive in a season defined by the pandemic.

“It was definitely a unique challenge to bring a certain level of energy and to adapt to the new environment that we were all forced to play in,” Mitchell-White said. “To see everybody having to form their own energy and learn to grow through adversity was definitely different.”

Red Hawks sophomore guard Keyon Pryce missed having a normal environment where there are always fans in the stands cheering on the Red Hawks.

“Not seeing your family or friends in the crowd and keeping a high motor is really difficult. Everybody accepted that challenge and it was something that kept us moving forward.”

As for the future, the Red Hawks will return most of their experienced players including Mitchell-White, Pryce and junior forward Steve Breeman. However, their young players have developed nicely thus far, includng freshman guard Amir Williams. Williams won multiple NJAC Rookie of the Week honors and scored a career-high 17 points against Kean University in a game on Feb. 12.

“I knew he had a chance to help us as a freshman, but he exceeded my expectations from what I thought at the start of the season,” Potts said. “He has a good understanding of the game, and he really created a niche for where he can fit in. He had a lot of success his first year, but the question is if he’s okay with that or if he wants more.”

The culmination of this season brings the end of a journey for five seniors on the team: Irving Callender IV, Tim Algerian, Malachi Smythe, Joseph Radi and Peter Obertan Jr. All five of the seniors have accomplished so much on and off the court over their four years on the team and Potts knows they will take that with them into their careers.

“The best thing I can say about them is that I am proud of the young men they have become today,” Potts said. “They’re responsible, committed, supportive and hard-working. And there is way more success in front of them than there is behind them. They will always be members of our family and a quick phone call away.”

Sophomore guard Keyon Pryce shoots a three-pointer in a Feb. 5 contest against William Paterson. Photo courtesy of Julia Radley

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Sophomore guard Keyon Pryce shoots a three-pointer in a Feb. 5 contest against William Paterson. Photo courtesy of Julia Radley

The Red Hawks huddle up around head coach Justin Potts during their Feb. 27 contest against NJCU. Photo courtesy of Julia Radley

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Women’s Soccer Sits Ontop of NJAC After Dominant Year

Red Hawks win their first NJAC Championship since 2014

It took a shot from deep outside the box from sophomore midfielder Chisom Onyewuenyi in order for the Montclair State University women’s soccer team to win their first New Jersey Athletic Conference (NJAC) championship since 2014. Head coach Patrick Naughter and his team achieved this feat while having a stellar 5-0-2 record.

This championship came after a 1-0 win over the Rutgers-Camden Raptors at RU-Camden Community Park. The top-seeded Scarlet Raptors came into the game sitting at 5-0-1. The only team they had not beaten was the Red Hawks, as that game ended in a 0-0 tie earlier this season.

The lone goal in their 200 minutes of season play against one another was the game-winner by Onyewuenyi. Both of these teams have matched up all year long, and this game was no different.

In the end, it was a team not built around one player, but a whole team effort in the Red Hawks who took home the championship. Senior captain and defender Catherine Carnevale won her first NJAC championship in her four years of being a Red Hawk. She knew this team was bound for greatness.

“I feel like on and off the field everyone has a role and they know that which I think makes us one of the best teams,” Carnevale said. “This year we are so close and I think that’s what makes a good team on the field, we are playing for each other.”

The team needed to be on the same page more than ever this season, which showed how the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic affected everything. The team started practicing in the fall not knowing when they would play. Naughter knew the difficulties and knew how special of a group this year was.

Knowing so many other schools around the country were missing out on competing, the Red Hawks took full advantage of the opportunity, exceeding all expectations. All year long this team was above the rest, whether it be each individual game or overall in the NJAC.

They won every game in terms of shots, getting a total of 115 and only allowing 35 from their opponents. Both statistics lead the conference in their respective categories. This included a great play from freshman midfielder Aileen Cahill, who was named NJAC Rookie of the Week twice this season.

The Red Hawks also went on to sweep all NJAC team honors. Cahill secured the Rookie of the Year and finished on the all NJAC second team. Senior Phoebe Bledsoe won Goalie of the Year. Carnevale won Midfielder of the Year, sophomore forward Sofia Ambrosio won Offensive Player of the Year and junior defender Lexington Ambrosio won Defensive Player of the Year.

Junior defender Laura Noseworthy and senior midfielder and captain Emily Degeyter. Closing out the awards was Naughter, who won his back-to-back NJAC Coach of the Year and his fourth all-time.

These awards only signify the type of leaders that are on this team, with both captains earning first-team honors and Bledsoe being named Goalie of the Year. As a leader, Bledsoe knew exactly how to motivate one another to play for each other.

“I’m playing for every single one of you on this field, on the bench, in this program. This is for us,” Bledsoe said to her teammates in the huddle right before the second half of the championship game.

By winning the NJAC championship season, it marks the program’s fourth conference championship in school history. As for Naughter, this is his third title in 11 seasons at Montclair State.

“It feels awesome to win it, this group has been great the entire year,” Naughter said. “There were a lot of [starting and stopping of play]. We didn’t know when we would play. I couldn’t have asked for more from these kids. They are resilient.”

With the extra year of eligibility, a couple of faces from this year’s team will return. Carnevale will be using her extra year of eligibility and senior goalkeeper Nicole Carbone will be coming back as a coach in the fall. Naughter could not be more proud as he always spoke highly of Carbone on and off the field.

