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ALUMNI NEWS



HOMECOMING 2021 THE BIG RETURN

The campus community welcomed alumni, friends, family and fans to one of the most spirited days of the year – made all the more joyful after a year in which the pandemic forced the party online. It meant the return of the popular Student Talent Showcase, a street fair, food and carnival games and an alumni tailgate (for those 21 years and older) with beer, wine, food and a live band. Among the day's other highlights was a halftime ceremony during the football game against TCNJ honoring the Knute Rockne Championship team, which celebrated their 50th anniversary of that 1970 championship game (a year late, due to COVID-19). ■







Montclair State's Student Government Association is led by its first all-Latinx executive board, from left, Christie Rosales, Guillermo Estrada, Karla Farfan Miguel and Ashon Lanada.

A First for Student Government

Shared experiences and alumni mentoring inspire the first all-Latinx exec board

As more Latinx students fill leadership positions on campus, nowhere is their rise more striking than how they are reshaping the Student Government Association. The first all-Latinx executive board ever elected oversees a \$1.7 million budget and more than 60 student organizations – and is being mentored by alumni who were once on the SGA themselves.

Not only do they share a Latin American heritage but they are also on track to be the first in their families to graduate. “We noticed during our first interaction that, wow, this is historical,” says Executive President Ashon Lanada, a senior majoring in Business Administration.

They also share a sense of purpose to make a positive impact as the campus readjusts to the COVID-19 pandemic. “There’s so much newness in this year,” Lanada says. “We call it ‘The Revival.’ This is our theme, this is our mantra because we are coming to not just put SGA on a map, but to put student life back into its place.”

Montclair State is the largest Hispanic-Serving Institution in New Jersey – 30% of this year’s freshman class identify as Hispanic – and the University has created an environment where Latinx students feel they belong, thrive and can succeed, says Associate Provost for Hispanic Initiatives and International Programs Katia Paz Goldfarb.

The SGA executive board members say they have been given the training, support and resources – including being mentored by alumni – to be well prepared to shape campus life, and ultimately the world, in ways that matter.

Among the former SGA leaders mentoring the group is George Juzdan ’14, ’21 MBA, manager of corporate accounting at Eisai US, a Japanese pharmaceutical company. They talk regularly.

“It’s been a good experience for me to be able to mentor the students and provide lessons. You don’t really get to see the full picture while going through college or what the results were and what the impact is until after you finished your term,” Juzdan says. “Having that insight and providing it to them has been helpful, I think, in their decision-making.”

Family members and other role models have greatly influenced these student leaders, and Executive Vice President Karla Farfan Miguel, a senior majoring in Justice Studies, says she grew up quickly as the daughter of immigrants from Peru and Mexico.

“I translated every document for my parents. I ordered food. I made phone calls for doctors who didn’t understand Spanish. That brought me up with initiative,” Miguel says. “My parents work incredibly hard, cleaning houses, working in warehouses, cleaning schools after hours. I grew up watching that and understanding that education was my only way out of this lifestyle.”

Both Guillermo Estrada, executive treasurer and a Public Health senior, and Christie Rosales, executive secretary and a senior studying Psychology, say coaches and mentors have been especially important. Estrada, who grew up without a father, says “I think that overcoming that type of adversity is what made me who I am today.”

Rosales credits her sister with helping raise her while her parents worked. “She was the one who took on the heavy burdens. She’s been my inspiration.”

What the executive board is accomplishing together is connecting them to the future, says Miguel. “All of us want to go into our respective fields to create change – change that’s going to last, change that’s going to help our communities reach another level and to be visible.” ■

–Marilyn Joyce Lehren

New Strategic Communication Center Opens

Homecoming included a ribbon cutting for the Joetta Di Bella and Fred C. Sautter III Center for Strategic Communication. Read our profile of Emmy Award-winning alumna and donor Joetta Di Bella Sautter on page 41. ■



The President's Club Luncheon

Members of The President's Club, the University's leadership giving society, gathered for a luncheon on Homecoming with volunteer leaders, student leaders and President Jonathan Koppell. "I am pleased we could come together to celebrate our common philanthropic bond to the Red Hawks," says Chairman Jerry Appelstein (seen below between Paul Stahlin '74 and Vice President for Finance and Treasurer Donna McMonagle). "The positive energy in the room was breathtaking." ■



Celebrate Good Times!

An in-person celebration for the Classes of 1970, 1971 and 1972 is planned for May 2022. Want to participate? Contact Karen Hackett, Office of Annual Giving and Alumni Engagement, at 973-655-4207 or hackettk@montclair.edu.

1970
1971
1972



Have You Seen the New Green?

A tribute to alumni that marks the heart of campus, Alumni Green has a new look. The updated area – bounded by Cole Hall, Sprague Library, Moorehead Hall and the Amphitheater – offers all a beautiful space to stroll, sit and enjoy. Originally established in 1996, the Green was a gift from the University's Alumni Association and is funded in part by generous bequests and alumni donations.

Thanks go to all alumni and friends who have generously supported Alumni Green through the years. To learn more, visit montclair.edu/alumni-green. Gifts to the Alumni Green Fund continue to support plantings throughout campus. To donate, visit montclair.edu/make-a-gift and select "Alumni Green." ■



Supporting Student Success

The newly formed **Black Alumni Advisory Council** affinity group aims to mentor students and celebrate how much more diverse Montclair State has become through the years. "We want to let [students] know that people who look like them succeeded at Montclair State, succeeded in their careers, and are now working to help lift the next generation," says Council Vice President Brenda Coleman-Caldwell '78. For more information, contact Alyssa Zinola, Office of Alumni Engagement, at zinolaa@montclair.edu or 973-655-5465. ■