12-4-2021

The Montclarion, December 2, 2021

The Montclarion

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Future Plans for Montclair State

The Effects of Online Education

Sal DiMaggio
Assistant Feature Editor

When students and educators were sent home in March 2020, they quickly had to figure out what to do without being in person. Our ways of teaching and learning were disrupted by the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic and so we had to make do with what we had: online learning.

Around a year and half later, online learning has turned the way we think about education on its head. Even today, as we are still slowly making our way out of the pandemic, virtual education is still implemented. Whether it be the virtual days due to inclement weather or the asynchronous classes that students are still taking this year, online learning is the way that we dealt with COVID-19 interrupting our education.

Students at Montclair State University have a lot to say about their experience with online learning via Zoom. Although experiences differed in some ways, they left a lasting impression on most. Cam Martin, a junior sports media and journalism major, described how he handled the initial transition to learning online.

“Using Zoom for the first time was definitely unique to me partially because I’d never experienced an online school,” Martin said. “I can sleep in a little bit, but this is still kind of new to me. I’m good with technology, so I could find a way to successfully complete this, but it’s just really a matter of, ‘Can I really do this at the moment?’”

Mari Zuniga, a senior communication and media arts major, had a more difficult transition into what became the new normal for education.

“I find it hard to concentrate on the computer,” Zuniga said. “It’s really difficult for me because I’m looking at this and looking at that. I’m hearing them, but I’m not listening. I’m not paying attention.”

Dr. Erik Jacobson, an associate professor in the teaching and learning department, noted how different students reacted in different ways to the initial switch over to virtual learning.

“[For students who prepared for online learning], it might’ve been slightly different than they were expecting, but I think classes still worked for them,” Jacobson said. “I think they got maybe not 100% of what they were expecting, but I think they got a good chunk of it. And the students who were not prepared for it, I think really suffered.

Students weren’t the only ones impacted by the move to Zoom. Professors had to deal with this change as well. Dr. Michael Koch, an adjunct professor for the School of Communication and Media, was one of many.

Continued on Page 5

Robby Ruiz shows a great love for singing. Photo courtesy of Robby Ruiz

Crossword
Puzzle & More
On Page 13

A number of circumstances cause people to oppose vaccines, but this doesn’t merit a comparison to the Holocaust.

Chloe Lawrence
Staff Writer

Rumors ran ablaze at Montclair State University the Sunday before students went on Thanksgiving break when a student reported suspicious individuals carrying a large case in and around Feliciano School of Business.

That case, later revealed to be holding audio-visual and tripod equipment, led students to believe there was a possible sighting of a gun on campus after rumors spread on social media.

Martina Zavalla, a freshman psychology major, was one of the students who heard about the incident on social media.

“I was in my room with my friends and we just saw a story on Snapchat that there was a shooter,” Zavalla said. “We just thought it was fake because a lot of rumors go around.”

Rumor continued on Page 3

Student Artist Profile: Robby Ruiz

Darian Mozoo
Staff Writer

At school, Robert Edward Ruiz, better known as Robby, is a senior marketing major. But beyond that, there is a singer and songwriter who from the age of eight has shown great talent performing onstage. He is an artist ready to make an impact by capturing the hearts of all who listen to him.

Rutz’s first time singing in front of a big audience was during a high school talent show where he performed “One” by Three Dog Night. This was a defining moment for Ruiz, who has since then written nine original songs.

“I was really nervous [at that talent show],” Ruiz said. “[But] as soon as [I] started, I turned into somebody else, into that inner artist that I always wanted to be.”

From that day on, Ruiz knew he wanted to dedicate his life to music.

The struggles he endured during the beginning of his career weren’t easy to overcome at first. Ruiz often felt disheartened when faced with people who didn’t believe in his success, despite the number of supporters he had.

“Even though I had a lot of people like my family, friends and managers who always supported me, I felt alone,” Ruiz said.

Looking back, Ruiz says if he had the chance to speak with his younger self, he would advise him to always stay true to himself and never pretend to be someone else.

Robby Ruiz continued on Page 18

President Jonathan Koppell and Vice President Dawn Southerls address questions raised by student media.

John LaRosa | The Montclarion

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Read more on Page 16

Read more on Page 13

Read more on Page 6
Anyone who has information regarding these incidents is urged to call the police station at T-I-P-S (8477).

Tuesday, November 16
Fraud: Officers responded to Parking Services regarding a report of fraudulent documents being utilized on an individual’s vehicle. This incident is under investigation.

Friday, November 19
Red Hawk Deck: Officers responded to the Red Hawk Deck regarding a report of an act of criminal mischief. Officers were met on the scene by a student who reported that their vehicle’s back window had been smashed in. This incident is under investigation.
Yamilet Nunez, a freshman early childhood education major, was off-campus when the rumor spread, however, she still heard about it through her floor’s GroupMe chat.

“I was really scared for the rest of my friends and I just thought, ‘Oh my gosh, what if I was on campus?’ and how scared I would be,” Nunez said. “It was just a frightening moment for my parents, me [and my friends].”

Patricia Manon, a freshman biology major, was sleeping in her dorm when she woke up to a message warning her of a shooter on campus. Though there ended up being no threat, Manon said it’s important to question the accuracy of these kinds of things.

“Just don’t listen to people,” Manon said. “Try to investigate for yourself because you never know.”

Other students were dissatisfied with the nearly one-hour time frame in which it took the university to send out a text alert. Dr. Dawn Soufleris, the vice president for student development and campus life, said the administration and University Police Department knew quickly that there wasn’t an imminent threat, but the police had to make determinations before getting information out to the campus community.

“What you don’t want to do is send something out that puts people in an absolute panic, and then it’s not that at all, or send something [saying] that everything’s fine, you know, ‘nothing to see here,’ and then all of a sudden, it’s not that, and it is something to be really concerned about,” Soufleris said. After resident assistants expressed feeling out of the loop as to what was going on, Soufleris discussed what the administration can do moving forward to help lessen the spread of rumors.

“We did go out to SGA and made sure that the Student Government Association knew what was happening, but we now think, ‘you know what, we should have included [resident assistants] in that,’” Soufleris said. “So, there’s always learning experiences from these things.”

Montclair State President Dr. Jonathan Koppell discussed the importance of becoming consumers of reliable information.

“I think, yes, we have to be good communicators, and we will be, but also people need to become consumers of information,” Koppell said. “I think this is part of the things, like, ‘Well, who did you hear this from? Was it from a credible source?’”

When all was said and done, Koppell said the university police handled the situation appropriately.

 “[The university police] took the report seriously even though there was deep skepticism of the report,” Koppell said. “So, let’s figure out exactly what was seen. And not just saying like, ‘No, it wasn’t a gun.’ They actually wanted to figure out well, ‘What was it? Who was it? What did they see?’ And so then we could give a real answer.”

Soufleris encourages any student who sees something to say something, even if it may end up being nothing.

“Even if you have a twinge, you should say something, and then we’ll figure it out afterward,” Soufleris said. “That is the right thing to do as a community member.”

Patricia Manon says it’s important to question the accuracy of these kinds of things.
Students and faculty at Montclair State University shared their concerns over the new Omicron coronavirus (COVID-19) variant.

Stephanie Silvera, a public health professor specializing in epidemiology, explained how new variants of COVID-19, such as Delta and Omicron, emerge.

“New variants emerge when the virus has the chance to replicate in a host and there is a genetic alteration to the virus,” Silvera said. “Most mutations are harmless, but some, like the ones seen with Delta and Omicron, can change how the virus behaves, either making it more transmissible, able to evade host immunity (either natural or vaccine-mediated), cause more severe illness or some combination of the three.”

Silvera said the Omicron variant is concerning.

“Early data indicate that Omicron is more efficient in terms of transmission and is outpacing Delta,” Silvera said. “This indicates that it is likely much more transmissible, able to evade host immunity (either natural or vaccine-mediated), cause more severe illness or some combination of the three.”

