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MONTCLAIR

Winter 2024

PATERSON'S PROMISE



*Signs of hope
and progress grow
with University partnerships*

THE BIG PICTURE



2023 Montclair State University Commencement

CONGRATULATIONS CLASS OF 2023
#MontclairStateGrad





COMMENCEMENT 2023

In three ceremonies in May, Montclair State University conferred degrees on 5,386 graduates, making the Class of 2023 the largest graduating class in Montclair history. And in keeping with that trajectory, this past fall, for the third year in a row, the University welcomed its largest incoming class. That, along with returning students, brought more than 22,000 students back to campus.

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FROM THE PRESIDENT



Greetings from Montclair,

Happy New Year!

As we head into 2024, we're celebrating an extraordinary amount of work toward the greater good that is happening with the help of our community partners.

As you can tell from the cover, some of that good work is taking place in Paterson, a vibrant and diverse community facing many challenges, where our collaborations are providing signs of progress and a future of promise.

As you'll read in Paterson's Promise (page 24), we are partnering with Paterson schools and the City of Paterson on numerous fronts, including the development of the Charles J. Muth Museum of Hinchliffe Stadium and a revitalization initiative we're calling "One Square Mile."

This is the type of transformational work that can be done when universities become true partners with the communities they serve and listen closely to their actual needs. With the generous support from Montclair alumnus Chuck Muth and his wife, Laura, Montclair is able to commit to running the Muth Museum as a community-engaged learning hub where every Paterson school child will have an opportunity to understand the role that Paterson played as a linchpin in the civil rights movement and the desegregation of baseball. At the same time, Montclair students from a variety of majors will gain hands-on learning opportunities by organizing and curating all aspects of the museum.

Our One Square Mile initiative is another example of laying down roots and partnering with a community to respond to issues in ways that can make a true impact. After engaging community organizations, listening to folks who articulated real needs and aspirations, and asking where we could make a difference by tapping into our knowledge and resources, we were pointed to the heart of the Fourth Ward.

With a grant from the Geraldine R. Dodge Foundation, and our partnership with Paterson Public Schools, we began our work by turning Eastside High School into a University-assisted community school that provides ESL classes for adults and an after-school program for students, with more services to come.

Our work in Paterson is an example of how a university can maximize its potential by harnessing its partnerships to develop solutions alongside communities that share a vision of what is possible when we work together.

I am grateful for a university community – students, faculty staff and alumni – that understands the educational value in working toward the greater good and making the world a better place in the process.

Also included in this issue are innovative updates to our curriculum, the launch of our summer Pre-College Program for ambitious high school students, and the introduction of Bloomfield College of Montclair State University – the exciting result of our merger with Bloomfield College. I'm energized about all of the progress taking place at Montclair, and hope to see you on campus soon.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Jonathan Koppell".

Jonathan Koppell

MONTCLAIR

Publisher

Joseph A. Brennan, VP,
Communications and Marketing

Editor

Laura Griffin '20 MA

Assistant Editors

Robert Gano
Marilyn Joyce Lehren '21 MA

Design Director

Randi Rosh '20 MA

Designer

Samantha Spitaletta '97

University Photographer

Mike Peters

Contributing Photographer

John J. LaRosa '22

Staff Writer

Sylvia A. Martinez

Contributing Writers

Michele Hickey
Laura Iandiorio
Andrew Mees
Rosa Mulryan
Elyse Toribio

Production

Ariana Leyton '17, '18 MS, '22 MA
Debra Morella '79

Digital magazine

Elle Morella

MONTCLAIR is produced by
Communications and Marketing.

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Letters to the editor may be sent to
editor@montclair.edu or to:
Montclair State University
Communications and Marketing
150 Clove Road, Third Floor
Little Falls, NJ 07424

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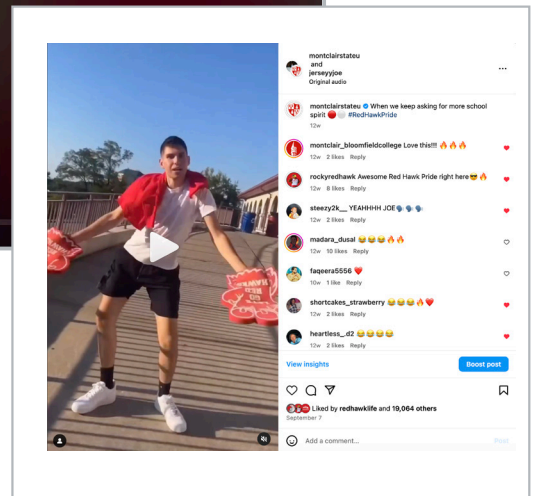
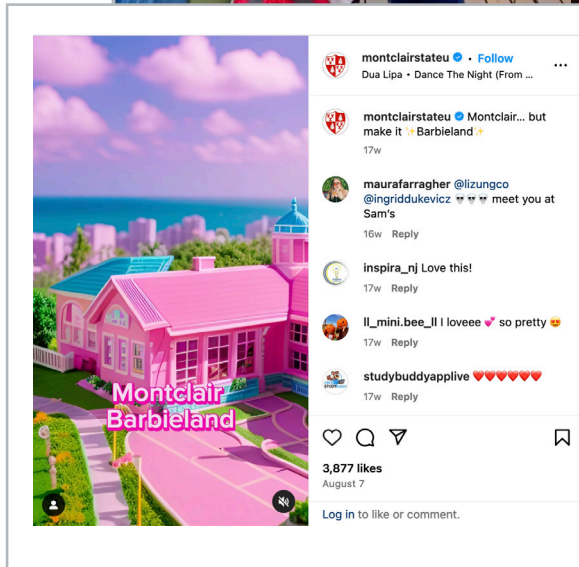
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These days, much of our feedback comes through social media. You can find @montclairstateu on Instagram and TikTok and search for Montclair State University on Facebook and LinkedIn.



The @montclairstateu TikTok, renowned among colleges and universities, has 19.2K followers and 2.1 million likes. Its videos often get millions of views. This video received 1.2 million views with 66.2K likes. We like it too!

66.2K
136



Montclair teamed up with senior influencer “Jersey Joe” (@jerseyjoe), to create a school spirit “reel” on Instagram to the delight of more than 19K of you. Watch the reel @montclairstateu.

Capitalizing on *Barbie* movie mania, Montclair’s Instagram featured a “reel” that turned campus into Barbieland. It’s definitely our dream campus!

SUPPORTING STUDENT MENTAL HEALTH

The New Jersey Office of the Secretary of Higher Education awarded the University a \$850,000 grant to help expand mental health resources for students.

The funding allows colleges and universities to expand professional capacity to meet unique mental health needs of students, focusing on underrepresented student populations disproportionately impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic.

The grant will also fund additional professional development for faculty and staff focusing on diversity, equity, inclusion and belonging as well as specialized mental health and substance use treatment opportunities for

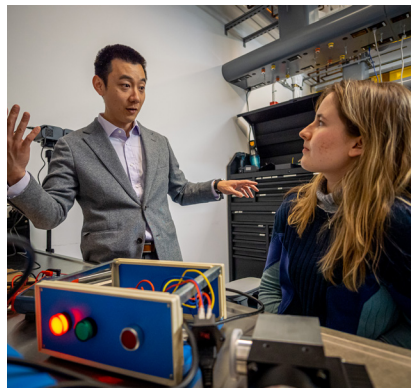


The grant will also fund emotional support training for Pebbles the Pupscot.

students, emotional support training for the school's pupscot, Pebbles, and nap pods on campus.

"We know there are sleep issues with this generation, and lack of sleep has a connection to anxiety, depression and performance," Vice President for Student

Development and Campus Life Dawn Meza Soufleris says. Beyond that, "the grant also provides additional training for staff and others who provide triage and prevention for students, particularly in intersectionality and access to counseling, with a multicultural focus." ■



Professor Wins Prestigious NSF CAREER Grant

Assistant Physics Professor Kent Leung and the students in his nuclear physics lab are asking big questions about the universe. Questions like: "How did matter emerge following the Big Bang?" and "Are there any undiscovered particles and forces out there?" With these questions and others, they're looking to further understand the vital role neutrons play in the universe.

With the help of a five-year, \$616,289 CAREER Grant from the National Science Foundation, Leung aims to create a new experimental nuclear physics research program that will work toward finding the answers.

Because neutrons are the most abundant subatomic particle on Earth, they are "an ideal test bed and probe for new science," Leung says.

The NSF CAREER grant builds on a five-year, \$436,000 grant Leung was awarded last September from the U.S. Department of Energy's Oak Ridge National Laboratory, which supports equipment for research into the neutron's extremely small electric dipole moment, which has never been observed. ■

Montclair Ranks 7th in Nation for Social Mobility

In its 2024 Best Colleges guide, *U.S. News & World Report* ranked Montclair No. 7 in the nation (out of 435 national universities) and No. 1 in New Jersey in social mobility, a measure of how well schools enroll and graduate low-income students and bring them closer to achieving the American Dream. Montclair was also ranked No. 11 for graduation rate performance, which measures how well students outperform the anticipated graduation rate of those with similar backgrounds at other schools.

In addition, the University moved up 19 places, coming in at No. 163 overall – its highest ranking ever – and reached No. 88 among the nation's top public universities on this closely watched list of the best colleges in America.

Just a week earlier, *The Wall Street Journal/College Pulse* released its Best Colleges in the U.S. list, ranking Montclair No. 104 overall out of 400 institutions, No. 37 out of 204 public institutions and No. 4 in New Jersey.

Montclair also moved up in *Washington Monthly's* rankings, coming in at No. 81 out of 442 national universities. ■



A CLASS ACT



Class of 2023 master's graduate Desmond Durham earned his degree while working three jobs – high school teacher, youth basketball coordinator and GED instructor – and raising his 9-year-old son on his own.

After teaching in Newark for 10 years, Durham decided to pursue a Master of Arts in Educational Leadership in order to make a larger impact in Newark.

"I asked myself, where would I find the time? Am I smart enough? I then considered how I would disappoint my son, Desmond Jr., and every single one of my students by passing up this opportunity," said Durham, whose story gained national attention, including an appearance on *Good Morning America's* digital platform and on the daytime talk show *Sherri*, where he and his son were presented with a trip to LEGOLAND in Florida.

"I hope my story empowers young men of color who look and sound like me to never give up on their dreams because no dream is too big, and nothing we desire for the future is out of our reach." ■

From Science Hall to Irvin D. Reid Hall

The University dedicated the naming of Irvin D. Reid Hall on September 20 in honor of the former president who three decades ago was the driving force behind Montclair achieving university status.

The ceremony was held in front of the former Science Hall – home of the Department of Biology – on a sunny afternoon that highlighted both the quintessential beauty of the campus and Irvin D. Reid's numerous contributions to student success during his eight-year tenure

as Montclair's president. "To have my name associated with any structure on this campus, but particularly a science building, is just the most touching thing that I could think of," Reid said.

Among his career accomplishments, including later becoming the first Black president of Wayne State University, Reid said he is most proud of his time at Montclair. "Because I quite frankly learned to be president here."

In addition to helping the college gain university status, Reid's contributions include creating the Center for Academic Success and graduate education; expanding the honors program; computerizing the campus; building Yogi Berra Stadium and the ice arena; commissioning architectural plans for Science Hall; and creating the Global Education Center. For more coverage, see page 38. ■





Senior chemistry major Marisa Messina became the first student in Montclair's history to be named a Goldwater Scholar in May. Her research focuses on an enzyme that could one day be used to target breast cancer treatments.

The Barry Goldwater Scholarship is one of the most prestigious national undergraduate scholarships in the natural sciences, engineering and mathematics, says Computer Science Professor Stefan Robila, the campus representative for the Goldwater Scholarship. It is awarded to students who plan to conduct research within their field after graduation, and eventually become experts in that field. Messina plans to pursue a doctorate in Medicinal Chemistry with a long-term goal of joining a pharmaceutical research team with potential to cure disease. ■

TWO NEW COLLEGES AND A NEW SCHOOL



Dean Rashid Ahmed



Interim Dean Vincent C. Alfonso

Responding to current and future workforce needs, the University created two new colleges and a new school. The College of Education and Human Services became two separate and distinct entities: the College for Education and Engaged Learning, and the College for Community Health.