“She’s hired,” Naughter said in response to Carbone wanting to become a coach in the fall. “People don’t realize she is one of the most important people to ever be in this program.”

This team will hopefully return in the fall barring any setback with the COVID-19 pandemic still looming. The quick turnaround does offer little time for off-season training, with the fall season only 4.5 months away. However, with so many players returning next season, the future is looking bright for the women’s soccer team.
#FocusRacialJustice: The Power of Platforms According To Women’s Soccer

Red Hawks’ Kylinn Kraemer and Imani Thompson are using their platforms to change the world.

Kylinn Kraemer is cheered on by her teammates prior to the start of a home game.

Photo courtesy of Kylinn Kraemer

On the field, they are star athletes, but off the field they are leaders making a difference. Senior midfielder Imani Thompson and junior defender Kylinn Kraemer are two student-athletes from Montclair State University’s women’s soccer team who know how to utilize their platforms to the fullest and elevate the voices of others to support minorities.

Graeham Goetrell, the assistant coach of the team, has been a staunch supporter of his athletes taking a stand against racial injustice.

“In a time where everybody has a platform and audience, it’s easy to say words today and forget them in a few days, weeks or months,” Goetrell said. “Kylinn and Imani have both been unrelishing, both in their words and more importantly their actions, to use the opportunities they have to speak for other people not as fortunate.”

Goetrell continued to express more thoughts about the young athletes and their advocacy.

“Without any regard for what others may think of them, they have a firm conviction in their hearts on what is right and what needs to be done to expose racial injustices and provide solutions,” Goetrell said.

Thompson was recently selected as one of two student-athletes for the New Jersey Athletic Conference Diversity and Inclusion Committee. She attends panels every month to discuss ways to create a more diverse and inclusive conference along with planning fundraisers. She also hosts diversity and inclusion training for coaches and administration so they are more mindful about what is said and done in athletics.

As an aspiring physical therapist, her goal is to serve underprivileged communities and make physical therapy more accessible to people in inner cities who lack the resources for care.

Thompson’s favorite athlete, Muhammad Ali, is one of the greatest examples of athletes who used their platform to help minorities and stood for what they believed in. She also admires how Ali used his platform to make a difference and wants to do the same to better not just herself, but the world.

Thompson’s family has been a part of the civil rights movement for generations, all actively trying to make a difference. Her mother grew up in Mississippi, where she was discriminated against and faced the effects of segregation; even being hosed down during the Rodney King riots.

As a person of color with a family history of slavery and racial discrimination, Thompson feels as though it is her responsibility to try and change the world. Her family has been a model of overcoming adversity, being successful despite setbacks and unsparingly giving to others.

“Coming from a family very involved in the social justice movement, this past year with everything happening, I felt like it was me and Timmy’s turn to get involved,” Thompson said.

Thompson and her brother, Timmy, put together a Black Lives Matter march in their hometown of Wayne, New Jersey, this past summer. Thous- ands of people marched and gave speeches about racial injustices.

Wayne, New Jersey, being a predominantly white town, took a strict approach to the protests. Businesses boarded up their buildings, military trucks were deployed and countless police officers patrolled the area. Despite the resistance, Thompson felt it was powerful. She was especially proud of being able to change the minds of some conservative people, who now understand the purpose behind the movement.

Meanwhile, Kraemer attended a Black Lives Matter march in Waterbury, Vermont. It was a peaceful protest, with a lack of police officers and no disruptions. Vermont tends to be seen as a white state, but the march proved to be diverse. One point that stuck with Kraemer was a speaker telling everyone to stop saying only white people live in Vermont, as it minimizes the issues the residing minorities are facing.

Kraemer is president of the Petey Greene program at Montclair State, which supports the academic goals of incarcerated and formerly incarcerated individuals through high-quality volunteer tutoring programs while educating volunteers on the injustices that manifest in our carceral system.

Being part of this program since 2018, she cultivated many new passions through her experiences.

“I have been opened up to a world way beyond my own,” Kraemer said.

In November and December, she led the soccer team to fundraise PPE, prepaid gift cards, winter gear and more for citizens exiting prison.

Kraemer dreams of becoming a forensic clinical psychologist and continuing to reform the criminal justice system. She has learned how to better center the voices of those who are impacted directly by these oppressive institutions as she sees how other people are impacted by the injustices that manifest in every aspect of life. She uses her platform to bring awareness to inequalities and continuously fights for change.

As Kraemer points out, as a white person with privilege, it is more important than ever to center the voices of those who are directly impacted and help bring their perspective to light instead of speaking for them or ignoring the issues entirely.

Both teammates believe soccer has played a part in fueling their passion for social justice. Thompson believes the sport structures how you are as an individual and contributes to life characteristics including the ability to push through anything.

Kraemer believes being part of a team and working closely with other individuals makes you more empathetic as a person, as you see what they go through. Everything they do in soccer translates into real-life experiences.

According to Goetrell, they have had an impact not only on the people they have served but on their team as well.

“I find myself in awe that I get to help strong young women like this on a day-to-day basis, and their example spurs me on to not just accept instances in the world as the norm but actively work to change them for the next generations,” Goetrell said. “Words can’t describe how proud I am of them and the impact they’ve had on me since I’ve been at Montclair State.”