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Montclair State president Jonathan Koppel said the university is monitoring the Omicron variant.

“There’s always something new around the corner, and [COVID-19] is sort of part of the environment now, so there’s going to be these variants,” Koppel said. “And so, I think caution is the better approach here on these things.”

Sophia Esheileh, a junior business administration major, was surprised to learn about the Omicron variant.

“My reaction to the COVID-19 variant is that I’m shocked that with so many getting vaccines, the virus is still spreading to this day,” Esheileh said.

Megan Kick, a junior English major, expressed her worries over the Omicron variant.

“The new [COVID-19] variant is definitely frightening, and it is disheartening to see the ongoing mutations and spreading of this virus,” Kick said. “I am concerned because each new variant seems to be more alarming than the last, and I would hate to see all of the progress that has been made through vaccinations, mask-wearing and distancing be lost.”

Kick also said the timing of this new variant is troubling.

“It is also very nerve-racking to see such a spike around the holidays and wintertime when a lot of people are already more susceptible to becoming sick due to travel and changes in temperatures,” Kick said. “My hope is that everyone takes all the precautions necessary right now to keep ourselves and those around us safe.”

Silvera shared the best ways to slow the spread of the Omicron variant.

“If you haven’t been vaccinated, go get vaccinated;” Silvera said. “If you have been vaccinated and it has been six months since your final dose, get a booster. Beyond that, this is the time to recommit to proper mask-wearing.”
Montclair State University President Dr. Jonathan Koppell and Dr. Dawn Soufleris, vice president for student development and campus life, met with the university’s student media on Nov. 29 to discuss what students can expect in the near future.

A concern of many students has been the lack of transportation to New York City on weekends since a large part of the university’s appeal is its close proximity to the city. Koppell and Soufleris recognize this and are working on solutions for the problem.

“I’ve already, sort of, been digging around to figure out who do I go to to get the train schedule fixed,” Koppell said. “[Access to New York City is] part of the promise that the university offers to potential students. And so we’ve got to figure out a way to make it happen.”

Soufleris mentioned the past shuttles that took students to Willowbrook Mall once a month which ended as a result of the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic. While they are looking into bringing those back, she also discussed some alternative options the administration is looking into, such as offering transportation to Willowbrook Mall, which has a bus ride into the city.

“We are looking into [seeing if we could] get some shuttles that would take students to Willowbrook Mall to hop on [New Jersey Transit to take into] Penn Station,” Soufleris said. “I am hoping that we’re going to do that on a pilot basis in the spring. Probably in the February/March area.”

Soufleris said the bus ride from Willowbrook Mall into the city is approximately 25 minutes.

As a response to the reports of sexual harassment on campus, Soufleris is reorganizing the way in which orientation is run next year. In this restructuring, new students will come to campus five to six days before upperclassmen, where there will be a heavy concentration on discussing Title IX issues, relationships, adjusting to college life, communication, respect and community. According to Soufleris, the one-day orientations are not enough to cover the complicated issues that students have to face.

“It’s going to be this intense, some of it fun, but intense experience where students will learn a lot of things,” Soufleris said.

The last two years, graduation ceremonies were split into multiple different events held at Sprague Field, spanning over 12 days. As for the class of 2022, nothing is finalized yet regarding a graduation ceremony. However, Koppell said he is a big believer in having at least one big ceremony for all students and is willing to spend the money for it to be at a venue that can accommodate large families.

“That ceremony means something. That ‘walking across the stage’ means something, you know, [in terms of] hearing the music, having the robes [and] having the funny hats,” Koppell said. “You’ve had this picture in your head for a long time and you want to experience it for real, and I honor that and take that seriously. So, we’re going to do the best we can to offer that experience in a meaningful way.”

In terms of what they are most proud of accomplishing this semester, Soufleris said aside from the new orientation, she is proud of her ability to get out and connect with students, whether it be at sporting events or around campus.

“I’m proud of] just being available to students as much as possible,” Soufleris said. “I’m a very student-centered so for me that’s my greatest accomplishment so far, with tons more things to come.”

Koppell stated that Montclair State is right where he is supposed to be.

“I feel really good about the connection that’s been formed with the students and the faculty and the staff because it just underscores how distinctive and special a thing we have here at Montclair [State] and people value it and that’s really powerful,” Koppell said.
Online Education (continued from page 1)

“[Online teaching is] not my preferable way to teach, but I wasn’t completely against it either,” Koch said. “I wanted to be safe, and I wanted everybody to be safe, too. So it was challenging, but I made the best of it that I could and I tried to be as accommodating as [I] possibly could be.”

Mental health was also something that online learning affected. Going to classes has a social aspect to it as well as an educational one, and being forced to learn from home took that away. In addition to being a professor at Montclair State, Koch is also a therapist, and he saw students struggling with their mental health. But he also noted that sometimes it’s hard to know what students are going through.

“I think that it’s a bit of a cliché to say everybody is struggling, but there is a lot of cumulative impact of this,” Koch said. “Maybe six months ago, some people [would say], ‘Yeah, I’m fine. I’m doing alright.’ But as it drags on and on, it just gets tiring. I think there’s a lot of mental exhaustion. [Even] myself and [other educators] are not immune to that at all.”

Zuniga went on to discuss her struggles with mental health while learning over Zoom.

“Before COVID-19, [my mental health] was already on the rocks,” Zuniga said. “So when online learning happened, it slightly got worse. [I thought] ‘How am I going to get through this? Are we always going to be on Zoom?’”

According to Jacobson, the decline in mental health wasn’t quite invisible to professors, but it was hard for them to tell exactly what was going on.

“I had students who would straight up tell me how they were doing and how they were feeling and others who fell off the radar,” Jacobson said. “So I [would] email them, ‘How are you doing? Is everything okay?’ But then there were students who showed up, did their work, were engaged and their personality wouldn’t lend themselves to saying, ‘Actually I’m struggling right now.’”

Despite this, online learning may have its advantages going forward if used correctly, especially here at Montclair State where traffic and parking seem to always be cause for concern for students, according to Jacobson.

“It certainly provides flexibility, right?” Jacobson said. “In terms of time, schedule and physical location, Montclair State has a lot of students who work outside of school. We have a lot of students who are commuters, [and] we’ve got terrible traffic and parking problems on campus. So certainly Zoom and using online learning platforms may be a way to address some of those things.”

As the future unfolds, the COVID-19 pandemic will continue to shape our education systems. No one can predict the future and tell what it has in store for us, but at the end of the day, one thing is clear: online learning has changed the way we think about education forever.
Montclair Residents Gather at the Grand Opening of the Wellmont Arts Plaza

Amanda Alicea | The Montclarion

The wait is finally over for Montclair residents.

Seymour Street in Montclair, New Jersey, was full of commotion from community members, live music and several vendors and artisans. Locals were finally able to celebrate the grand opening of the Wellmont Arts Plaza on Nov. 20 after the event was postponed early on this month.

Located in Montclair’s arts district and adjacent to the Wellmont Theater, it’s no surprise that the pedestrian plaza was occupied by many artists and vendors from Montclair and surrounding cities. Many of the artists present at the grand opening began their art journey when the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic first broke out.

Soo Kim, an alcohol-ink mixed media artist and owner of Soosoo Studios, quit her full-time job to dedicate her time to her art form. Kim’s art pieces feature lightly-colored flower and patterned designs.

“I’m a pandemic-born artist,” Kim said. “[My art] was really about releasing my energy, letting go and being able to breathe.”

Kim was not the only artist who began to master their craft during the height of the pandemic.

Jennifer Eliza also began to focus on her art form when the city was quarantining. Eliza owns Flower Funk and creates flower arrangements using a variety of cans as vases and most favorably LaCroix cans.