The College for Education and Engaged Learning, led by Interim Dean Vincent C. Alfonso, includes Educational Foundations, Educational Leadership, Teaching and Learning, and the Center of Pedagogy and allows for the creation

of new academic offerings to meet the evolving needs of our state and the nation.

The College for Community Health, led by inaugural Dean Rashid Ahmed, is preparing the next generation of community health professionals to meet the imperative for health equity. It includes Counseling, Exercise Science and Physical Education, Family Science and Human Development, Nutrition and Food Studies, and Public Health. In addition, the new college includes Communication Sciences and Disorders, which was

previously housed in the College of Humanities and Social Sciences.

The University's new School of Computing, housed in the College of Science and Mathematics and led by inaugural Director Constantine Coutras, offers undergraduate and graduate degrees in Computer Science, Information Technology, Cybersecurity, Data Science, Applied Mathematics, and Statistics, with planning for new academic offerings underway. ■

Hollywood, Here We Come

Students can now study in Los Angeles as part of the School of Communication and Media's Semester in LA, which offers juniors and seniors a residential program that has established the University's permanent presence in Los Angeles.

Students in the Semester in LA program are enrolled full time through a combination of in-person classes focused on the Los Angeles media industry taught by a Los Angeles-based media professional, online Montclair coursework and internships in film, media, entertainment and lifestyle fields. Students are grouped together and live in apartments in Burbank made available through the program.

Montclair is now one of a small number of universities that maintain residential programs

in Los Angeles focused on film, television and entertainment. School of Communication and Media Director Keith Strudler and Assistant Professor Guy Nicolucci created the program and launched it last January.

"Our Semester in LA program enhances our students' learning experiences and networking opportunities, and creates friendships that will last a lifetime" says Strudler. ■



THE SECRET SAUCE IN PRESIDENT'S COOKING SHOW

With his own cooking show, President Jonathan Koppell showcases the people who make Montclair thrive – along with the students who are creating some of the best video content in the nation.

Koppell's new student-produced show, *Cooking With Koppell*, launched in May on Hawk+, the official streaming platform of Montclair's School of Communication and Media.

The show provides guests the chance to prepare a meal of their choosing – in some cases, a family recipe or a dish that reminds them of home – alongside Koppell in Montclair's famed Red Hawk Diner.

Amidst the cooking and conversation, Koppell learns more about the people who make the University such a diverse, inclusive and vibrant community.

"The best thing about Montclair State University – our secret sauce, if you will – is our people," says Koppell. "This show is less about cooking and more about getting to know the amazing individuals who make up this community." ■

Journalism Students Win Two Student Emmys



Fourteen School of Communication and Media students were recently recognized by the College Television Awards, which emulate the Emmy® Awards, for their production of the *New Orleans | Raging Storms* program, winning both best in the news category and the Seymour Bricker Humanitarian Award.

The program was among one of two projects by Montclair students nominated and among 132 entries from teams at 35 universities nationwide. The awards were given out in Los Angeles on April 1, 2023.

The Seymour Bricker Humanitarian Award comes with a \$4,000 cash prize for the project that best highlights a humanitarian concern, in this case *New Orleans | Raging Storms*, which reported on climate change and racial injustice in New Orleans, Louisiana. ■



LISTENING FOR COSMIC CLUES

Under the cavernous dome of the Jennifer Chalsty Planetarium in the Liberty Science Center – the largest planetarium in the Western Hemisphere – Physics Professor Marc Favata led an audience on a listening tour of the cosmos.

In his Space Talk “Cosmic Clues from Gravitational Waves,” Favata explained to the crowd how he and other scientists “listen” to the ripples of

gravity to learn to observe the mysteries of space and time and about colliding black holes and neutron stars.

“Gravitational waves are cool,” Favata says, “and we can use them to explore the universe in a different way than we have before, in a way that’s more like listening than watching.” ■

It Ain’t Over for Yogi Berra Stadium



The University has partnered with New Jersey Institute of Technology (NJIT) to ensure the future of one of northern New Jersey’s signature baseball venues – Yogi Berra Stadium – as part of a multi-million-dollar collaboration that will provide a home field for both schools’ NCAA baseball programs.

The project will have a total cost of \$5.3 million, which will revamp the stadium for the 2024 season.

Improvements to the facility will include a new, state-

of-the-art artificial turf playing surface, dugout upgrades, outfield wall replacement, a new storage building, new bullpens and batting cages, improved VIP and press boxes, and upgrades to both locker rooms. Future renovations could also include upgrades to additional space within the facility to create supplemental locker rooms.

The enhancements will position Yogi Berra Stadium as a location capable of hosting conference and NCAA baseball tournaments as well as other high-profile events, making it a year-round facility that will serve the baseball teams, all students and the community at large. ■



The First Harm Reduction Certificate Program in the U.S.

The College of Humanities and Social Sciences has launched the first-of-its-kind online graduate-level certificate titled “Harm Reduction Approaches to Substance Use.”

It is the nation’s first program designed to certify students and professionals in the practices and principles of harm reduction strategies to fight the drug overdose crisis. Students study the effectiveness of ongoing/proposed harm reduction intervention programs, and those who are interested also have opportunities to engage in harm reduction practices through volunteer experience.

The certificate introduces students and professionals to a harm reduction approach to substance use disorder, discusses a range of harm reduction services and programs, and offers training on destigmatizing, social justice-oriented and trauma-informed engagement strategies with people who use drugs.

“Montclair State University has a vital role to play in addressing the public health needs not only in our nearby counties, but the entire state of New Jersey,” says Social Work and Child Advocacy Professor Svetlana Shpiegel. ■

Juneteenth at the White House

Chancellor Marcheta P. Evans, and her spouse, Ed Evans, were guests of President Biden and Dr. Jill Biden at the White House's inaugural Juneteenth Concert on the South Lawn.

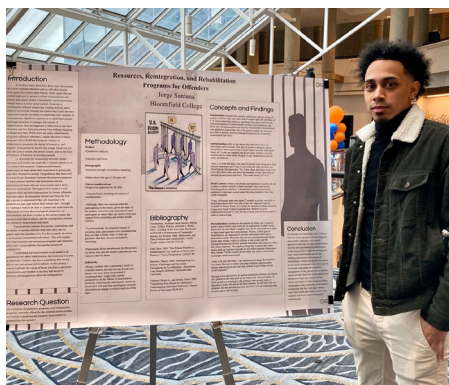
"Juneteenth has always been very meaningful to me personally, as it is to our College community. Growing up in Alabama during the Civil Rights era, I never imagined that I would be attending a Juneteenth concert on the White House lawn," said Evans. "Having Bloomfield College represented at the White House's inaugural Juneteenth Concert is indicative of the

growing understanding of the contributions Predominantly Black Institutions are making in our country's economy as we propel the social mobility of our graduates, their families and the many generations that follow." ■



Bloomfield College Chancellor Marcheta P. Evans and her spouse, Ed Evans, at the White House's Inaugural Juneteenth Concert.

Bloomfield Student Earns Top Research Poster Award



Jorge Santana '23, a Bloomfield College sociology major with a concentration in criminal justice, won the Best Undergraduate Poster award at the Eastern Sociological Society's 93rd Annual Meeting in Baltimore, Maryland. Only five of 70 undergraduate student posters received recognition at the Society's awards ceremony. The poster, titled "Resources, Reintegration, and Rehabilitation Programs for Offenders," was part of his research for a senior research seminar taught by Assistant Sociology Professor Natascia Boeri. ■

HIGH PRAISE FOR BLOOMFIELD

- Bloomfield College was designated as New Jersey's only four-year Predominantly Black Institution, Hispanic-Serving Institution and Minority Serving Institution, and has been continually recognized as a leader in social mobility opportunities and outcomes for first generation and low-income students.
- For the fifth year in a row, Bloomfield College is nationally ranked as a top undergraduate school for Game Design. In its "Top 50 Undergraduate Schools for Game Design for 2023," *The Princeton Review* ranked Bloomfield College highest in New Jersey and No. 35 nationally. ■

CELEBRATING A MILESTONE: THE 150TH COMMENCEMENT

Bloomfield College celebrated a historic 150th Commencement on Saturday, May 20, 2023, on the College Quadrangle. The Class of 2023 comprised students who originated from or held citizenship in more than 12 countries. Close to half became first-generation college graduates. Just over 280 students listened to inspiring remarks from three honorary degree recipients. CBS News Chief Investigative and Senior National Correspondent James D. Axelrod, who also served as a past member of the Bloomfield College Board of Trustees, was awarded an Honorary Doctor of Humane Letters degree. Congresswoman Mikie Sherrill and Assemblywoman Mila M. Jasey were awarded Honorary Doctor of Laws degrees. ■



(L to R): Montclair President Jonathan Koppell, journalist James D. Axelrod, Assemblywoman Mila M. Jasey, Chancellor Marcheta P. Evans and U.S. Congresswoman Mikie Sherrill.

SNAPSHOTS



27 Degrees and Counting

From Cinema and African American studies to Psychology and Sports Management, Montclair State University Adjunct Professor Joseph Segriff has an interest – and a degree – in it. Many of the 27 college degrees he's earned from 15 colleges and universities adorn his living room walls. In the last 35 years, he's earned three doctorates, one post-master's Education Specialist degree, six master's, two bachelor's and 15 associate degrees, not to mention numerous certificates.

Why? It's part of who he is, he says. "I like being a lifelong learner," says Segriff, who has taught Fundamentals of Speech in the School of Communication and Media for four years. "I like continuing my educational pursuits as a thinker and a learner. There's nowhere I'd rather be than in a seat in a classroom – or in front of students teaching."

He's worked primarily part time as an adjunct professor, which allows him time to take classes, study and write papers (he once wrote six in one night). It probably also helps that for years, he's slept only three to four hours a night. "I've been able to get a lot of work done. I have an enormous amount of energy."

Unsurprisingly, Segriff is well-versed on a variety of subjects and finds psychology and biology particularly interesting. "Psychology addresses human issues in a way that biology doesn't. But biology demands of itself, a certain degree of exactitude." It also demands lots of math courses, which he admits are "not my strong suit," particularly pre-calculus.

Assistant Professor Marylou Naumoff, the coordinator of the School of Communication and Media's Fundamentals of Speech Program, who hired Segriff, says, "He's very loquacious. He's so smart and has so many interests. He just wants to keep feeding that brain of his."

In the pursuit of brain fuel, Segriff takes classes in person and online. Most recently, he earned another three associate degrees, bringing his total to 15; he's pursuing another five, which he expects to complete by December 2024. Segriff, 67, says it's more economical to take community college classes.

While his degrees are one measurement of learning, self-efficacy – or his belief in his ability to be able to get it done – is his ultimate goal. "If you don't have self-efficacy, in my view, you don't own your accomplishments. As impractical as I am, spending money chasing degrees I don't even need, it kicks into my self-efficacy, and that makes me happy," he says.

Plus, he'll never have to wonder if he did enough in life. "Even if I didn't go for another degree, I'll still be plenty satisfied," he says. "You have to spend time doing what really appeals to you." ■

—Sylvia A. Martinez

Montclair Adjunct Professor Joseph Segriff sits in front of only some of the 27 college and university diplomas he's earned as a lifelong learner.
(Photo by John J. LaRosa)

WELCOME, BLOOMFIELD BEARS!

Historic merger creates Bloomfield College of Montclair State University

After state reviews and legislation, Bloomfield College officially became part of Montclair State University in July, allowing for Bloomfield's important mission to continue and its students to be able to complete their education without interruption.

The merger also meant that Bloomfield students would not only benefit from Montclair's lower tuition and fees but also the support of the second largest public research university in New Jersey. Prior to merging with Montclair, Bloomfield College was the only four-year institution in New Jersey that had been designated as a Predominantly Black Institution, a Hispanic-Serving Institution and a Minority Serving Institution.



Students were given bags with the Bloomfield College of Montclair State University logo on them at orientation. (Photo by John J. LaRosa)



Mascots Rocky the Red Hawk and Deacon the Bear pose for a selfie with President Jonathan Koppell and Chancellor Marcheta P. Evans at the start of the school year. (Photo by Mike Peters)



Renamed “Bloomfield College of Montclair State University,” the college will provide an affordable, high-quality liberal arts education in a supportive, personalized environment.

Former Bloomfield President Marcheta P. Evans will continue to provide leadership as chancellor of the college and as a key member of the leadership team under University President Jonathan Koppell.

