

# “I Wanted to Be a Cop. Then My Dad Was Put On A Ventilator With COVID.”

Jessica's life took an unexpected turn during the pandemic. What she discovered at Montclair helped her build a whole new future.



JESSICA JAVIER

When Jessica Javier first arrived at Montclair, she was pursuing an undergraduate degree in psychology and weighing two very different futures — law enforcement or clinical counseling. Nursing, at the time, wasn't even on the list.

Today, she's a registered nurse in the labor and delivery unit at Morristown Medical Center, but her path to the NICU was far from linear.

“Originally I wanted to be a police officer,” she said. “Then I thought I wanted to become a psychologist. But in my last year at Montclair, I realized I wanted to do something more hands-on — something that felt like I was directly making a difference in someone's life.”

That shift in thinking was catalyzed by a deeply personal experience. During the height of the COVID-19 pandemic, Javier's father was hospitalized with the virus. He spent 27 days on a ventilator. Family visits weren't allowed.

“I remember nurses calling me on an iPad so I could see him,” she said. “And I remember thinking, I wish I could be there — to help in moments like that.”

She began researching nursing programs shortly after, eventually enrolling in Montclair's pre-licensure MSN program. At the time, it was the only graduate-level licensure program in New Jersey — and one she had already grown familiar with as a student.

“I'd already fallen in love with the campus,” Javier said. “The atmosphere, the energy. There were always events, things happening. It felt like a real community.” That sense of community proved essential when she returned as a graduate student.

“Montclair was the only school I applied to because it felt right,” she said. “From the beginning, the admissions team was responsive and approachable. I always felt like I had someone to go to.”

Like many nursing students, Javier admits the program came with intensity. Classes were rigorous. Labs and simulations demanded full commitment. Students were told early on that the program would require complete focus.

“They weren't exaggerating,” she said. “But they weren't being harsh — they were preparing us. If you take that advice seriously, it really sets you up for success.”

Javier credits Montclair's hands-on approach for helping her feel ready for real-world clinical work. Outside the classroom, she volunteered at cardiovascular screening events both on and off campus — experiences she says added nuance to her nursing skills and helped her build confidence in patient care.

But it was a conversation with one professor that had the most lasting impact.

“I was struggling, honestly,” Javier said. “I didn't think I'd pass. I went to her in tears more than once. And she just told me: Be confident. You know what you're doing. That stayed with me.”

Now, as a full-time nurse in labor and delivery, Javier says she thinks about those words often — especially on the more difficult days.

“I tell other people all the time — if you're serious about nursing, and you're willing to work, Montclair is worth it,” she said. “It's a hard program, but it prepares you. And you won't be alone.”

Her own decision to specialize in labor and delivery was shaped by another personal moment: the birth of her son.

“I remember those nurses so clearly. They were amazing,” she said. “That care — compassionate, knowledgeable, calm under pressure — I wanted to give that to someone else.”

For students unsure of their next step, or whether they belong in a graduate nursing program, Javier offers a message grounded in empathy and realism.

“I've been there,” she said. “I've had the doubt, the fear, the uncertainty. But if this is something you want to do — if nursing is the calling — you can do it. And Montclair will help you get there.”