“Working from home and being on Zoom calls every day, I needed to bring the outdoors inside,” Eliza said. “So, I started playing with flowers and my recycled goods and it kind of formed into this fun thing. It’s like they get a second life; a can gets another life.”

Some artists enlisted the help of locals to help them finish their pieces. Alex Cook, a multi-disciplinary artist, began painting a large mural stating “You Got This,” when the grand opening began. In the span of a few hours, Cook began allowing young children and parents to help paint the mural, instructing them where to add colors and designs.

Along with a number of artists selling their work to locals, some vendors were selling items for a good cause.

Ann Bismal, a volunteer for Montclair High School’s Project Graduation, had a table set up for locals to purchase Montclair High School merchandise to support senior students. Bismal aims to raise funds through the school year to lower ticket prices for seniors.

“Because of the COVID-19 pandemic, we’ve been mostly selling online, so we’re really excited to be part of the community and sell to people from the town,” Bismal said.

Coordinators from Two South Willow, the newly built luxury apartments adjacent to the plaza, were largely responsible for getting vendors involved in the grand opening. Many of the vendors saw Two South Willow’s Instagram advertisement for the event and reached out to attend with their booths.

Live music was also provided by Montclair’s School of Rock. Young musicians lined the stage and performed several sets for locals to enjoy while they shopped from the artisans and vendors.

The 15,000 square-foot plaza was initially approved by the Montclair Planning Board back in 2017 but construction began in 2018. Montclair-based architect, Arterial, designed the plaza so residents could enjoy an area with outdoor seating and a space for people to perform outdoors.

The redevelopment of the plaza included 220 new residential units, 50,000 square feet of retail space and 30,000 square feet of office space. The plaza also houses two permanent works of art, one being a sculpture created by James Moore and the other being a mural painted by artist Jenna Snyder-Phillips.

The opening of the Wellmont Arts Plaza marks the first turning point back to normalcy for the arts community in Montclair — a long-anticipated celebration of life and art.
In Need of a Winter Wardrobe Update?
Montclair State Fashion Studies Majors Are Here To Help

Transitioning into colder weather doesn’t have to be brutal when you can always count on your winter wardrobe to keep you cozy and stylish. As the days get shorter and the sun sets sooner on campus, wearing layers of clothing has become a necessity at Montclair State University.

In the blink of an eye, students went from slowly incorporating an extra layer of clothing to now dressing for the full-blown cold weather. Be prepared to see a whole lot of faux fur, bold colors, leather and puffer jackets. Ugg boots may even be having their comeback.

That being said, it is important to have staple pairs of both faux leather pants and a classic pair of jeans. My favorites are both from Abercrombie & Fitch. Plain or patterned turtlenecks and sweat-ers are also key pieces for layering.

When I want to feel cozy but also put together, my go-to outfit is a matching, plain sweatsuit in a fun color. For shoes, my staple pairs are Steve Madden platform boots or a simple pair of Converse. Kelly Pikaart, a junior fashion studies major, loves to keep her style casual, but also likes to make it look fashionable. Pikaart says having a black, winter jacket is a must.

“A winter piece everyone needs is a black puffer [jacket], for sure,” Pikaart said.

If you spot Pikaart on campus, you will most likely see her sporting a black SKIMS mask, matching leggings, a sweater, a puffer coat and boots. Not only is the SKIMS mask comfortable, but it is also versatile to match her neutral aesthetic.

Na’lah Jones, a senior fashion studies major, enjoys wearing chic “Sex and the City” inspired outfits and streetwear. She has a signature winter style.

“For outerwear, anything from faux fur coats to ankle-length puffer coats,” Jones said. “Garments would have to be corduroy pants or windbreaker pants paired with crew necks and a long sleeve underneath. For shoes, the staple ones I wear often are black Doc Marten boots, or anything sold by Clarks because their shoes are so warm and comfortable.”

Layering, as Jones said, is not only essential for leaving the house on a cold day, but also adds more flair to an outfit. After walking from Car Parc Diem to campus, one can simply peel off a couple of layers and end up with a completely new outfit on.

Nia Singer, a senior fashion studies major, was seen wearing an all-black, sleek outfit. She enjoys a classic and neutral on-the-go look.

“[Basics] can be casual and comfy, and I can just throw on a long coat to go with it,” Singer said.

Singer’s winter essentials are over-the-knee boots. “They go with everything, and to make the boots look even better, pair them with a long trench coat,” Singer said.

Haftz Williams, a junior fashion studies major, lives and breathes fashion. If you ever see Williams on campus, he is always put together.

This winter, Williams will be flaunting his puffer coat and blanket scarf, along with his winter staple piece: a hat.

 “[My winter essential is an] Carhartt beanie,” Williams said. “It really keeps you warm and is easy to mix and match with your outfits.”

No matter what your style is, it’s important to keep it simple and warm this holiday season. The best way to feel confident is by wearing something you feel comfortable in. Whether it be your thrifty band T-shirt layered with a turtleneck or your new leather pants and platform converse, fashion is a great way to express who you are to the rest of the world.
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BACKGROUND IMAGE BY SVSTUDIOART
Hawk Talk
What trend from elementary school do you miss?
By John LaRosa, Photo Editor

“I liked gym activities and recess. Me and my friends really liked soccer.”
Victoria Bernal
Freshman
Fashion Studies Major

“Silly Bandz. They were cool.”
Alex Zielonka
Freshman
Business Major
“Silly Bandz. I had a whole collection and liked trading [them]. I think I have a pink unicorn [one]. It was cool.”

Cailey Merulla
Junior
Communication and Media Arts Major

“I’m actually wearing a Silly Band. But, I’m thinking box ball. I haven’t seen a lot of people play that [recently]. There was a box of numbers [labeled] one through four. Everyone got in line, [so] it was like a single player game. The whole point was trying to put the ball into someone else’s box and get them out. You [wanted to] try to get the number one box. I don’t know. It was fun. Anything but Beyblades.”

Nick Tirella
Freshman
Filmmaking Major

“I don’t know if they do this anymore, but do you remember the book fairs they used to have [back then]? They would give you a magazine, and like at the end of the week, you had to pick a book. Sometimes they had games. I was the one who never got the books, [but] I always got the funny pencils, the games [and] the cute little diary with the lock.”

Kelly Arboleda
Junior
Medical Humanities Major
Across

5. A popular winter-themed character who was brought to life by a magical hat.
6. A dome-shaped shelter made of blocks of snow and ice which serve as dwellings for the Indigenous peoples of arctic regions.
7. A severe snowstorm with reduced visibility and strong winds.
8. “It’s a ___________ world in the winter / When the snow comes to cover the ground / It’s time for play, it’s a whipped cream day / I wait for it the whole year ‘round”

Down

1. A seasonal state many animals go into throughout wintertime, notably bears, to survive the colder months when food is scarce.
2. A recurring character throughout media, varying from hero to villain to trickster, who serves as the personification of winter, cold, ice, snow, etc.
3. Although enjoyed throughout the seasons, it is most commonly associated with winter due to the comforting nature of this heated beverage.
4. “A beautiful sight / We’re happy tonight / Walking in a winter ___________”

Word Search

tindghyadlazinllhgx
pecimecarcticsydomnff
thisajusteknalbvtimmh
 pca qfnoxkcmtjhitzpp
fhlahenmdyepwrectedl
asesfeyqrjlfqjebjeecu
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Snowball Fight Freezing Shovel
Sweaters December Arctic
Blankets Season Holidays
Mittens Snowflakes Sledding
Fireplace Solstice Icicle

*For answers to the puzzles, please check The Montclarion Facebook page every Thursday.*
The Call is Coming from Inside the Hawk

Recent occurrences on Montclair State University's campus have led many students to question the methods in place that are meant to keep them safe.