“Today we exuberantly celebrate the result of tenacious dedication, cooperation and hard work by employees of our two strategically aligned institutions,” Evans said on the day of the merger. “This merger ensures that our commitment to the academic and economic success of young people from traditionally underserved communities will not only continue but will be enhanced.”

“This is a transformative moment for our students, and generations of students to come,” said Koppell.

On June 30, New Jersey Governor Phil Murphy signed enabling legislation sponsored by Senators M. Teresa Ruiz (D-29) and Renee C. Burgess (D-28), as well as Assemblywomen Britnee N. Timberlake (D-34), Eliana Pintor Marin (D-29) and Mila Jasey (D-27). It is also co-sponsored by Senators Gordon M. Johnson (D-37) and Paul A. Sarlo (D-36), as well as Assemblywomen Verlina Reynolds-Jackson (D-15), Linda Carter (D-22), Shavonda Sumter (D-35) and Cleopatra Tucker (D-28),

and Assemblymen John McKeon (D-27), Brandon Umba (R-8), Thomas Giblin (D-34) and Kevin J. Rooney (R-40).

“We are grateful to our elected officials for their support,” said Koppell. “They understood that it was vital for the State of New Jersey to continue the mission and legacy of Bloomfield College.”

The merger has entered the “integration phase,” during which a distinctive educational experience will be designed for the students of Bloomfield College of Montclair State University. Over the next academic year, the future of all academic programs will be considered and the College will continue to offer courses required for Bloomfield students to complete their existing majors and programs, honoring the majors of all currently enrolled students.

Bloomfield will also maintain its NCAA Division II athletics programs and remain the Bears, for at least the next year, unless otherwise directed by the NCAA.

The merger process began in October 2021, when Bloomfield put out a call for an academic partner to help it avoid closing due to financial challenges exacerbated by the pandemic. Montclair responded because its mission aligned well with Bloomfield’s mission of providing access to high-quality educational experiences to students from groups that are often marginalized, and it wanted to enable the historic college to remain a resource for the community.

In December 2021, the institutions signed an agreement formalizing their commitment to explore a strategic relationship. In October 2022, both Boards of Trustees approved an Agreement and Plan of Merger, advancing plans to create “Bloomfield College of Montclair State University.”

Now, Bloomfield’s mission will carry on and be further enhanced by the resources of a large, comprehensive public-serving research university with a growing national reputation.

“We believe being part of Montclair State University is overwhelmingly in the best long-term interest of current and future students, faculty, staff and our local communities here in Essex County and beyond,” said Evans.

“As we design a new and distinctive experience for Bloomfield College of Montclair State University, we will seek to create a new national model for how institutions can come together to better serve their communities,” said Koppell. “The future of higher education is collaboration, not competition, and we hope this will serve as an example of what is possible when institutions of all shapes and sizes work together.”

News of the merger was also celebrated by New Jersey elected officials.

“For well over a century, both Montclair State University and Bloomfield College have played important roles in providing New Jersey students with a high-quality education,” said Governor Murphy. “This merger will allow an institution that has served countless individuals from a diverse array of backgrounds to continue offering a distinctive and transformative educational experience to its students. I commend and congratulate Montclair State University and Bloomfield College on the completion of their historic merger.” ■

Summer in the City

By Marilyn Joyce Lehren
Photos by Mike Peters

B

efore last summer, the path to college for Tori Mcklaine, a high school senior from South Jersey, had been pretty straightforward. She's already committed to Montclair State University as a student-athlete to play Red Hawks soccer and planned to major in Journalism.

But a train ride to New York City as part of Montclair's Pre-College Summer Programs opened her eyes to a variety of different paths she can take within Montclair's School of Communication and Media.

"Being part of the social media group introduced us to public relations, influencer marketing and working with agencies," Mcklaine says. "I've come to realize there are so many intricacies within one field and there are so many ways to find the perfect fit for you."

The new weeklong Pre-College Summer Programs allowed Mcklaine and nearly 100 other high schoolers to pursue their passions and career paths in film and TV production, social media marketing, business innovation, Python and robotics, and art and architecture.

Classes taught by Montclair faculty are complemented by access to the corporate and cultural resources of New York City. It is the best of both worlds as students experience what it's like to live and learn on campus and how the University is

connected to the vibrant metropolitan region. This past summer, NYC field trips included Google headquarters, creative agencies and the hit musical *Hamilton*.

Throughout the summer, a variety of pre-college and early college programs provided opportunities for students to bond over shared interests. Multi-week experiences at Montclair included the Pre-

Law Summer Academy, Italian Immersion Summer Program and Model United Nations Summer Academy.

Each summer, incoming Red Hawks are able to get a jump-start on college. This year, more than 300 students attended the Summer Bridge Scholars Program and Educational Opportunity Fund to earn credits and get used to the college routine. ■





1. Professor and History Department Chair Jeff Strickland, far left, leads students as they cross the streets of New York City to learn about the city's art, architecture and history.

2. Hayden Silva films a social media segment in the School of Communication and Media.

3. A student looks at an exhibit at the African Burial Ground National Monument.

4. Tori Mcklaine interviews University President Jonathan Koppell about the new Pre-College Summer Programs. "I had 100% confidence that if we invited high school students to come and sample what we had to offer at Montclair



that it would not be hard for us to attract very bright, engaged students. I have no doubt that this is going to grow in the years ahead," Koppell told her.

5. History Professor Jeff Strickland (in royal blue) brings students to the outdoor memorial of the African Burial Ground National Monument.

6. Coordinator of Strategic Communications Keith Green leads Social Media Success students through Times Square on their way to visit a public relations agency.

7. Stella Haupt-Lucas – holding her autographed playbill – proves she was indeed in the room where it happened.

Planting Seeds of Change

New minor in Native American and Indigenous Studies finds strength in partnerships with New Jersey tribal communities

By Marilyn Joyce Lehren | Photos by John J. LaRosa

In the winter, when the fields on the Munsee Three Sisters Medicinal Farm are empty and snow-covered, a group of Montclair State University students and their professors help ready the farm for spring. Beginning last year, they joined efforts to advance Indigenous food sovereignty, and by hand painting garden signs with the words “pehpechkweekush” for “carrot” and other crops in the Munsee language, they were also planting seeds to help revive an Indigenous language.



(Top photo) An intensive, field-based partnership with the Turtle Clan Ramapough includes work at the Munsee Three Sisters Farm. Kevin Blazon, a senior History major with a Native American and Indigenous Studies minor, works with Yvelices Nunez, who drove the Montclair students to the farm.

(Center photo) Farrah Fornarotto, a senior majoring in Anthropology, with minors in Archaeology and Native American and Indigenous Studies, paints a garden sign with the Munsee language word for "carrot."

(Bottom photo) Maisa Taha, associate professor of Anthropology and co-director of the Native American and Indigenous Studies program, talks with students at the farm.

"It's definitely a great place to start, but hopefully it's not where we stop," says Farrah Fornarotto, a senior majoring in Anthropology, with minors in Archaeology and Native American and Indigenous Studies. "There's a lot to tackle."

The challenges date back decades. Munsee Three Sisters Farm provides traditional food for the Turtle Clan of the Ramapough Lunaape (Lenape) Nation, a tribe that can no longer safely farm its own land in Upper Ringwood, New Jersey. Environmental and health issues caused by industrial dumping have led to a generational decline in the Turtle Clan members' ability to practice their culture, including the Munsee language, which is at risk of becoming as dormant as the winter fields.

A key aspect of Montclair's contributions are organizing the tribe's records and documents related to the industrial dumping on ancestral land. Montclair students help gather the scientific evidence documented at the Superfund site, the health impact and oral histories from eyewitnesses, and with University resources, are creating a single, digitally accessible repository for future researchers and the tribal members who continue to fight for proper cleanup of the land. The work is being done in close collaboration with Edison Wetlands Association Executive Director Bob Spiegel and members of the Ringwood community.

More than 300 pages of newspaper articles detailing the dumping of toxic paint sludge from a Ford Motor Co. factory have been indexed by students.

"Our students are going through and creating a table of contents identifying the names [of key players], the toxic chemicals listed in reports, physical sites that are listed, agencies that are listed, and creating a searchable tool for that whole collection of news articles," says Mark Clatterbuck, associate professor of Religion and

co-director of the Native American and Indigenous Studies program.

Montclair students taking part in the class projects say they share a commitment to helping Indigenous communities. Jala Best, who graduated last spring with a degree in Psychology, explains that her drive comes from her experiences as an Afro-Indigenous woman.

"Oftentimes the issues of Native communities are ignored or Native people are spoken about in the past tense, like we are not still living, breathing, surviving and fighting for justice You can't even conceptualize that there are atrocities happening today because you believe that it's a thing of the past," Best says.

As part of the University's minor in Native American and Indigenous Studies, Montclair initiated the field-based partnership with Turtle Clan Chief Vincent Mann of the Ramapough Lunaape Nation. Program support includes students working directly with the tribe on food sovereignty, the language revitalization effort and ongoing environmental concerns.

"The issues and the challenges of the Turtle Clan, they're huge, they're varied and there's no shortage of them," says Clatterbuck.

The program is closely tied to the University's Land Acknowledgement Statement. Clatterbuck, along with History Professor Elspeth Martini and Anthropology Professor Chris Matthews consulted with New Jersey's three state-recognized tribal nations – the Ramapough Lenape, Nanticoke Lenni-Lenape and Powhatan Renape – in drafting the statement, and also considered how it could represent a commitment from Montclair to working with and for their communities.

"It's not just about making some sort of historical reference. It's really about saying, 'What is our responsibility to those communities?'" Clatterbuck says. The program is intentionally community-engaged, hands-on and focused on



(Top left photo) Mark Clatterbuck, associate professor of Religion and co-director of the Native American and Indigenous Studies program, constructs signage as part of the field work helping promote the preservation of Native American land and culture.

(Top right photo) Meryem Teke '22 paints a garden sign at the Munsee Three Sisters Farm. The work is among the creative ways Montclair is supporting the Turtle Clan's language revitalization and environmental recovery.

problem-solving, including finding creative ways to support community-driven language revitalization and environmental recovery. "The Ramapough understand that part of their healing and survival is really dependent on recovering key aspects of their cultural ways," Clatterbuck says. "Language is on par with restoring foodways and their access to clean water, land and air."

Munsee language expert, Nikole Pecore, a member of the Stockbridge-Munsee Nation in Wisconsin, has guided Montclair students studying linguistic anthropology in building a digital repository of instructional materials that will be used to train new Munsee teachers and support community learners.

"We're looking at language as a key to culture, to bringing back Munsee speaking cultures, as well as other Lenape languages belonging to original peoples in the State of New Jersey," says Associate Anthropology Professor Maisa Taha.

Work on the farm also includes students preparing the fields and helping deliver the organic, healthy, medicinal healing crops to the community. "It's doing the nitty-gritty

work with local communities and following their lead," Clatterbuck says.

"It might be challenging to figure out how all of these different pieces fit together. But the fact of the matter is they are all intimately connected," Taha says. "You can't have language without culture. You can't have culture without tribal sovereignty. You can't have tribal sovereignty without environmental justice. What we're bringing to our students and frankly, to ourselves as well, is this huge opportunity to work with our tribal partners in trying to understand those connections and come up with reasonable, impactful solutions that will serve them for years to come."

Clatterbuck adds, "We're all passionate about this on a personal level, and we see this as a matter of justice and addressing – you hear the buzzword 'decolonization' thrown around a lot – but as far as I'm concerned, this is what that work looks like. It's messy, and it's trial and error, and we're figuring all this out as we go. But that is the work." ■

With workshops in poetry, fiction, nonfiction and memoir, the Creative Writing program punches above its weight, nurturing the literary dreams of future authors

By Sylvia A. Martinez • Photos by Mike Peters

PLOT TWIST

Somewhere in Crystal Castro's mother's attic is the first book Castro ever wrote. "It's written in crayon and stapled together," says Castro, a junior editor at Little, Brown Books for Young Readers, one of the Big Five publishers based in New York City.

Castro graduated from Montclair State University with a Bachelor of Arts in English and a minor in Creative Writing in May 2022.

"My first day at the office was three weeks after graduation," says Castro, who credits the Creative Writing program with helping her land her dream job. "I love it. This is

probably what I'll do for the rest of my career – happily so."