In October, The Montclarion reported on the increasingly prevalent issue of sexual harassment on campus when students came forward to share their experiences. Campus police's response to the reports The Montclarion investigated seemed less than satisfactory, especially given the advice to "recognize that the problem is not lurking strangers" despite the fact that both reports discussed alleged harassment by strangers to the victims.

The administration claims to be planning a new approach to orientation in response to these incidents, where incoming students will be given time to focus on important topics and acclimate to college life before upperclassmen arrive on campus.

Dr. Dawn Souferis, vice president for student development and campus life, explained that not all of the actions being taken regarding the cases can be made public due to the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) regulations.

"If I come forward as a student and I say this happened, there's a whole process that happens behind the scenes, but it is not public because it protects privacy," Souferis said.

Still, many students feel campus police haven't done enough regarding their response to the sexual harassment cases. Miles Dean, a freshman psychology major, made a statement about an unnamed student his friend group has interacted with.

Dean alleged that this student has had several claims of harassment made against them but has not been removed from campus and will be returning in the spring despite the reports.

One student who spoke out said authorities claimed cameras weren't working in the space where she was harassed, and even with her description of the assailant, nothing else was done.

If this is the kind of support students can expect after facing harassment or other forms of sexual crimes at Montclair State, then it's no wonder students are upset.

Then, on Nov. 21, reports were made regarding a suspicious individual on campus, which sent students into a panic due to the assumption that the individual was possibly armed. Conflicting stories emerged regarding how campus police handled the emergency, with authorities insisting they did not send students into lockdown while some students said they were told to remain indoors for their safety.

In response to the rumor of a gunman on campus, which began circulating on social media following the false alarm, Montclair State President Dr. Jonathan Koppell elaborated on how students can be more proactive when it comes to interpreting information in stressful situations.

"I think, yes, we have to be good communicators, and we will be, but also people need to become consumers of information," Koppell said. "I think this is part of the things, like, 'Well, who did you hear this from?' Was it from a credible source?"

All things considered, today's social climate on college campuses certainly doesn't help ease tensions. With on-campus gun violence burdening the collective consciousness of students, it's easy to assume the worst.

Still, students should feel obligated to look into reputable sources of information before circulating whatever they are hearing from others, especially in such stressful circumstances.

Whether a situation involves a potentially life-threatening emergency or not, frequent communication is only half the issue. Transparency is vital in matters of safety, especially on a large college campus.

More people means a higher risk of incidents occurring. While alert systems like RAVE are helpful for mass communications, interpersonal relations between campus police and students need to be more consistent when it comes to urgent information. With conflicting stories about whether the campus went into lockdown and concerns over the timeliness of announcements made by authorities, it is clear that the situation could have been handled more smoothly by all.

Besides, alerts are not preventative measures, which some students feel are more effective. Cameras put in place to deter criminal acts need to be returned more smoothly by all.

Stresses like these need to be met with ramifications to deter others from acting similarly.

No matter what authorities or the administration claim is being done to address issues of campus safety, it is their actions that make the most impact and tell the campus population they are being cared for.

Campus Voices:
How do you think Montclair State has handled recent safety concerns?

By Maddye Belov-Boxer
Photos by John LaRosa

-Miles Dean
Psychology
Freshman

- Alyssa Benito
Film and Television
Freshman

-Lanie Norton
Biology
Freshman

- Christos Samouhos
Exercise Science
Freshman

"I just think they got to be more on top of things, and I don't know, maybe hire new people because, like, what's going on right now isn't working. Like I said, there's been so many incidents of friends of mine who've been harassed or assaulted. It's just like, come on. When's it going to stop?"

"There needs to be more communication toward students and [also], I think they need to be really transparent, because, like, everything they handle is concerning our safety, and we're paying a lot of money to be here. [So], we all deserve to be safe and informed."

"I actually don't know anything about the sexual harassment thing, but I don't think that anything was handled incorrectly with the person on campus. I think everyone was kept updated at least, and I wasn't personally scared, but I know other people were more worried about it and could have probably [needed] more information."

"I feel safe in the sense that if there is a dire emergency, you can click a button and you can have campus police come right away. But at the same time, too, it's like [anyone] can enter any of the buildings here."

"I think, yes, we have to be good communicators, and we will be, but also people need to become consumers of information," Koppell said. "I think this is part of the things, like, 'Well, who did you hear this from?' Was it from a credible source?"
The Potential Chaos of Meta

If you’ve been reading recent news, then you have probably heard the word “metaverse” going around over the past month. Metaverse isn’t something new. In fact, the term was coined in 1992 by science fiction novelist Neal Stephenson. Metaverse is a combination of technologies, especially virtual reality, where users can live in multiple digital realities, also known as 3D environments.

On Oct. 28 of this year, Mark Zuckerberg, creator of Facebook, said he is transitioning his company to a metaverse within the next five years and renaming the company Meta. According to a press release, Meta is “announcing a $50 million investment in global research and program partners to ensure these products are developed responsibly.”

The term meta is used to describe something as “transcending.” Something Zuckerberg wants to accomplish with his company by taking the internet experience to a more immersive place. This news was very exciting for many people in the technology industry. Not to mention, all those issues are already occurring with the internet in its current state. Another major problem is the heightened accessibility a company and even your online friends can have to your privacy. Metaverse will create a bigger space for a company making this transition into a metaverse.

The increase of metaverses can worsen addictions to online platforms, sensory overload and isolation from the real world. Not to mention, all those issues are already occurring with the internet in its current state. Another major problem is the heightened accessibility a company and even your online friends can have to your privacy.

Meta gets nearly all of its money from personalized advertisements. The company making this transition into a metaverse will create a bigger space for more personal information to be collected and be infiltrated at any point. Despite Meta’s claims of responsible development, it’s important to know the company, formerly known as Facebook, has already had major problems with data collection. Allegations have been made about how the company makes money off of people’s privacy, enough for Zuckerberg to be seated at a Senate hearing.

Where we allocate our privacy affects our personal and physical safety. This movement is inevitable, as Meta is the biggest social media site around the world and controls many other social media platforms. If you’re someone who uses social media platforms such as Meta, Instagram or any other site, it can be easy to feel as if you have no control over the direction the internet is moving in. However, you do have some power when it comes to protecting your social media privacy.

First, read the terms and conditions. Yearly, those three pages you probably just scroll through only to press accept and continue on with your account. If you don’t want to read through all of that tiny print, then take the time to do research and ask questions about actions that are being set in place to ensure your privacy when it comes to any site.

Next, you need to know that all the personal information you put onto a site is stored within that company’s database. What Meta will do is take your data and sell it to third parties. So consider what information you wouldn’t mind being shared and what you want to keep private. Things about your home address, school, bank information and workplace should be shared with the utmost caution.

Finally, you can install a tracker blocker. This is a tool that can be installed on a laptop and phone that will prevent sites from monitoring what you do and stop companies and their targeted ads from appearing on your account.

Those methods will be helpful to keep in mind, especially as the internet is moving toward being centered around metaverse. Where we input our personal information is important because it means putting trust in any company that ensures it in the first place. Be on the lookout in the next five years because Meta probably won’t be the only site making this big transition.

Brianna DeJesus, a sophomore fashion studies major, is in her first year as a staff writer for The Montclarion.
Don’t Compare COVID-19 Mandates to the Holocaust

Chloe Lawrence, a junior English major, is in her first year as a staff writer for The Montclarion.

The Holocaust claimed the lives of 6 million Jewish people. When the Nazi regime took over, Jewish people were forced to wear the Star of David on their clothes. It was intended to distinguish and segregate them from the general population. The refusal to wear an identification mark could lead to punishment as severe as death. After the Holocaust, the Jewish population in Europe shrank from 57% of the world’s population to 35%.

Today much of the world is divided over the need for coronavirus (COVID-19) vaccines. Some believe the mask mandate and requirement of vaccine cards for several establishments is an infringement on their rights. Significant politicians, board members and a portion of anti-maskers and unvaccinated citizens are comparing their experience to the Holocaust, a time when millions of people were displaced, brutalized and murdered.