Up until she entered the Creative Writing program, Castro says, she thought of writing as something she did alone in her bedroom. Then she was introduced to a writing workshop with visiting English Professor Rachel Carter. "She fostered such an incredible workshop environment, where I was reading other people's work, they were reading my work, and we were giving each other feedback," she recalls. "It was this incredibly collaborative experience, and I – all at once – fell in love with that."

Montclair's Creative Writing program was restarted in 2008 by director and English Professor David Galef, a prolific writer, author and champion of his students, both present and former.

Galef notes that many students at Montclair are second-generation immigrants, often the first in their families to attend college, and English isn't always their native language. Additionally, "They're often holding down one or even two jobs and that's tough," he says. "The fact that they're competing head-to-head with schools with higher profiles and they've done this well – I think it's amazing, and they should be recognized for it." ➔



(Left) Montclair alumna Priyanka Taslim '14 holds her book *The Love Match* (courtesy photo), which *Publishers Weekly* described as “Jane Austen meets Bengali cinema in Taslim’s joyful debut.”

(Right) Student Fatima Konate asks a question in a creative writing workshop while holding Professor David Galef’s book on writing flash fiction.



Creative Writing program director and English Professor David Galef, with his lesson projected on his face and the screen behind him, talks to students about the writing process.



Professor Mark Rotella teaches specialized courses, such as food, memoir and sports writing.

“I’m kind of lucky in that the students who take my class are those who are very interested in writing,” Rotella says. “They attend all the classes, and they do the work.”

In his food-writing class, which may include tasting food and writing about it or penning a restaurant review, Rotella takes a Proustian approach. “I take them into writing about food as memory and how food – like Marcel Proust’s madeleine – once you bite into something, will spark a whole barrage of memories,” he says. “I talk about food as culture; a lot of students at Montclair come from so many different backgrounds, that food becomes a lingua franca for discussing culture.” Meanwhile, his memoir-writing class “allows students to really get to know each other, feel comfortable with writing about themselves and sharing it,” he says. Lastly, sports writing is not about scores reportage but long, narrative-form writing.

Ultimately, he says, “What I want them to have, at the end of the semester, is that one piece of writing that they are really proud of, that they can say they accomplished. They could show their family, they could show their kids in the future but also that maybe when they apply to grad school or for a job, there’s a writing sample there. They can say, ‘I wrote this, and I’m proud of this.’”

The 411 on Creative Writing

The creative writing workshops and a Creative Writing minor are open to all undergraduate students, regardless of discipline; however, only English majors may pursue a Creative Writing concentration.

Galef is proud of the program and how it benefits students. “I’m often asked that age-old question, ‘Can you really teach creative writing?’” he says, laughing. “People who ask that question have probably never been to a workshop.”

The program covers 200-, 300- and 400-level courses. Students in the 200-level courses are often given writing prompts, but not in the advanced courses, Galef says. “You’ve got a semester to give us 40 pages, do what you want. We give more structure than that, but we don’t tell you what to

do. You produce stories or sections from a longer work, and we workshop it,” he says, adding, “It’s pretty similar to what a student will encounter in an MFA program. In fact, a project in the advanced fiction workshop makes a very suitable writing sample, should you want to apply for an MFA program.”

Through the Creative Writing program, students can take a variety of classes. “You may think you’re God’s gift to poetry but have you tried a fiction class? How about screenwriting? How about Young Adult? We’ve got a lot of different electives,” Galef says.

Professor Mark Rotella, director of the Joseph and Elda Coccia Institute for the Italian Experience in America, teaches a mix of classes, including food, memoir and sports writing. An author and former senior editor for *Publishers Weekly*, Rotella loves teaching.

This year, Rotella helped formalize a partnership between the Montclair Literary Festival and Montclair State University.

Learning to be a writer

Creative Writing alumnus Davon Loeb '11 has been getting rave reviews for *The In-Betweens: A Lyrical Memoir* (West Virginia University Press), a coming-of-age story about his Southern Black and Long Island-Jewish heritage.

"Engagingly delivered, candid reflections on heritage and identity," praises Kirkus Reviews. Chicago Review of Books writes: "Utterly captivating and resonant, *The In-Betweens* deserves a top spot on your bookshelf."

After earning a BA in English with a concentration in Creative Writing, Loeb graduated with an MFA from Rutgers University-Camden in 2015, where he started his memoir. Yet the New Jersey author, English teacher and online editor at The Rumpus credits the Creative Writing program with making him a better writer.

"Though I did not write any of *The In-Betweens* while studying at Montclair State University, in many ways, the writer I eventually became, the writer I am now, has everything to do with my experiences in Montclair," Loeb says. "Taking creative writing classes, specifically poetry and fiction, at Montclair was really about expanding my exposure to literature, craft and workshops."

Loeb recalls doing readings for Montclair's literary magazine, *The Normal Review*. "I remember the first time I ever had a piece published, that it was there, and that I celebrated with my classmates. It felt very special," he says.

Additionally, Loeb, who is currently working on a collection of essays about parenthood and being a father, looks back fondly on learning from Montclair professors "and feeling like I learned so much about how to become a better writer – that my poetry could absolutely

influence my prose, consequently, my prose could influence my poetry – that the two could equally exist in my work."

Alyssa DiPalma '23, who earned a BA in Film and Television, won the 2023 Johnny Muller Memorial Scholarship in Fiction with "Passaic," a story she wrote as part of a class while working on her Creative Writing minor. She credits Galef with creating "a safe environment for other writers to share their work, to critique each other's work, to give each other positive feedback or critical feedback but in a way where no one ever felt like it was too harsh or too critical."

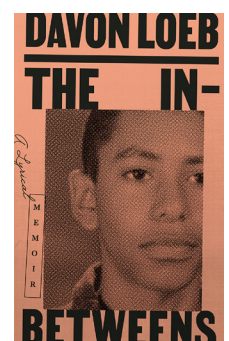
Meanwhile, Little, Brown editor Castro says she went into the Creative Writing program thinking that she was just going to become

a better writer. "I definitely did, but I came out with my career and so much more," she says.

Castro encourages anyone "who is interested in reading and writing" to participate. The program, she says, isn't "just for people who want to be authors someday. It's for anyone who feels like they have a story, and I'm of the opinion that that's everyone." ■

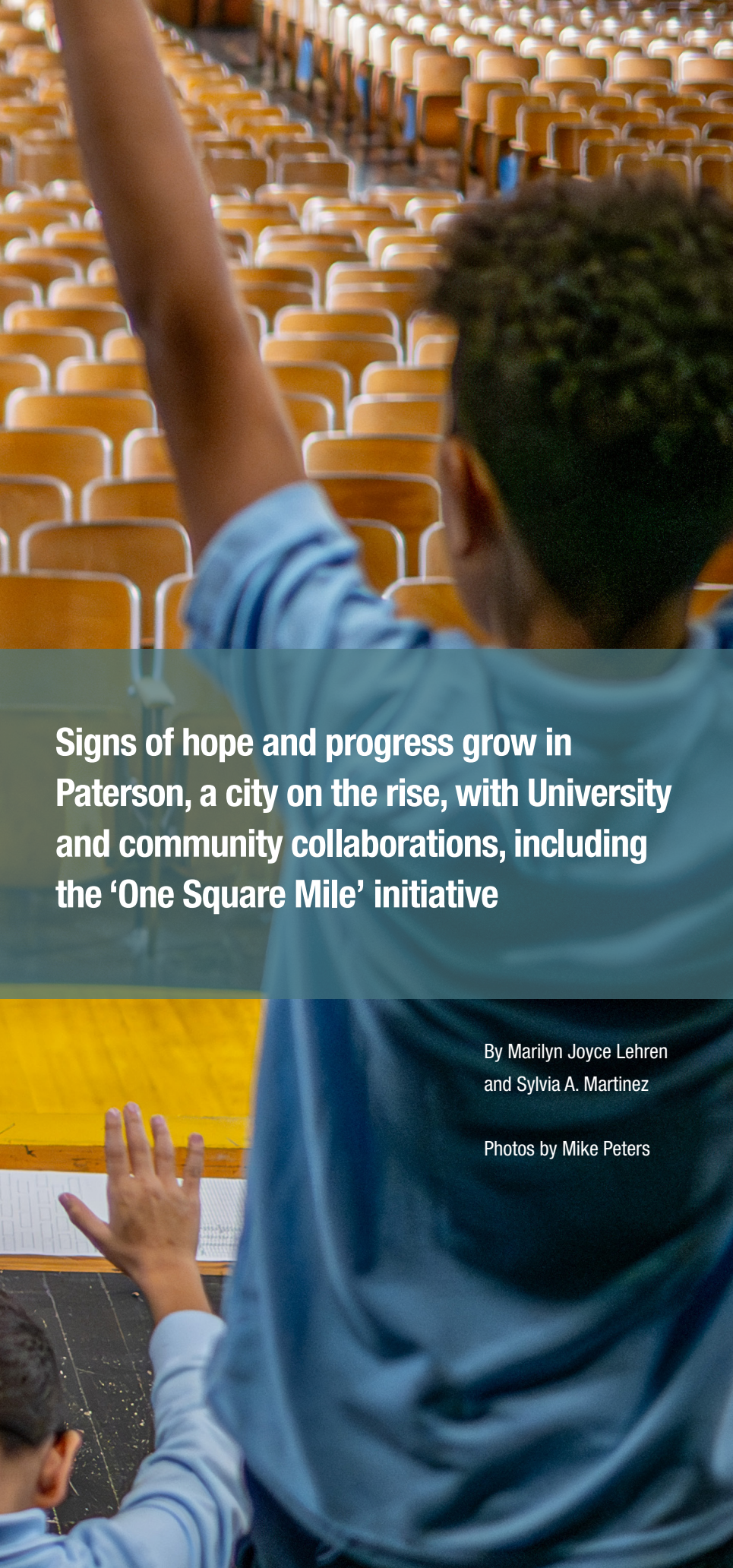


Author, English teacher and online editor Davon Loeb '11 has received literary praise for his recently published book *The In-Betweens: A Lyrical Memoir*.
(Photo by Frank Apollonio)



Paterson's Promise

Inner City Ensemble's Nicholas Rodriguez leads students at Public School No. 15 in a routine they will perform for an audience at the end of the academic year.



Signs of hope and progress grow in Paterson, a city on the rise, with University and community collaborations, including the ‘One Square Mile’ initiative

By Marilyn Joyce Lehren
and Sylvia A. Martinez

Photos by Mike Peters

A

fter school at Paterson’s Public School No. 15, in a neighborhood facing challenges, its community service programming is in full swing, with classes in the performing arts presented as a means to boost student achievement. Nicholas Rodriguez, the executive artistic director of Inner City Ensemble, leads elementary students in stillness, mindfulness, movement and more. The uniform-clad group of students mimic his moves, then dance through their routine as he plays Santana’s “Smooth.”

A Juilliard-trained dancer and choreographer, Rodriguez got his start with this same ensemble in his hometown of Paterson, dancing with his older brother in the group’s first performance. He’s come full circle, now running the arts nonprofit that ignited his passion for dance and provides free training and performing opportunities for underserved youths in Paterson.

Rodriguez is one of many who believe – despite its deep struggles – in Paterson’s promise. There is profound pride and a deep reservoir of hope among the city’s community activists, 110 nonprofits and volunteers that outcomes can be better, that streets can be safer, and fewer lives can be lost to addiction and gun violence.

In the year since Montclair State University announced a \$1 million grant for a collective impact project called “One Square Mile,” focused on transforming New Jersey’s third-largest and one of its poorest cities, that hope has been renewed by

movement to collaboratively advance racial justice and equity, improve health and foster student achievement.

Funding from the Geraldine R. Dodge Foundation is going toward a new full-service community school at Eastside High School, offering English classes for adults and classes in the creative arts to teens. Four nonprofit organizations – with missions to help the homeless, address substance use, provide free meals to families, and help kids express themselves through dance and arts programming – have also received a slice of the Dodge Foundation funding.

This is just the beginning of a shared vision between the University and city advocates and leaders, one that aims to revitalize a concentrated area of the city. The One Square Mile initiative is engaged in finding community-driven solutions to the city's crises.