This comparison has prompted a movement of protesters and social media posts. Those who choose to wear the Star of David in resistance to the vaccine and mask mandate dismiss the oppression Jewish people faced less than 100 years ago.

After Speaker of the House Nancy Pelosi’s decision to mandate masks in the House of Representatives, anti-mask advocate and Republican Rep. Marjorie Taylor Green responded in retaliation to the decision.

“You know, we can look back at a time in history where people were told to wear a gold star, and they were definitely treated like second-class citizens, so much so that they were put in trains and taken to gas chambers in Nazi Germany,” Green said.

In saying this, Green invalidates the suffering of Jewish people at the hands of Adolf Hitler. In no way does the mask mandate, used to limit the spread of COVID-19, compare to the horrific atrocities of the Holocaust.

Vaccines have eradicated diseases for decades. They have saved millions of lives, and masks have been proven by the CDC to minimize the spread of diseases. Unlike the Star of David identification marker, COVID-19 laws do not apply to one marginalized group of people, nor are they meant to mark people for certain death.

In fact, diseases ravaged the ghettos and concentration camps Jews were forced into. There was a need for vaccines amongst victims of the Nazis. Stripped of their belongings and homes, with no access to hygiene, medicine, clean water or food, many Jewish people died from typhus and cholera due to these unlivable conditions.

Jewish people were murdered by Nazis for being born Jews. There is no such punishment for refusal to receive a vaccine. When people choose not to get the vaccine, they are practicing free will, something Jewish people did not have the privilege of doing.

Today, millions of people have fears regarding the vaccine. A number of circumstances cause people to oppose vaccines, but this doesn’t merit a comparison to the Holocaust.

My grandfather’s great-aunts and great-uncles were sent to concentration camps and were murdered by the Nazis when they took over their hometown of Kolomea, Ukraine. Using the Star of David as propaganda for the anti-mask and anti-vaccine movement undermines the immense suffering my ancestors endured.

People must educate themselves on the history of a symbol before exploiting it. The yellow Star of David symbolizes the culture, history, suffering and religion of the Jewish identity.

To respectfully memorialize and honor victims of the Holocaust, one must refrain from equating their suffering to modern-day movements. Any remote comparison between the Holocaust and vaccine mandates is an injustice to the people that suffered in the ghettos and concentration camps, who were separated from their loved ones, not knowing if they’ll see them again.

Chloe Lawrence

What We Wear and How It Relates to Our Mental Health

Growing up I always dressed in a variety of colors. From accessories in my hair, my shoes and even my nail polish, everything always coordinated when it came to my outfits.

When I thought I was done dressing, I would then go to my mom and ask for verification of my outfit. She would often agree with my choices, except for one day when I was about 12 years old and asked if I could paint my nails black.

My mom said no, reasoning that I was too young. I didn’t put up a fight, but I had questions about why I had to grow older before being able to wear a certain color.

On a daily basis, we naturally partake in actions that display our moods through fashion. One example is when you’re going for a night out and you decide to wear a bright red lip or heels that make you feel powerful. Or, when it’s a Monday and because you’re tired of how we feel and fashion is one impactful way to communicate your mood.

If you notice your friend, who usually wears bright and eccentric colors, has been dressing down in more black and monotone outfits, maybe check up on them to see how they’re feeling. This doesn’t necessarily indicate that their mental health needs attention; perhaps they feel more confident in the clothes they are now deciding to wear.

Clothes will always be a part of your life. Maybe now is the time to see what clothes you own that you’ve given a symbolic meaning to and redefine what that is. See what you need to buy more of so you can always feel your best and confident self.

This can be an intimate journey between you and your wardrobe. If you have no idea where to get started, here is one important thing that helps me and I encourage you to get dressed: experiment with your style.

Experimenting with your style allows you to discover what makes you feel good and what you love, and also what you absolutely hate.

You create the rules when it comes to your style and mental health.

Brianna DeJesus, a sophomore fashion studies major, is in her first year as a staff writer for The Montclarion.
“The Monster” — Avery Nixon

I nervously watch the sun fall into the horizon line. It's coming.

As the dark night sky creeps over our homes it bears a whole other darkness, the monster.

Tensions rise in our home as we prepare ourselves to defend our livelihoods. It's coming.

Each and every night we face the same battle of fending the monster off from our loved ones.

It's too quiet, too calm, for that we know soon terror and chaos will come. It's coming.

I can feel it, we haven't had a night to ourselves where we could truly enjoy tranquility.

No one knows what causes the monster to come. It seems to come at random, but it's coming.

Just when I think we might get lucky, I can see its eyes. The eyes that signal it's about to bring forth a bloody massacre once again.

Maybe if we keep still and quiet, it’ll doze off until the next night, but it never does. Amity and comity seem to only upset the beast.

A small growl breaks the silence. What have we done to disturb its evil?

I glance over to my mother who is about to be caught in the crossfire, I look longingly toward her knowing there is nothing we can do to save her.

The monster snaps.

Its sharp teeth sink into my mother’s arm and she cries for help. We know it’s a lost cause to try and stop it because you’ll be punctured as well. She manages to hurl the monster off of her and onto the ground.

The monster continues to try and reach her again, snarling and shaking to get another chance to cause pain.

My father bravely manages to lock away the monster for the night into a cage meant just for it.

After the household begins to calm and we can let our guards down, I stare into the monster’s beady black eyes. We could never imagine our lives enduring the demon every night for a running total of nine years. It’s exhausting.

I’m scared at the thought of this torment going on for many more years to come. I have a sick feeling it’s never going to die.

The moral of the story? Make sure you’re prepared to face unrelenting and unprovoked terror when you adopt a chihuahua.

“Cry Over Strangers” — Julie Shields

Never let yourself cry over strangers.

Someone who doesn’t know or care.

Just looking for something to help themselves.

Pain just for you to bear.

Tears are small and never noticed.

Hard to get rid of or disappear.

I might have said I didn’t want to be lonely.

But I wasn’t planning on words and fear.

Tell yourself you’re stronger than you seem.

Or braver than you believe.

Once you tell yourself these things,

Your tears will stop their sting.

So never let yourself cry over strangers.

They don’t mind what they see.

Should be the strong person you show yourself,

Who you are always supposed to be.

“True Story” by Avery Nixon
“It’s going to be a hard ride,” Ruiz said. “People are going to be in your face, telling you differently and [trying to] convince you to do things that you don’t want to do. Avoid them at all costs.”

Fortunately, he was able to overcome the obstacles thrown his way and get back to work as a singer and songwriter, which he credits to his faith in God and the constant support of his loved ones.

Throughout his life, Ruiz’s dad has been a big inspiration when it comes to his music. This is especially since they would always practice together before each show Ruiz participated in. He is also inspired by well-known artists such as Luis Miguel, Romeo Santos and Maluma, as well as English artists like Michael Bublé, Frank Sinatra and a couple of others.

Ruiz especially appreciates the genre of bachata due to his constant exposure to Dominican Republic’s culture, as he and his parents used to go there almost every summer.

“I started listening to this music, and I liked it because it’s a very romantic [genre] — the dance, the form [and] the type of singing,” Ruiz said.

Romance ties into one of the first songs Ruiz wrote, “No Puedo Amarte,” which translates to “I Can’t Love You.” The song is based on falling in love for the first time and describes a difficult time he experienced while in a relationship.

His most recent song, “Una Pregunta,” which translates to “A Question,” brings about a different genre as a result of Ruiz wanting to bring something new to the table. This song has a combination of pop, R&B and rap. According to Ruiz, “Una Pregunta” is a very romantic song and would make people feel optimistic and happy while listening to it. For him, the best way to overcome the madness of this world is with love, which is reflected in his song.