Montclair is in it for the long term, says University President Jonathan Koppell, speaking in October at a meeting of the advisory group. "I don't view this as a one-year project or a two-year project. I view this as a decades-long placement, where we together start to understand the ingredients of transformation on a neighborhood-by-neighborhood basis."

Montclair Justice Studies Associate Professor Jason Williams, a scholar-activist who examines the experiences of young Black men with the American criminal justice system, adds: "When we think about the K-12 school system, when we think about the criminal legal system, when we think about substance use disorder, Paterson has great, great needs. The city has been abandoned for so long. I think the urgency requires that we focus on the city."

UNIVERSITY'S COMMITMENT

The University has long been present in Paterson. Williams, for instance, works within the community addressing harm reduction and criminal justice reforms. In the public schools, Montclair faculty support

teachers and school leaders in the district's multicultural classrooms. The University's Upward Bound staff prepare Paterson high schoolers for college. Robert Reid and Pauline Garcia-Reid – both Family Science and Human Development professors – collaborate on the Communities Organizing for Prevention and Empowerment or C.O.P.E. Initiative, with Montclair students assisting in classes aimed at preventing substance misuse and the spread of HIV among African American and Latino youths.

The University's growing partnership also includes the revival of Hinchliffe Stadium, one of America's last remaining Negro League ballparks, which sits next to the iconic Great Falls of the Passaic River. Montclair alumnus and Paterson native Chuck Muth '77 and his wife, Laura, made a transformational \$5 million gift that allows the University to partner in the creation and operation of a museum to tell the story of the league and the integration of baseball.

"The opportunity to work alongside Montclair State University on the stadium revitalization project presented a terrific way for me to give back in a meaningful way to the city that played such a pivotal and inspiring role in helping to build my personal foundation and launch a successful career in business," Muth said when announcing the gift for the museum that will also serve as a community hub.

'PATERSON/ON THE RISE'

Paterson has become such a focus for the University that last spring, Montclair's student journalists examined its crucial issues and its evolution from a storied manufacturer of silks and other textiles to a post-industrial city challenged by drugs, crime and unemployment.

"Unless you live in New Jersey, you wouldn't know the importance Paterson had on the industrial revolution; the impact it had on film, television and radio; different cultural groups coming to the United States and how it's a hub for Arabic and Muslim cultures throughout the entire eastern United States,"



Alexander Hamilton chose the Great Falls of the Passaic River for America's first planned industrial center. The site once powered the machines turning out steam locomotives, Colt revolvers and aircraft engines. By the end of the 19th century, the silk industry had earned Paterson its nickname, "Silk City."



says Francis Churchill '23, who served as senior producer for the Montclair News Lab special titled *Paterson/On The Rise*.

Students spent time in the community to gain trust and to get the perspective on the city's problems from people who live there, including those who face homelessness, substance use challenges and food insecurity, as well as from the advocates, volunteers and activists who are trying to make a difference.



(Right) Montclair President Jonathan Koppell addresses the One Square Mile advisory committee in October at The Brownstone in Paterson. The initiative is one of scores of projects in which the University and community collaborate to find solutions to pressing issues.



(Left) Student journalists looked at the troubles that confront Paterson, and the partnerships being formed to find solutions to pressing problems. The report was overseen by Professor Steve McCarthy, a network TV news veteran and Emmy Award-winning producer. (Photo courtesy of Montclair News Lab)



(From left) BAW Development CEO Baye Adolfo-Wilson, now retired Paterson Public Schools Superintendent Eileen F. Shafer, Paterson Mayor Andre Sayegh, donor Chuck Muth '77 and Montclair President Jonathan Koppell at a press conference announcing the partnership to create the Charles J. Muth Museum of Hinchliffe Stadium. Sayegh said the city appreciates the partnership "to help make history again."



Aracelis Ruiz grew up in Paterson and attended its public schools. Recently she oversaw a pilot program of adult English language classes at Eastside High School and serves as project manager of the One Square Mile collaboration.



Home to a diverse population, Paterson bustles with activity.

"When you hear about Paterson, you hear about the bad stuff, but the work I did, I saw so many organizations that are really putting in a lot of hard work into making it a better place," says George Valdes '23, a multimedia journalist.

ENDLESS POSSIBILITIES

Among those who understand the potential – and challenges – in Paterson is Aracelis Ruiz, whose family moved from the Dominican Republic to Silk City when she was a child. She attended Paterson Public Schools, becoming the first in her family to earn a high school diploma and eventually a college degree.

Ruiz was teaching Sunday school when she learned her father was caught in crossfire that left him and two other men shot and wounded in June 2022, victims in a long list of gun violence statistics.

"A lot of people may be numb to these things happening," Ruiz says, "but it's not normal for any of us, and it shouldn't be."

Ruiz is committed to helping create better lives for Patersonians. Years of volunteer work with her Paterson church, Vida Nueva, and more recently as a neighborhood revitalization specialist for Passaic County Habitat for Humanity, have shaped her views about the interconnectedness of

education, housing, crime, drugs, food insecurity – and how the connections among engaged partners can drive meaningful impact.

Recently, she was hired as One Square Mile project manager to coordinate the University's role as "the convener and anchor institution that provides support and resources" with the various partners involved in social justice, social public health and education.

"It's collaborative, so to get to dig in and bring forth that change in the community, that's exciting," Ruiz says. "Think of the possibilities. The possibilities are endless."



(Left) St. Paul's Community Development Center operates a food pantry, among many other programs, and works in two full-service community schools in Paterson to provide food for families experiencing food insecurity.



Montclair Instructor Alice Wright teaches English as a new language to adults as part of the new full-service community school at Eastside High School.



At Public School No. 5, families pick up the free meals provided by St. Paul's Community Development Center.



At Public School No. 15, elementary students rehearse the routine they've been working on as part of an after-school program presented by Inner City Ensemble. When not on stage, the bilingual students work on English, math and homework assignments.

NONPROFITS GET A BOOST

With Dodge Foundation funding secured by the University, Paterson was able to open its 11th full-service community school at Eastside High School. The program is organized around helping students succeed in school and life, and offers creative classes in writing, dance and drama. Montclair will assist with college and career readiness workshops.

Eastside's full-service community school also offers English classes for adults. More than 60% of Paterson's residents speak a language other than English, according to the U.S. Census. The University is now assessing data from a 10-week pilot

program coordinated by Ruiz and taught by a Montclair ESL-certified instructor to create sustainable, long-term, English-as-a-new-language programs for Spanish- and Arabic-speaking residents. ESL students are tutored by Montclair students, including Bonner Leaders, Latin American Student Organization members and others.

"Our students love to connect the theory to practice to see what it's like to do this work out in the real world. They get excited about it and that excitement also gets transferred to the community. I think it's a great marriage," says Bryan Murdock, associate vice president for Community Partnerships.

Black Lives Matter Paterson, St. Paul's Community Development Center, Calvary Baptist Community Center and Inner City Ensemble also received funding as part of the first group to benefit from the One Square Mile initiative.

Tough issues are being addressed, including working to overcome hunger in the city. Addressing struggles with food insecurity, St. Paul's Community Development Center provides free meals at two full-service community schools in Paterson. Its share of Dodge Foundation money will cover the costs of a strategic planning process, updating its website and creating a promotional video to help tell its story.

The University is also assisting with the nonprofit's Breaking the Cycle program, which helps formerly incarcerated men with job training to secure culinary arts or OSHA construction safety certification. Montclair faculty will examine its program design, data collection and other reentry work.

The Inner City Ensemble is hiring a part-time administrator to help with board development and grant writing so that it may continue its work in the arts addressing cultural identity, belonging, and social justice and reform issues.

Calvary Baptist Community Center operates a preschool and hosts vaccination

clinics, among other services. The nonprofit will use its portion of the Dodge Foundation grant to enhance technology.

Black Lives Matter Paterson will purchase a van to provide harm reduction supplies and services, including educational materials, throughout the city's Fourth Ward.

HARM REDUCTION, A PROJECT OF SOCIAL WORK AND SOCIAL JUSTICE

The opioid epidemic and substance abuse in Paterson manifests in overdose fatalities that are among the nation's highest. With additional support from the Open Society Foundations and Vital Strategies, Montclair has harnessed the resources of its Social Work and Justice Studies programs to provide critical harm reduction awareness, education and training to community and faith-based leaders who are at the front line of the epidemic.

"At this moment, a lot of it is about building connections and talking with people on the ground," says Williams, the social justice professor and scholar-activist. This includes collaborating with community members, policymakers and elected officials, and partnering with the Passaic County Department of Health and community-based organizations on substance abuse programming.

"We've been educating the community about what substance use disorders are and then what steps we need to take as a collective to ameliorate some of these bad policies that are on the books," Williams says.

Funding from Vital Strategies helped Social Work and Child Advocacy Professor Svetlana Shpiegel launch this past fall an online graduate-level certificate titled "Harm Reduction Approaches to Substance Use." This is the nation's first program designed to certify students and professionals in the practices and principles of harm reduction strategies (see story, page 10).

"Unless you live in New Jersey, you wouldn't know the importance Paterson had on the industrial revolution; the impact it had on film, television and radio; different cultural groups coming to the United States and how it's a hub for Arabic and Muslim cultures throughout the entire eastern United States."

—Francis Churchill '23



Taking his work out into the community, Professor Jason Williams meets with Brenda “Bre” Azanedo, project manager of the Black Lives Matter Paterson Harm Reduction Center, which supports Paterson residents battling addiction. The outreach includes distributing items such as naloxone to reverse an opioid overdose and other harm reduction supplies to the community.



Montclair students lend helping hands to a Habitat for Humanity project in Paterson during a day of service marking the opening of the fall 2023 semester.



(Left) The new Superintendent of the Paterson Public Schools Laurie W. Newell, who has taught at Montclair, is partnering with University administrators and faculty who work with youths and in the schools. Newell, shown here with Associate Vice President for Community Partnerships Bryan Murdock, says she welcomes Montclair's collaboration.

Shpiegel also completed a needs assessment in Paterson, looking for gaps in harm reduction services based on indicators such as overdose deaths, where the services are located and where the need is. The work, conducted with the University's Center for Research and Evaluation on Education and Human Services, included qualitative interviews with key stakeholders, focus groups, surveys and GIS mapping.

Montclair assisted Black Lives Matter Paterson in drafting a grant proposal for additional state funding for the city's first harm reduction center, which opened on Broadway Street earlier this year.

IN SCHOOLS, 'ADJUSTING THE SAILS OF THE SHIP'

Three years ago, the Montclair State University Network for Educational Renewal launched an equity-oriented leadership

professional learning series. This program met with all district and school leaders to discuss issues of implicit bias, anti-racist leadership, inclusivity and academic achievement throughout the school year.

The results are promising. “What we have seen in the walk-throughs is a lot more attention to detail as it relates to equity,” says Educational Leadership Assistant Professor Patricia Virella. This includes more visual aids in multiple languages, more teachers speaking native languages to children, more adults having difficult conversations about race and equity, as well as equity-focused instruction that allows for critical thinking.

“When we think about the work of equity leadership, it really is about how do you get the leaders to adjust the sails of the ship to meet the needs of the particular demographics that they have in their building,” Virella says.

Associate Professor Fernando Naiditch is part of a team of faculty assessing the needs of teachers in classrooms with linguistic diversity. Students in Paterson speak languages that crisscross the globe: Spanish, Arabic, Turkish, Bengali, French, Russian – nearly 50 different languages in all.

Recently he led professional development with the district's teachers on promoting learning in multilingual classrooms, sharing with them best practices for students learning English as a new language. “My aim is to support teachers with the skills and knowledge needed to be successful with culturally and linguistically diverse student populations,” Naiditch says.

Adds Montclair alumna and Paterson Public Schools Acting Assistant Superintendent Nahed Badawy '08 MAT, '14 MEd: “I like to be challenged and Paterson is challenging, but in a positive way. When you achieve success in Paterson, you feel so good. It's the ultimate reward because you make a difference in people's lives.” ■

Sports Briefs



Men's Soccer Ranked 5th in DIII, Plays in NCAA 'Sweet 16'

The No. 5-ranked Montclair men's soccer team battled No. 7 Connecticut College to a 2-2 draw but were knocked off 4-3 in penalty kicks in the NCAA Sectional Semifinals "Sweet 16" matchup in Fredericksburg, Virginia, on November 18. The Red Hawks finished their season with a 19-2-2 record and undefeated in a perfect 9-0-0 in the New Jersey Athletic Conference.

"It was a great run that I felt ended too soon," said Head Coach Todd Tumelty. "[Penalty kicks] are a tough way

to go out. I'm really proud of our guys. This is a special group. They deserve better, but we will learn from it and keep moving forward."

To make it to the tournament, the Red Hawks first claimed the 15th New Jersey Athletic Conference Championship in program history, beating Rowan University 4-2. To top off the season, the coaching staff was named Staff of the Year by the NCAA for Division III men's soccer. ■

Women's Soccer Makes 9th Appearance in NCAA Tournament



For the second consecutive year, the Montclair women's soccer team earned an at-large bid to the NCAA Division III Women's Soccer Tournament and traveled to Virginia Beach, Virginia, for the first round.

"For the program to be selected for consecutive NCAA Tournaments is a testament to the quality of players that we have in the program," says Head Coach Pat Naughton.

In the tournament, the No. 20 Red Hawks lost to host No. 23 Virginia Wesleyan University in the first round.

It was the Red Hawks' ninth appearance in the NCAA Tournament. Montclair was 13-3-2 on the year and advanced to the semifinals of the New Jersey Athletic Conference before earning the at-large bid. ■

Sports Briefs

Field Hockey Player Named to National Senior Team



Senior field hockey forward/midfielder **Carlie Van Tassel** was named to the National Field Hockey Coaches Association Division III Senior Team this past fall. A four-time First Team All-NJAC selection, Van Tassel led Montclair with eight goals and 18 points. In her four years at Montclair, Van Tassel scored 31 goals while adding five assists for 67 points. Thirteen of her goals were game-winning tallies and the senior was 2 for 2 on penalty strokes. The NJAC Rookie of the Year in spring 2021, the Vernon, New Jersey, native earned Second Team All-Region laurels in fall 2021 and First Team accolades last year. ■

Red Hawk Open Tees Off for Success

With the backdrop of a beautiful autumn day, 116 golfers teed off and raised more than \$110,000 for Montclair State University student athletes and programs at the 11th annual Red Hawk Open at the Crestmont Country Club in West Orange.



Proceeds will continue to enhance the student-run and produced Red Hawk Sports Network, as well as provide upgrades to the Panzer Athletic Center locker room and the Panzer Fitness Center. Additionally, the support will help provide student coaching opportunities within Montclair State University Athletics. "We appreciate the great support that we receive from our alumni, friends and campus partners," says Rob Chesney, director of Intercollegiate Athletics. "The money raised continues to support all of our programs, enhancing the student-athlete experience." ■

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MONTCLAIR ALUMNI NEWS

HOMEcoming 2023



Always a day filled with good food, good times and the return of hundreds of Montclair alumni and their families, Homecoming 2023 did not disappoint. Highlights included a street fair, the Student Showcase, the Alumni Barbecue, plus a zipline for the adventurous at heart. And to top it all off, the Red Hawks beat the TCNJ Lions 42-7 in the big game.

For more photos and video, scan the QR Code:







One Day for Montclair

Montclair's Annual Giving and Alumni Engagement team along with members of the student group FAN (Future Alumni Network) are all smiles during One Day for Montclair and World's Fair Day, on the way to a record-breaking day that raised more than \$270,000 from 1,588 donors. Save the date for this year's One Day for Montclair: **April 25, 2024.** ■



Waichungo Family Courtyard Opens

Wamwari Waichungo '90 and President Jonathan Koppell were among those who celebrated the ribbon cutting and dedication of the Waichungo Family Courtyard in University Hall in April, recognizing Wamwari's commitment to creating opportunities for the University, the College for Community Health and the next generation of food science leaders. ■



Class of 1973 - 50th Reunion Celebration

Members of the Class of 1973 reconnected with former classmates at their 50th Reunion. In celebration of this milestone anniversary, reunion participants led the procession during the University's 2023 Commencement exercises. The class also returned to campus for a gathering and tour. Members of the Class of 1974 – help plan your celebration! Contact Rachel Vigilante at vigilanter@montclair.edu or **973-655-5465.** ■

Carpe Diem Luncheon

Members of the University's Carpe Diem Society gathered in October for a recognition luncheon, bringing alumni, former faculty, loyal donors and friends back to campus for lunch and a performance by students from the College of the Arts.

Carpe Diem Society members are the University's legacy giving community committed to advancing Montclair by establishing gifts through their wills, life insurance policies, retirement designations, trusts or other gift plans.

"You've promised to keep our mission strong by investing in future students," Rita Walters, vice president for Development and Alumni Engagement, told the luncheon guests. "And I thank you deeply. We cannot be who we are meant to be without you." ■





Black Alumni Advisory Council's Summer Barbecue

In June, members, families and friends of the BAAC gathered for a special barbecue in celebration of Juneteenth. There was fun, food, music and games, and a special performance by the Montclair State University West African Drumming and Dance Ensemble. If you are interested in joining the group, please visit montclair.edu/alumni/baac for more information or contact Briana Curtis at curtisbr@montclair.edu or 973-655-7478. ■



Hispanic Latinx/a/o Alumni Network Kickoff

Hispanic Latinx/a/o alumni gathered this past spring to expand their network and hear from representatives from the Office for Hispanic Initiatives, LASO (Latin American Student Organization) and MASA (Mexican American Student Association). The Hispanic Latinx/a/o Alumni Network was created to provide opportunities for networking among alumni and a forum to strengthen connections with the University and its students. If you are interested in joining the group, please visit montclair.edu/alumni/hlan for more information or contact Renee Giliberti at gilibertir@montclair.edu or 973-655-7872. ■

Sizzling Summer Fun at McLoone's

Alumni gathered at McLoone's Boathouse in West Orange to network and enjoy the early summer and waterfront views. Members of many affinity groups, including the Black Alumni Advisory Council, Hispanic Latinx/a/o Alumni Network, Recent Alumni Network and Women's Initiative Network were in attendance. ■



Women's Initiative Network Presents 'Negotiation in the Workplace'

One of the leadership development workshops presented by the Women's Initiative Network (WIN), led by career coach Tara Chiari, guided alumni and friends on using negotiation skills to get what they want in their careers and in their lives. WIN engages the University's more than 93,000 alumnae in the intellectual, cultural and educational life of the University, forming a vibrant community to inspire and empower women to become leading volunteers and visionary donors. If you are interested in joining the group, please visit montclair.edu/alumni/win for more information or contact Rachel Vigilante at vigilanter@montclair.edu or 973-655-5465. ■



Attending the dedication ceremony with former President Irvin D. Reid are from left, SGA alumni Sal Anderton '95, Michael Costa '96, Reid, Helen Archontou '91, Paul Prior '93 and Richard Kunze '94.

Reid's Alumni 'Fan Club' Attends Dedication

In the years since Helen Archontou '91 led "Operation Blueberry Pie," the code name for a student takeover of administration offices in protest of rising tuition, she's looked back at the occupation of the former College Hall – with then-President Irvin D. Reid stepping over her while she slept outside his office – as a turning point in her life, one leading to a career dedicated to community organizing and public service.

"I don't want to say Dr. Reid supported the protest, but he tolerated it in a way that let us go through our process, which empowered us and helped shape our own civic engagement," says Archontou, CEO of the YWCA Northern New Jersey and adjunct faculty in Social Work and Child Advocacy.

This past September when the renamed Science Hall was dedicated as Irvin D. Reid Hall (see story Page 7), Archontou was among the Student Government Association alumni who attended the ceremony to thank Reid for the respect he showed them as student leaders involved in the issues of the time.

"President Reid really had a big impact on our lives," says Paul Prior '93, an attorney who represents people with disabilities. "He was a fantastic leader of the college, and I say college because I'm a member of the last graduating class of Montclair State College." Thirty years, nearly to the day, his son Alexander Prior '23 graduated from Montclair State University, the change of status credited to Reid's tenure.

"College is a time when you explore different personalities, you explore different ideas, you explore different beliefs, you get introduced to different belief systems, and all of us in student leadership, we were kind of a self-selecting bunch that challenged authority and challenged the status quo. Reid let us do that and he did it with grace and dignity. He treated us with deep respect," Prior says.

"President Reid enjoyed watching us try to challenge authority knowing that in the future these were skills we would need in the 'real world.' Because of that, we all had great admiration for him and I think we have developed even greater admiration for him as the years have gone by," he says. ■

ONE DAY FOR MONTCLAIR 2023



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ONE DAY FOR MONTCLAIR

April 25, 2024



Recent Alumni Network Welcomes New Grads

Recent alumni from the past 10 graduating classes welcomed the new year, networking and learning more about the Recent Alumni Network. The affinity group focuses on programs for the newest graduating class as they become alumni, addressing the special interests and needs of the first years following Commencement, as well as providing opportunities for networking, community service, and cultural and professional development activities. For more information or to join this networking group, visit montclair.edu/alumni/ran or contact Nada Rustom at rustomn@montclair.edu or 973-655-3323. ■

Good Chemistry

For Mary Ann (Leonard) Siklosi '70 and Michael Siklosi '70, Montclair degrees provided a solid foundation for graduate school and successful careers at Procter & Gamble. Their time at Montclair also paved the way for a happy life together. In 2021, their family celebrated their 50th wedding anniversary with a special gift to reward high-achieving chemistry majors. The \$5,000 gift, raised from the Siklosi, Raraigh and Gorman families, will support awards for students majoring in chemistry or biochemistry who have excelled in General Chemistry I and II courses. The generous contribution will make it possible to award \$500 a year for 10 years. In 2023, Montclair recognized Mary Ann and Michael, and the gift that honors them, with a bench plaque tribute on the Alumni Green. In May, the couple attended the College of Science and Mathematics Chemistry Awards ceremony via Zoom, offering remarks and letting students know how much Montclair means to them. ■



Alumni Receive 2023 Service Awards



(L to R): Bloomfield College Chancellor Marcheta P. Evans, Sheila Wooten '85, Celeste Walden-Kelley '15, John J. Delucca '66, BCAA President Maurice A. Lyle '09, Mary Jessup '03, John Skowronski '91, Lisa Dews '02 and John Murdock '73.

The Bloomfield College Alumni Association (BCAA) presented eight service awards to alumni who have "devoted time, talent and treasure over decades" in support of students.

Receiving Alumni Awards were: Distinguished Alumni Presidential Award, Past BCAA President John J. Delucca '66; Distinguished Alumni Leadership Awards, Past BCAA President and Emeritus Committee Member John Murdock '73 and

Senior Associate Dean of Students/ Director of Athletics Sheila Wooten '85; Distinguished Alumni Membership Awards, BCAA Emeritus Committee Member Lisa Dews '02, BCAA Emeritus Committee Member Mary Jessup '03 and BCAA Treasurer John Skowronski '91; and Distinguished Alumni Staff Award, TRIO Student Support Service Program Office Manager and Academic Coach Celeste Walden-Kelley '15.

In addition, the BCAA presented the Above and Beyond Award to Bloomfield College Chancellor (formerly president) Marcheta P. Evans in recognition of "her exceptional performance" that resulted in the merger with Montclair State University. ■



Aurelio Soto '23
shot video using
a 360-degree
camera in
Makhanda,
South Africa.

Creating 360-degree Virtual Study Abroad

As a senior, 2-D Animation major Aurelio Soto '23 traveled to Makhanda, South Africa, as part of a team working to create 360-degree video tours for an innovative virtual study-abroad program between Bloomfield College and the town of Makhanda in the Eastern Cape province of South Africa.

Facilitated through faculty development funding and Bloomfield College's Changing Lives Internship program, Soto accompanied Jason Torreano, Bloomfield College instructor of media communications, on the trip to South Africa during spring break. There, Soto conducted interviews and shot video using a 360-degree camera at nearly a dozen locations in Makhanda.

The final product leveraged virtual reality, mobile technology, an Oculus and similar devices to create 360-degree video tours that were later woven into existing Bloomfield College coursework, taking a traditional virtual study abroad program to the next level.

"Virtual study abroad offerings are often little more than Zoom conversations," says Torreano. "Creating this type of immersive experience offers students who have the desire, but not the financial resources, to study abroad through a transformative learning opportunity that transcends the boundaries of campus."