“I liked talking about love because the society we are living in right now is very difficult,” Ruiz said. “There’s a lot of negative things going on.”

Esmeralda Tamayo, a senior linguistics major, met Ruiz in high school and has been following his music for some time, which she says she is inspired by.

“I feel like I can connect with the song lyrics,” Tamayo said. “I’m Latina, and I feel very proud to see how [Ruiz] pays tribute to Latin American music and culture because it shows that if we put all our effort into doing something, every dream will come true. I recommend [that] everyone listen to his songs. He’s amazing.”

Chris Sanchez, Ruiz’s producer and mentor, who has worked with many other Latin artists such as Aventura, Romeo Santos and Prince Royce, among others, is also proud of Ruiz and his improvement in the field of music.

“[I’ve known Ruiz] since he was 17 years old, and I have seen him grow as an artist [and] songwriter,” Sanchez said. “He’s extremely talented, and he’s been showing a lot of promise.”

Moving forward, Ruiz wants to encourage everyone who’s following their dreams to keep going and never lose faith.

“Never give up on your hopes and dreams,” Ruiz said. “[Because] if you put in all that effort every day with consistency, you can achieve whatever you want in this world. Don’t let anybody tell you differently.”
‘Encanto’ Enchants Viewers During the Holidays

“Encanto,” an original Walt Disney Animation Studios film directed by Byron Howard and Jared Bush, tells the story of the Madrigals, a Colombian family in which all members possess a magical gift. The only exception is Mirabel, who upon discovering the magic that surrounds their house is in danger, will have to risk everything to save the house and her family.

The story as such isn’t new; a person who experiences emotional conflict as a result of feeling different, like the “black sheep” of the family, is nothing we haven’t seen before in other movies, series and even musicals.

However, there are many factors that save this movie from becoming a cliche.

What attracted the most attention, even since the trailer was released in September of this year, is the location of where the story takes place: Colombia.

“Encanto” depicts many Colombian elements, such as the flora and fauna, traditional clothing worn by the characters, typical foods such as “Arepa con Queso/Ajiaco” and even a few colloquial phrases used not only in Colombia but in most Latin American countries.

Beauty and feminine strength are two topics the film embraces strongly through female characters like Isabela and Luisa, both sisters of Mirabel, who embody Latin American women.

Each of the soundtracks is a fundamental part of the plot. “Colombia, Mi Encanto” sang by Carlos Vives, a famous Colombian singer, is the opening song. It describes the happiness that abounds in the Colombian people of the film and is upbeat, making you want to dance nonstop.

Other songs such as “Dos Oruguitas” sang by Sebastián Yatra, “What Else Can I Do?” performed by Diane Guerrero (the voice of Isabela) or “Surface Pressure” performed by Jessica Darrow (the voice of Luisa) were originally created with very popular rhythms from Colombia.

During an interview, Lin-Manuel Miranda, the songwriter for “Encanto,” said he was inspired by the rhythms of ‘90s rock in Spanish.

“Colombia has a lot of rich musical traditions within itself that are unique,” Miranda said.

Encanto” is simply beautiful. Viewers are sure to love the characters and their stories. The plot itself will take you through a roller coaster of emotions, which will keep you hooked until the very end of the movie. It will leave you with a completely inspirational moral about family love that can make one tear up.

This film is currently available in theaters but will be available on Disney+ in December of this year. You can’t miss it.

Darian Mizio
Staff Writer

“Encanto” shows the importance of family ties as well as loving ourselves.

Mirabel is the only member in the Madrigal family who didn’t receive a magical gift.

Mirabel comforts her younger cousin Antonio.
‘Ghostbusters: Afterlife’ Introduces New Generation to the Franchise

The “Ghostbusters” franchise has seen plenty of ups and downs since it launched in 1984. As the comedic story of a group of scientists who start hunting the supernatural for a living, the eponymous film became a smash hit, spawning multiple feature films, animated series, video games and comic books.

The most recent chapter, “Ghostbusters: Afterlife,” seeks to return to form while paying tribute to original writer and cast member, the late Harold Ramis, who played Egon Spengler. Director Jason Reitman, the son of original director Ivan Reitman, had a personal journey involving the two reconnecting that the former channeled for this film’s story.

Decades after the events of the first two films, Egon’s estranged daughter Callie, played by Carrie Coon, is forced to move herself and her two children to an old farmhouse in Oklahoma where her father spent the last few years of his life. Callie’s sharp-minded daughter, Phoebe, played by McKenna Grace, begins to discover the reason why her grandfather alienated himself from his family and friends. In the process, she learns she and her brother, Trevor, played by Finn Wolfhard, might have to finish his work to save the world.

The movie takes a little bit to get going as we are introduced to the new characters, but once Phoebe starts to learn of the strange occurrences in her new home, it picks up and becomes a solid mix of action, humor and heart. Grace makes Phoebe an interesting lead. She is clearly Egon’s granddaughter, and her interest in the sciences and supernatural helps her entanglement into the situation feel natural. She and Wolfhard play off each other well, and it is easy to buy them as siblings.

The new ghostbusting team she forms with her brother, along with young spectral enthusiast, Podcast, played by Logan Kim, and Trevor’s crush, Lucky, played by Celeste O’Connor, prove to be an endearing group. Podcast, in particular, has some amusing moments.

The supporting cast does well, with Paul Rudd taking a fun turn as Phoebe’s summer school teacher. He has the same enthusiasm for the supernatural that his students do, which allows him to connect to his pupils while also forming a relationship with Callie.

Being part of the “Ghostbusters” franchise, it is expected that some laughs and scares will abound. The humor in “Ghostbusters: Afterlife” is on point with plenty of chuckles and belly laughs to be found, reminiscent of those from the first two movies. The film also proves effectively creepy, although there is a bit of an overreliance on jump scares.

Characters from the series’ past appear as well, and the way they are incorporated into the story works in making this feel like a passing of the torch. The score, by Rob Simonsen, is also quite excellent. It borrows quite a bit from Elmer Bernstein’s original themes, but the new music adds to the action, humor and sweet moments.

All these aspects result in the whole film feeling similar to the many family movies released by Amblin Entertainment during the same decade as “Ghostbusters,” though the production company had no involvement in the creation of the film. “Ghostbusters: Afterlife” ultimately works as a sequel to the classic entries from the 1980s while formally introducing a new generation of ghostbusters to audiences. The film ties into the past well and simultaneously makes the new characters worth following. The humor hits, the scares are mostly effective and the action is exciting.

If you’re looking for some good entertainment, you know who to call.
Lady Gaga Kills in ‘House of Gucci’

Tiffannie Coy
Staff Writer

Directed by Ridley Scott, “House Of Gucci” is based on the 2000s nonfiction book by Sara Gay Forden, which details the real-life story of the rise and fall of the Gucci dynasty. Lady Gaga plays the role of Patrizia Reggiani, a low-income woman who manages to marry the wealthy and somewhat shy Maurizio Gucci, played by Adam Driver. The film tells the story of how their marriage became one of the most infamous crime cases the fashion industry has seen to date.

As the film begins, the audience meets Patrizia, who encounters Maurizio at a party. The two, somehow or another, hit it off and eventually get married. This is when Patrizia’s true colors start to shine through.

While Patrizia starts as an innocent, sweet woman whose only intention is to find love and be treated fairly. We soon see she may have ulterior motives when Maurizio loses his 50% share of the Gucci company after their children and are put toward money and power.

Sadly, Patrizia never regains her innocent, sweet personality, and this is shown not only in her change of character but in her change of motivation to be with her husband. This change is seen in Patrizia’s physical appearance as well. While Lady Gaga’s character starts off wearing normal clothing and light makeup, she soon transitions into wearing extravagant clothes with darker shades of lipstick and eyeshadow, symbolizing her transition into being money-hungry.