Soto says that the distinctive learning experiences he gained while at Bloomfield helped him land a position with Princeton University, working in its Africa World Initiative, a hub for Africa-related research, programming and international scholarly networks. ■

BC Graphics Grad Designs Downtown Bloomfield Banners



Light pole banners in Bloomfield Township's primary commercial district were designed by Vincent Leu '14.

Fifty colorful pedestrian light pole banners recently hung within Bloomfield Township's primary commercial district are the latest artistic collaboration between the Bloomfield Center Alliance and Bloomfield College of Montclair State University.

Professor Yuichiro Nishizawa, chair of the College's Division of Creative Arts and Technology, worked closely with the Alliance and the project's design leader, Vincent Leu '14, to create the banner designs earlier this year.

"This collaborative effort is truly born out of our strong and persistent mutual interest in community building and developing projects that showcase the College and the vision and talents of our students," says Nishizawa.

Leu, who majored in graphics for print and digital media, says he was honored to be part of the team. "It is not every day that you get to do something fun that will be seen by an entire community and its visitors." ■




Alumni Return to Exhibit Their Art

For two Bloomfield College Division of Creative Arts and Technology grads, a spring 2023 return to campus involved showcasing their work in a professional art exhibition in the Scott H. Kaplan '02 Art Gallery in the College library.

The works of Shamisha "MY" Quintaira Williams '19, a digital artist, and Tosheka "Toshe" Escoffery '20, a fiber artist who also creates fine art with pencil, ink and pastel, were included among the exhibition of several female artists.

"These very impressive up-and-coming artists, who nurtured their talents here at Bloomfield College, spoke fondly about their experiences as students in our creative arts and technology programs," said Bloomfield College Chancellor Marcheta P. Evans. ■

A full-page photograph of Maurice A. Lyle '09, a Black man with a beard, wearing a grey blazer over a dark zip-up shirt. He is standing on a grassy area with a brick building and trees in the background. The scene is lit with warm, golden light from the setting or rising sun, creating a soft glow. In the background, there are blurred figures of people and a red banner with white text that partially reads "THE NINTH".

Maurice A. Lyle '09, Bloomfield SHARING LIFE LESSONS

Bloomfield College Alumni Association President Maurice A. Lyle '09 is grateful for his academic and campus life experiences at Bloomfield that he says set the stage for his career success.

For Lyle and the College, there is mutual appreciation. His leadership in the Alumni Association is well recognized, particularly his dedication to helping students broaden their knowledge about career pathways that may be open to them within their majors and the steps they need to take for rewarding careers after college.

"As a young professional, it took me a long while to learn my way, and if I can help students early on, so they don't need to navigate a path

on their own, my own life has come full circle," he says. "I'd like current students to know that there are no limits if they persist, take one step at a time, follow their dreams and never settle for less."

Lyle had to work full time while attending evening classes part time to earn his BS in Finance at Bloomfield. His lessons in persistence paid off. Today, he serves as a financial advisor at Merrill Lynch Wealth Management on Park Avenue in New York City, where he builds financial plans for a select group of highly successful entertainers, families, professionals and business owners.

In earlier financial industry roles, Lyle worked as a financial service

representative at MassMutual and served 10 years as a finance manager at Hudson Auto Group. He holds the Series 7 and Series 66 FINRA Registrations, the Life licenses and the Chartered Retirement Planning Counselor designation. He is also accredited as a Chartered Sustainable Responsible Impact Investment Counselor and as an Accredited Wealth Management Advisor.

Always eager to lend his expertise, Lyle is a member of the NAACP Oranges and Maplewood Branch and the Business Advisory Council for Community Options Union County Division in Westfield, as well as an associate member of The Metropolitan Black Lawyers Association, president of The Essex

Toastmasters Club of Bloomfield and board advisor for Jazz Choreography Enterprises in New York City.

"I owe a lot to Bloomfield, and I look forward to continuing my participation in leadership roles under Montclair State University," says Lyle. "The current work I am doing to help mentor students on how to reach their goals quicker, and seeing the impact it can have, is incredibly gratifying. Being involved in this meaningful way with my alma mater, the college that supported and provided me with so much, will always be a very rewarding part of my life, and I know there is much more to come." ■

—Rosa Mulryan

'50s



Leon Zimmerman '59, a former national award-winning journalist, spoke at Rowan University's commemoration of the historic USA-Soviet Summit Conference, which he covered 56 years ago.

'70s



Margaret "Midge" Guerrera '71, '78 MA wrote *Cars, Castles, Cows and Chaos*, which was published by Read Furiously. She describes it as a Jersey girl's humorous romp through Italy.

Kathleen Stein-Smith '72 was named an Officier dans l'Ordre des Palmes académiques, a national order bestowed by the French Republic on distinguished academics and teachers and for valuable service to universities, education and science. She is the chair of the American Academy of Teachers of French Commission on Advocacy.

Anna Calluori Holcombe '74, a professor emeritus of ceramics at Florida State University, was awarded the Excellence in Teaching award from the National Council on Education for the Ceramic Arts.

Sheryl Needle Cohn '75 MA announces her historical fiction Holocaust screenplay *The Baker of Quaregnon* was a semifinalist in an Israeli film festival in December 2022.

Douglas Rallo '75, Esq., a personal injury attorney in Libertyville, Ill., and owner of Law Offices of Douglas Rallo, P.C., was named to the 2023 *Best Lawyers* list.

Andrew Jannetti '76, a dancer, choreographer, producer, administrator and educator, was presented with the Outstanding Leadership (PK-12) award from the New York State Dance Education Association this year and received their Lifetime Achievement award in 2022.

Joe Cosentino '77 wrote and released *Drama Prince*, *Drama Merry*, *Drama Daddy* and *Drama King*, books number 15 through 18 in his Nicky and Noah mystery novel series.

'80s



Barbara Pinelli '82, an eighth grade history teacher in South Plainfield, received a National Education Association Envision Equity Grant to help students learn about the election process and the importance of voting.

Janine K. Iannarelli '83 was elected chair of the European Business Aviation Association's Associate Member Advisory Council in May.

Barbara Bell '86 was awarded first prize for her artwork "Success in the Future" at a juried show organized by NAWA (National Association of Women Artists) in Highland Park, N.J., in December.

Matthew Blank '86 became a sword carrier with the New Mexico Men's Wellness men's community at ceremonies in Denver, Colo., and at Ghost Ranch, Abiquiu, N.M. He is a senior investigator with Adult Protective Services in Boulder County, Colo.

Claire Katz '87 MAT, department head and professor of Teaching, Learning & Culture at Texas A&M University, is a 2024 finalist for the Robert Foster Cherry Award at Baylor University.

'90s



Daniel Gerard '93, president of the International Association of EMS Chiefs, was appointed in May to serve as the EMS Educators Sector Representative on the department's National Emergency Services Advisory Council.

William "Bill" Mesce '93 MA had his collection of three one-act plays, *A Jersey Cantata*, staged at Burgdorff Cultural Center in Maplewood in August. He also released an essay collection: *Reel Change Take Two: More Movies, the People Behind (and In) Them, and the Business of Making Them* in January. His novel *Lucidity* was published under the pen name Aja Holland in 2022.

Laura Shovan '94 MAT wrote *Welcome to Monsterville* published by Apprentice House Press in April.

Michael Fanizzi '96 MA retired after a 30-year career in education. Throughout his career, he served as a high school director of athletics, teacher, coach and held administrative positions. He was inducted into the Director of Athletics Association of New Jersey's Hall of Fame, Class of 2023.

Jorge A. Castro '98 published *Manage Your Money Manager* in October 2022, which guides the individual investor on how to set up an online tool that has been used by market analysts on and off Wall Street for decades.

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A full-page background image of Emma Kaptein '13, a blonde woman wearing a blue and white New York Giants beanie and a black winter jacket with a fur-lined hood. She is smiling and making a peace sign with her right hand while holding a smartphone in her left. Other people in winter gear are visible in the background, some holding up phones to take pictures.

Emma Kaptein '13 GAME ON

New York Giants social media manager Emma Kaptein '13 completed her broadcasting degree on the cusp of seismic changes in the industry. "The media role has changed dramatically in the last 10 years," Kaptein says, emphasizing that TikTok and Instagram reels didn't exist when she was in school.

"You have to be willing to adapt," she says.

She's now in her 11th season with the franchise, keeping pace with the dynamic field. "It is an amazing organization," she says. "I worked hard to lock in my internship there

and did everything I could to stay beyond that."

The pivotal internship, which she landed in her junior year at Montclair, opened the door to her career and united her passions for sports – in particular football – and broadcasting.

Putting into play a comprehensive digital marketing program, Kaptein is leading the team's social media strategy on seven digital platforms, with the help of a social media coordinator and the support of as many as 25 production and design professionals. "We have weekly

brainstorming meetings where everyone, from interns on up, gets to pitch new ideas," she says. "We also engage a wide range of influencers to create additional content."

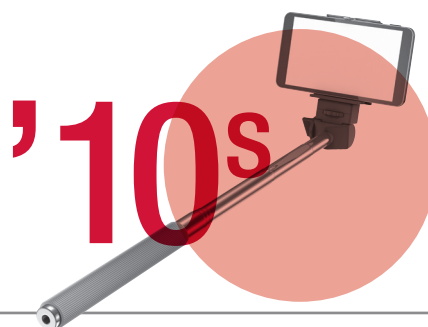
On game days, however, it is Kaptein, the social media coordinator and the social media intern in charge of posts. "It gets pretty intense," she says with a laugh.

In addition to the career services support she received at Montclair – especially when she was pursuing internships – and the leadership skills she gained as a member of Theta Kappa Chi, Kaptein is grateful

for the hands-on projects assigned in her classes. "I wasn't able to study digital marketing – it wasn't even a thing yet – but I learned how to dig in and get things done," she says.

It is a perspective that Kaptein now shares with current Montclair students through her work as a volunteer mentor for the School of Communication and Media. "I'm in my second year as a mentor," she says. "I help students set goals and give them guidance as they build their resumes. It is very rewarding." ■

—Michele Hickey



Dierdre Letson-Christofalo '00 MA, EdD was named associate provost and



dean of the School of Professional Studies and Innovation at Moravian University in September.

Carrie Brown '01, a business development manager for Hillman Consulting LLC, was honored at the annual Women of Valor Tea Awards hosted by St. Francis Food Pantries and Shelters for her professional success and commitment to philanthropy.

Jigar Parikh '02 was named vice president of financial planning and analysis at Instant Teams, a talent marketplace that uses innovative technology, career development and skills-based hiring.

Nicole Tocci '02 launched a business called One Vintage Button and creates necklaces out of high-end designer branded buttons. Her business was featured in the *New York Post*.

Raza Ashfaq '04, a certified public accountant, was named partner at CohnReznick, a leading advisory, assurance and tax firm.

Mary Burns '04 Cert., '05 MAT, the author of *Saving Eric: A Mother's Journey Through Her Son's Addiction*, was recently honored in Speak Up Talk Radio's 2023 Firebird Book Awards in the Addiction and Recovery category.

Victoria Obenchain '07 MA is a K-8 educator selected for the 2021 Grosvenor Teacher Fellowship with Lindblad Expeditions and the National Geographic Society. Although travel was on hold during the pandemic, this year, she was finally able to take an educational voyage by sea to Antarctica alongside marine biologists and geologists.



Stacy Albanese Fagioli '08, '17 MA and **Andrew Fagioli '11** welcomed their second child, Noel Nicole Fagioli, on January 29, 2023. Noel joins a proud family of Red Hawks alongside big brother, Carson Andrew.

Victor Stolberg '08, an associate professor/counselor at Essex County College in Newark, is the author of seven articles, including "Globalization" and "Tobacco," in the recently (2023) published *Wellness Around the World: An International Encyclopedia of Health Indicators, Practices, and Issues*.

Charles Kontos '08 (deceased, 2010) was a wildlife biology PhD candidate at Rutgers University. His parents published a book *On Nature's Trail With Charlie* last September. Rutgers also presents a Charlie Kontos Environmental Activist Award each year.

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Diane Lebo '10 received a PhD in cell and molecular biology from Boston University and joined the firm Lathrop GPM as a technical specialist in its Intellectual Property Group in April.

Jack Blaszkiewicz '10, assistant professor of Music History at Wayne State University in Michigan, released his first book, *Fantare for a City: Music and the Urban Imagination in Haussmann's Paris*, through University of California Press in December.