These wardrobe changes were made possible by the costume designer of “House of Gucci,” Jany Yates, who studied the couple through past images and retellings of close friends’ stories to make well over 50 looks just for Patrizia alone. Although it didn’t end well for her, Lady Gaga’s character is the most intriguing throughout the entirety of the film. This consistently blew my mind as these events changed the real-life Patrizia in the same way.

The movie made me question how much money and power can change someone just over the course of five years. I felt sorry for Patrizia up until the end of the film because it was evident how much she loved Maurizio until his attention went elsewhere.

Also worth adding is the movie had me laughing for a good majority of it. The inside jokes between members of the Gucci family and outside friends brought the movie together even when it was evident it was taking a turn for the worse.

While I had heard different stories growing up about the rise and downfall of the Gucci family, this movie cleared up a lot of rumors and set the story straight for a younger generation interested in the brand or the fashion world overall.

The film is slightly over two hours long, but it is sure to keep your attention throughout its entirety due to the dynamic relationships between Patrizia and the rest of the Gucci family as she chases fame and fortune.

Top Picks to Stream

‘The Stepfather’ on Netflix

Before Penn Badgley became Joe Goldberg, a serial killer, he once played Michael Harding, a teenager who instead sought out to expose the killer. "The Stepfather," a 2009 remake of the 1987 film, is a classic thriller that follows a recent divorcee and her new love interest, but Michael seems to be the only one who can sense something isn’t right.

Returning from military school, Michael comes home to find his mother, Susan, portrayed by Sela Ward, madly in love with David, played by Dylan Walsh, a man who emphasizes the importance of family. Although shocked by his discovery, Michael decides to give David a fair chance—considering how happy his mom appears to be. But he can’t help but be suspicious after strange, puzzling events occur that blatantly spell out the words “serial killer.” Concerned for his mother and family, Michael sets out on a mission to expose David.

With suspenseful and jaw-dropping scenes, this film will constantly keep you on the edge of your seat.

- Sêkhena Sembene
Assistant Entertainment Editor

‘The Silence’ on Netflix

“The Silence” tells a story similar to “A Quiet Place,” in which a family must avoid making even the slightest of noise in order to evade death by sound-attracted, flying creatures known as vesps.

Ally Andrews, a girl who lost her hearing in an accident and played by Kiernan Shipka, sets out with her father, Hugh, played by Stanley Tucci, along with the rest of their family to the countryside where they trust it will be quieter. After learning the vesps are unable to survive in the cold, plans change, and the family decide to seek refuge in the north instead.

The film consists of the Andrews doing what they can to survive the journey to their safe place, all while remaining silent. As expected, it makes for a thrilling movie that leaves viewers holding their breath in anticipation and fear alongside the character.

- Megan Lim
Entertainment Editor

Adam Driver (left), Jared Leto (center) and Lady Gaga (right) star in “House of Gucci.”

Photo courtesy of Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer

Photo courtesy of Screen Gems

Photo courtesy of Constantin Film
The Newcomers of ‘Saturday Night Live’

Avery Nixon
Assistant Opinion Editor

“Saturday Night Live” (“SNL”) is one of the most beloved late-night institutions of New York City. Since 1975, the show has given us American political satire, ridiculously funny sketches, a lobster in a diner musical and some of Hollywood’s biggest comedians.

Cast members have come on the show as unknown acts and have left as A-list celebrities. Being new to the cast means you have some big shoes to fill if you want to make it.

Here’s which cast members are promising stars and which ones have fallen under the radar:


Bowen Yang is one of the most extravagant acts to grace Studio 8H’s sound stage. Starting off as a writer during season 44, Yang is now an official cast member. He is the first Chinese-American in “SNL” history, and he has already received an Emmy nomination for outstanding supporting actor in a comedy series.

One of Yang’s most memorable characters is the infamous iceberg from “Titanic.” Without a doubt, we will be enjoying Yang’s work for years to come as he clearly has the star quality to make it big.

2. James Austin Johnson (2021)

James Austin Johnson has just made his featured player debut this season. Johnson has already proved himself to be the “next big thing” as he opened his first-ever cold open.

The impressionist has mastered former President Donald Trump and current President Joe Biden’s mannerisms perfectly as he played them both for the show, and has also been in many sketches despite coming onto the show not long ago.

Johnson made it clear in his very first episode that he is here to stay and will soon become a household name.


Believed to be the perfect replacement for Kate McKinnon, impressionist Chloe Fineman can play just about anyone.

Fineman certainly has the potential to break out into the big leagues as she has already made late-night talk show appearances to make a name for herself. She just needs to be able to star in sketches that aren’t for her impressions, like impressionist king Bill Hader.

Hopefully, we’ll soon see more of Fineman’s comedy so she can cement herself as a Hollywood comedian.

4. Andrew Dismukes (2017)

Andrew Dismukes has been a writer on “SNL” since 2017 and a featured player since 2020. He is the perfect actor for the weird, shy kid trope, but not much else.

His “Weekend Update” bit about his grandma was quite entertaining, but “SNL” needs stars that can be chameleons of comedy, not the same old, same old character. With that being said, he is still a funny member who will probably last a couple of seasons.

5. Punkie Johnson (2020)

Punkie Johnson is still a featured player after her debut last season. She hasn’t yet made it as the star of any sketches and has been solidified in the background.

Johnson has had her funny moments, but she barely gets the screen time to make a name for herself. By now, it is not expected Johnson will live up to the legacy of comedians before her.


Sarah Sherman is one of the strangest acts to join the show, but that’s not necessarily a bad thing. She can definitely make the crowd bust out into laughter with her hilarious segment on “Weekend Update” with costar Colin Jost.

Sherman has the potential to be a big name on “SNL” if given the time and opportunity to work creatively.

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The Voice Heard Around Campus: Jack Barteck

Meet the man who has helped elevate coverage of Montclair State

By Matt Orth, Assistant Sports Editor

Whenever you cannot make a sporting event in person at MSU, you usually hear one, empathetic and iconic voice covering the action. Currently a producer for RHSN, the sports director for the radio station and a broadcast for the New Jersey Jackals home games as a color commentator this past summer.

Karin Harvey is grateful for the chance to report on a team, not just be a part of it. He often wanted to be liked by the teams, but he knows now you can be both liked and respected for asking the questions that need to be asked.

With his time at Montclair State coming to a close, Barteck will be looking to make as much of an impact as he can, no matter where he is headed. With a new class coming in next year and students still here for another year or two to help out, Barteck leaves them with a wise piece of advice: “My best advice is to get involved as early and as often as possible,” Barteck said. “You can’t be afraid to fail. It is the only way to grow. So, put yourself out there and push yourself to be your best. Most importantly, be curious, be yourself out there and push yourself as much as possible,” Barteck said. “I say it all the time: coming to Montclair State is the best decision I have ever made in my life,” Barteck said. “It has given me opportunities I could have only dreamed of and has given me a chance to be a part of it, no matter where he is headed. With a new class coming in next year and students still here for another year or two to help out, Barteck leaves them with a wise piece of advice: “My best advice is to get involved as early and as often as possible,” Barteck said. “You can’t be afraid to fail. It is the only way to grow. So, put yourself out there and push yourself to be your best. Most importantly, be curious, be kind and work hard.”

The Voice Heard Around Campus: Jack Barteck

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Whenever you cannot make a sporting event in person at MSU, you usually hear one, empathetic and iconic voice covering the action. Currently a producer for RHSN, the sports director for the radio station and a broadcast for the New Jersey Jackals home games as a color commentator this past summer.

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With his time at Montclair State coming to a close, Barteck will be looking to make as much of an impact as he can, no matter where he is headed. With a new class coming in next year and students still here for another year or two to help out, Barteck leaves them with a wise piece of advice: “My best advice is to get involved as early and as often as possible,” Barteck said. “You can’t be afraid to fail. It is the only way to grow. So, put yourself out there and push yourself to be your best. Most importantly, be curious, be kind and work hard.”

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Women’s Ice Hockey Is Still Hungry For Their First Win After Rough Start

Despite a winless record, the Red Hawks are continuing to show improvement on the ice.

The Montclair State University women’s ice hockey team currently fields about 15 players, according to their roster.

One major issue that can be attributed to the COVID-19 pandemic is the relatively thin numbers the team has been able to put together. According to the team’s website, the Red Hawks are fielding 15 players. This means that in most cases, some players stay out on the ice for almost an entire game.

Despite a less than optimal start to the season, it’s not necessarily time to panic. Some of Montclair State’s defining moments on the ice have come in the face of adversity.

Struble isn’t concerned with the numbers as their 2018 Red Hawks team, which was even smaller, found success in the DVCHC championship.

“This team is always small [in numbers],” Struble said. “In 2018 they won the championship with only seven or eight girls, so they had two subs.”

The young season has still produced memorable moments for a team that in many ways is still developing. Struble said one of the highlights of the season was when forward Sabrina Robinson scored her first goal of the season.

“Everybody is so excited to have the opportunity to be on the ice,” Struble said. “When [Robinson] scored her first goal of the season, she went nuts. It was incredible.”

Astalos said the key to getting back on track is getting back to the basics.

“We really got to focus on the fundamentals,” Astalos said. “We need to focus on good skating and putting pucks in the net.”

A defining characteristic of the Red Hawks has been their tenacity. When a team struggles early, it is common to see teammates not sticking together and not giving maximum effort on the ice. However, it’s clear that this unit is only growing closer together as the season goes on.

The team is gradually improving as well. Struble said the team is making progress with their play on the ice every game.

“You can’t tell from the score,” Struble said. “But if you come to the games, you see that we are finally learning our formations and [working on] the simple stuff [like] getting the puck up the boards and containing the puck. You can see that we are getting better slowly and slowly.”

Martinez said finding hockey players across the area, as well as on campus, is a critical step towards future success.

“Our coach Alexandra Tepper attends several travel tournaments and showcases throughout the year to visit with and speak to youth players. This team quickly became my home within the program. Our coach Alexandra Tepper attends several travel tournaments and showcases throughout the year to visit with and speak to youth players. This team quickly became my home within the program. Martinez said finding hockey players across the area, as well as on campus, is a critical step towards future success. Our coach Alexandra Tepper attends several travel tournaments and showcases throughout the year to visit with and speak to youth players. This team quickly became my home within the program.

Despite having established returning players such as junior goaltender Amber Astalos and senior forward Emily Struble, much of the roster is filled by newcomers. Players have come from all different athletic backgrounds, including sophomore defensemen Carlie Van Tassel, who also is a standout on the field hockey team.

Unfortunately, the Red Hawks have not found success on the ice as of yet. In their first six matches, Montclair State has been outscored 61-5. The Red Hawks play in the highly competitive Division II Delaware Valley College Hockey Conference (DVCHC) against clubs such as The University of Delaware and the United States Naval Academy.

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Best Sports Photos From the Fall 2021 Semester

A recap of the fall sports season in photos

By Montclarion Staff

Throughout the fall 2021 semester, The Montclarion’s student photographers helped to capture some of the most thrilling and captivating moments of the fall sports season and the early moments of the winter sports season.

The Montclarion has compiled 14 of the best photos from the semester from some of our contributors - David Venezia, Kevin Murrugarra, Trevor Giesberg and Alex Pallen. The following athletic teams were highlighted: football, volleyball, men and women’s soccer, field hockey, men’s basketball and men and women’s swimming and diving.

To see more photos, check out themontclarion.org

Senior guard Devin Cooper tries to convert a layup during a contest against DeSales University on Nov. 13. Kevin Murrugarra | The Montclarion

Sophomore forward Marvin Cadena fights for the ball during a Sept. 8 contest against Hunter College. Kevin Murrugarra | The Montclarion

Sophomore running back Makai Mickens eludes two Salisbury University defenders during a Oct. 2 contest. Kevin Murrugarra | The Montclarion

A Montclair State male swimmer competes in a race. Trevor Giesberg | The Montclarion

Junior guard Riara Polanco celebrates their win over Stockton University on Nov. 4. Photo courtesy of David Venezia

Leah Higgins and Riara Polanco celebrate their win over Stockton University on Nov. 4. Photo courtesy of David Venezia
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The Montclarion

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

Phone 973.655.5230
Fax 973.655.7804
E-mail Montclarionsports@gmail.com
Nickie Carter Works To Regain Form After a Roller Coaster Sophomore Season

Carter hopes to regain superstar level form after an up and down sophomore season

As the final buzzer sounded on the COVID-shortened 2021 season, it closed a strange chapter in Montclair State University women's basketball history. Between only playing 10 games and dropping the New Jersey Athletic Conference (NJAC) Championship Game for the second season in a row, the Red Hawks were in uncharted territory.

But amidst all the question marks, it seemed that one Montclair State guard had finally found the answers she was looking for all year long.

In the losing effort, then-sophomore Nickie Carter contributed one of the best games of her career, scoring 24 points and shooting four out of seven three-pointers. This type of game wasn't anything new for Carter; her freshman season she burst on to the scene, averaging 17 points per game, and scoring at least 20 points in 10 of the 28 games she played in, all on her way to winning NJAC Rookie of the Year honors along with numerous other awards.

Coming off of such a great season, Carter had set the bar pretty high for herself going into her sophomore season, not only statistically, but also taking on a captain role. However, before she could get there, she faced some setbacks.

"I got injured right before the season, and I was in a boot for four months, so going into my sophomore year, I was really out of shape," Carter said. "It wasn't just the physical aspect either. Mentally, I was not really in the headspace, so it was kind of hard, and I was also taking on the responsibility of now being a captain. My role was a lot different and there was a lot more expected of me. So that was kind of a hard transition."

Unfortunately, it showed, as through the nine games heading into that championship matchup, Carter was only averaging seven points per game, shooting just 33% from the field. As a result, her role changed once again, this time, a move from the starting lineup to a role off the bench. Though it was a big change, and it took an adjustment period, Carter found a way to not only accept the role but also to grow from the experience.

"People put a lot of emphasis on who's starting, who's finishing, but in reality, it's just how you perform overall in the game," Carter said. "And I think I came to terms with that, that it wasn't my time to start and I was fine. I used that as an opportunity to lead in other ways because I wasn't playing as much as I did. I definitely grew a lot from it."

Nobody would be a better judge of Carter's growth than her close friend and teammate, junior forward Saniya Myers, who has played alongside her going all the way back to middle school.

"Well, for starters, her shot definitely got a lot better than middle school," Myers quipped. "But in all seriousness, you can definitely see the confidence from her. Having been a captain multiple years now, you can just see each year her leadership skills get better and better. She's someone that's always there to push you, and she does it in the most respectful way, I feel like she wants the best for everyone on the team."

Heading into her junior season as one of the most experienced Red Hawks on the roster, Carter once again finds herself in a leadership role. Head coach Karin Harvey explained that even though there are some growing pains, the effort is noted.

"I think that she's working really hard to try to grow and to be a great leader. One of the things about it is really wanting to be a good leader and then trying to understand what that takes," Harvey said. "And she's working really hard at forming relationships with her teammates and setting good examples and being organized and communicating.

The women's basketball team hasn't started the season as they would've liked, posting a 1-3 record through their first four games, needing someone to take charge, just like that championship game against New Jersey City University a season ago. Carter has proven she can handle it, but this time wants to finish the job.

"Going into the championship game last year, I knew it was going to be a challenge and I knew someone was going to have to step up, and I felt that I had the experience that I was capable of that," Carter said. "Obviously it didn't end the way we wanted it to, but we have high expectations that it will be different this year."