Ross Fox '11, a business litigation attorney at Bressler, Amery & Ross, P.C., was recognized in Super Lawyers' 2023 New Jersey Rising Stars.

Allison Strong '12, actress and singer, opened for Grammy-winner LeAnn Rimes at bergenPAC in November and played "Mrs. Salinas" in the animated musical feature *Leo* with Adam Sandler and Bill Burr.

Edward Velky '12, a business and commercial litigation attorney at Bressler, Amery & Ross, P.C., was named to the Super Lawyers' New Jersey Rising Stars list.

Irina Kuzmich '13 received a PhD in Industrial-Organizational Psychology from the City University of New York.

Graham Preston '13 is an artist whose work was featured as part of the Audubon Mural Project at West 149 Street in New York.

Steve Way '13, an actor on Hulu's *Ramy*, performed his first-ever stand-up comedy special "Make Another Wish" in July.

John Weinstein '13 MA, provost and vice president of Bard Academy and Bard College at Simon's Rock, is the founding leader of the Bard Queer Leadership Project, which focuses on creating safe educational spaces for LGBTQIA+ students.

Chelsea Clarke '14, '17 MEd, '19 Cert., a teacher of gifted and talented students at Lester C. Noecker School



in Roseland, N.J., received the New Jersey Association for Gifted Children 2023 Teacher of the Year award.

Brian Engel '14 and **Brittany Ur '14** were married last year at The English Manor in Ocean Township, N.J.

Sophie Heinlein '14 was appointed associate attorney at Krauss Shaknes Tallentire & Messeri in September.



Vincent King '14 MBA and his wife, Christina, welcomed their second son, Connor Joseph King on June 5, 2023.

Ashley Matarama '14 serves as the Sergeant at Arms of Nichibei Toastmasters, a bilingual Japanese and English public speaking club which is part of Toastmasters International.

Diana Weisman '14 is the creative director of branded content at BDG Media. Her creative direction for an interactive online game was sponsored by Macy's and nominated for "Best Interactive Content Piece" and "Most Innovative Use of Content" in *Digiday's* 2023 Content Marketing Awards in May.



Tog Samphel '22

THE INVENTOR

On his first path to graduation, Tog Samphel '22 was lured away by exciting job opportunities.

While still a student, he worked part time at The Wiz, the one time electronics chain, and held an internship with MTV. Then, he was offered a full-time position with AOL, an opportunity too good to pass up.

"At first, I tried to do it all, working long days at AOL in New York City while attending night classes at Montclair," he says. "It was just too much. I left school with the goal to finish my degree someday soon, but my career kept growing."

Samphel's successful career in digital product design and user experience landed him in his current role as a product designer at Walmart Global Tech. But it was his creative response to an everyday need that led to his entrepreneurial path as an inventor – and to a deal on ABC's *Shark Tank* for his kitchen gadget, Anytongs, that turns regular eating utensils into versatile tongs.

Thanks to that, he is working with the show's Daymond John on product strategy along with potential licensing and retail store deals. "I quickly realized that inventing a product is only about 20% of what it takes to succeed. There is a massive

process to get manufacturing right, even for a relatively simple product."

The success of Anytongs is exciting but also bittersweet, as his mom – the inspiration for the product that is changing his life – has passed on. "She was a huge *Shark Tank* fan," he says. "In some ways I feel like I am honoring her by doing this."

He also honored his pledge to himself by completing his bachelor's degree in Visual Arts, 17 years after he left Montclair to work at AOL.

"Finishing my degree was something I really wanted to do for a long time, and I feel really good that I did it –

and that Montclair let me back in and found my records in the 'archives' and helped me figure out what I needed to finish," he says. "I have two little kids, and we always say 'Get the job done.' I always try to set a good example for them so I wanted to finish what I started."

Samphel is eager to share what he has learned with the next generation of entrepreneurs. "Even after college, even after discovering your passion, it is important to get as many experiences as possible," he advises. "Putting yourself out there helps opportunities come your way." ■

—Michele Hickey and Laura Iandiorio



Carla Stephens '15 MA was appointed director of the Bard Queer Leadership Project at Bard College at Simon's Rock.

Garrick Beauliere '16, a postdoctoral fellow at Baltimore Veterans Affairs and the current vice president for the Association of Black Psychologists' D.C. Chapter, was selected as a 2023 McDonald's Black and Positively Golden Change Leader.

Pierre Avalos '17, a business litigation lawyer, was named associate at the firm Faegre Drinker in December 2022.

Jackson Rezen '17 wrote *The Cut Wrist Crew*, published by Trichotomy Media in October 2022.

Thomas Algenio '18, a data scientist at Quest Diagnostics, spoke at the Feliciano School of Business in 2022 about careers in business analytics.

Alexa Racioppi '18 appeared in *On Your Feet!* at the Paper Mill Playhouse in October 2022.

Maddison Albrechts '19 founded a nonprofit theater company in New York called Mad Company. They put on their inaugural show, *Romeo and Juliet*, in March.

Dominic Lampasona '19 is a filmmaker whose award-winning sci-fi drama short was screened at the SOHO International Film Festival in October 2022.

Emily Falcioni '20, '21 MA and **Richard A. Thompson '20, '21 MA** are engaged to be married in 2024. As students, they started the MSU Circle K together, as well as revived the Political Science Club and Pre-Law Society.

Madison Kranis '20, joined Montclair's Global Center on Human Trafficking as the anti-trafficking program assistant in September.

Jenna Reilly '21 launched Unforgotten Jewelry Company, which features distinctive unisex rings inspired by tarot cards, created using cutting-edge 3D printing technology with metals.

Vanessa Sierra '22 appeared in *On Your Feet!* at the Paper Mill Playhouse in 2022.

Ranjeeta Mahraj '23 MA, a Fulbright graduate who has served on the board of the Fulbright Association New Jersey chapter, recently became a faculty lecturer at the National University of Modern Languages in Pakistan.

Taylor Trost '23 MA, a fourth grade teacher at Norton Elementary School in Hightstown, N.J., was honored in October with a Milken Educator Award, including a \$25,000 cash prize for her commitment to providing high-quality education for all students.

'60s

Henrietta "Heddy" Hubbard '66, retired executive vice president, American Urological Association, married Gerald Hart, former Biochemistry Department chair, Johns Hopkins Medical School, in June 2022. They now live in Athens, Ga.

'80s

Arnold Lawson '80 retired from the Office of the Assistant Deputy Secretary for Administration in Washington, D.C. Since retirement, he has become a certified information technology professional and has received scholarships from MGM National Harbor.

'00s

Karen Hart '03 retired in June from her position as the division administrator for Rheumatology at The Ohio State University Wexner Medical Center. She will soon welcome her fourth grandchild.

Felicia Laguerre Owens '08, a Digital Video Production major, edited a video project for the Cablevision series *All Things Newark* covering ways to minimize recidivism in the criminal justice system.

'10s

Christopher Cancel '13 has published four graphic novels in his series *My Life as an American Hero*.

BLOOMFIELD CLASSNOTES

50th Reunion Committee

It's almost time for the Class of 1974's 50th reunion. Want to serve on the Reunion Committee? Contact Rachel Vigilante in the Office of Alumni Engagement at vigilanter@montclair.edu or 973-655-5465.

1974

IN MEMORIAM

Laura Stanton Ingersoll '41
Marilyn Chapman Kolb '43
Vivian Schmidt Nostrand '43
Lois McCrum Robertson '44
Carmela "Millie" Pelosi Sloane '44
Anne Albert Miller '45
Constance Lauri Comberg '47
Dorothe Holonich McGowan '47
Ellen Schopis '48
Laura Cox Elcavage '49, '65 MA
George W. Forbes '49
William Todt '49, '53 MA
Kenneth Bechtold '50
Grace D'Agostino Bingham '50
George Di Falco '50
Robert McLuckie '50, '56 MA
Robert O'Connor '50
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Gladys Farranto Johnson '52
Florence Miciek Rowe '52
Shirley Bush Ranck '53
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Alice Stern Patton '54
Christine Caruso Testa '54
Margaret J. Mcguigan Cox '55
Dolores Grieco Gesumaria '56
Rosemarie Williams Nolan '56
Rosalie Scelfo Paddock '56, '71 MA
Howard White '56, '69 MA
Maxine Kushner Hunt '57, '66 MA,
'74 MA
Linda Lou Alvord '58
Donald R. Benson '58
Miriam Kraemer Gray '58
Emilie Giering Herm '58
Lorraine Bartkowicz Jones '58
Nancy Elting Plant '58
Daisy Briggs '60, '65 MA
Louis Campanelli '60, '66 MA
Peppi Elona '60, '64 MA, '83 MFA
William D. Hogan '60
Robert Ackerman '61
Frederick Chesky '61

**Richard Hodson '61 MA
Jack Jennings '61
Brenda Montgomery Kracht '62,
'65 MA
Arthur Van Slooten '62
Edwin C. Black '63
Joanne Russell Caffrey '63
Ann Stein Schwacke '63
Anthony Zanonato '63
Arlene Crescenzi Allen '64
Barbara Mikrut Bielinski '64
James Buchanan '64, '79 MA
Juliette Glerum Hagan '64
Ronne Epstein Harris '64
Gerard Kennedy '64, '66 MA
Diana Pomerleau '64
Diana Sara '64
Sandra Orlovsky Schwartz '64
John R. Lord III '65, '69 MA
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Joseph Fiordaliso '67
Jeanne Oppel '67
Barbara Faber Peck '67
David Pooley '67 MA
Martyn R. Smith '67
Judith Diem Wagenbach '67
Dennis Burtis '68
Phyllis Cernero Hoffman '68
Judith Berman Livant '68 MA
Vaughn Vandergrift '68, '70 MA
Clare Giancola Watson '68
Jerry Ice '69
Judith Harrington Armento '70
Lynne Paris Meehan '70
Charles Evertz '71
Barbara Hrevnack Stanley '71
Andrew David Zigre '71
Ronald M. Califre '72
Susan Scialabba Campbell '72
James Patrick Curran '72
Theodore Liszczak '72 MA
Vashti White '72, '75 MA
Frank Donahue '73 MA

Peter P. Vukovich '73
Daisy Morales '74
Sandra Lee Janowski Yanklowitz
'74 MA
Robert Tracy '75 MA
William F. Johnson '76
Wilbur Lewis '76
Sr. Barbara Kowalik '77 MA
Joan Adams '79 MA
Daniel L. Davis '79
Barbara Dennis '79
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Robert A. Bernabe '80
*Gerald LeBoff '80 HON
Frances Marino '80 MA
Madeleine Zeho '80 MA
Susan White '81
Jean Wilson Bennet Moore '82
Christina Nejelski Heilmann '85
Gloria Oliver '85 MA
Eileen Jerbasi Gelston '86
James Litowinsky '87
Philip M. Young '88
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LASTING LESSONS

SANDRA ADAMS | PROFESSOR, BIOLOGY

Biology Professor Sandra Adams is the kind of mentor and instructor that students keep in touch with long after graduation. “Any achievement I have, who do I call? Dr. Adams,” says Tamara Lewis ’01, ’03 MS, an emergency medicine doctor in Houston, Texas. As does Jackie Posy ’06, ’08 MS, a virologist. When Posy and her colleagues began the first trial of a self-replicating RNA vaccine for rabies, “I called Dr. Adams before I called my husband. I said, ‘I want you to know, you did this.’ It was a continuation of everything I learned from her.” Many lessons learned in Adams’ labs stay with her students. “Every time I run into a problem and have to start over, I think of her passion and her patience for getting it right,” says Posy. A virologist and biologist, Adams, who retires at the end of January, has taught at Montclair since 2001, continuing a career that began in 1975 as a high school science teacher in Decatur, Georgia, before she earned the first of two PhDs in 1985 and became a college professor. She has spent her career mentoring students as well as teaching them. When a former graduate student and mentee, Ron Durso, became the science supervisor for Fair Lawn schools, she helped him and his staff, including by visiting classes to promote careers in science and to “share her experiences as a minority scientist” growing up in the South. For many, Adams’ mentoring continues throughout their careers. “She brings out the best in her students,” says Lewis, the ER doctor. “I have benefited so much from having her as a mentor and a friend, and now I’m able to emulate that because I’m a Black female who has achieved a lot and can pay it forward.” ■

—Laura Griffin

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