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2023-24 Impact Report

School of  
Communication  
and Media

**MONTCLAIR**  
STATE UNIVERSITY



# From the Dean

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Perhaps the greatest privilege of being a part of a university community is that each day brings something entirely new and exciting. That is particularly true at the School of Communication and Media, where the mix of amazing students, faculty, staff, industry partners, and world class facilities creates the perfect setting for innovation and collaboration. Watching the continuous rise of our School and the success of our students and graduates is a true joy.

In this spirit, we've created our first Impact Report for the School of Communication and Media at Montclair State University. It's another way we can share some of the accomplishments of our students, faculty, and staff with the world. In this report, we highlight some of the remarkable work in our School community over the past year and give a sense of the scope and impact of these efforts. And while we certainly couldn't cover all the amazing things that happen each year, we hope this provides some perspective on why we think our School is a special place.

Although this report focuses on accomplishments from July '23 through June '24, there are exciting times ahead for the School. As you may have already heard, starting July 1 we will officially become a College, a designation that affirms the accomplishments thus far and, more importantly, the potential that lies ahead. This brings opportunities for new programs, new partnerships, new innovations, and even more ways we can be at the forefront of our fields while serving our students and our stakeholders. In fact, that begins in the Fall of 2025 as we formally launch our new fully online master's degree in strategic communication and media, a program that will help graduates prepare for a future that relies on experts who can effectively craft messages using a broad range of tools and technologies.

I hope you enjoy this inaugural Impact Report, and I'm certain you'll be inspired by the work of our students, faculty, and staff. I also hope you'll have the chance to connect with us throughout this upcoming year – by attending one of our School events, by engaging with content on our Social Media platforms, or through philanthropy – to name just a few examples. It's an honor and privilege to lead this community, and I'm excited about the opportunities ahead.

Sincerely,

Keith Strudler, Ph.D.

Dean of the School of Communication and Media

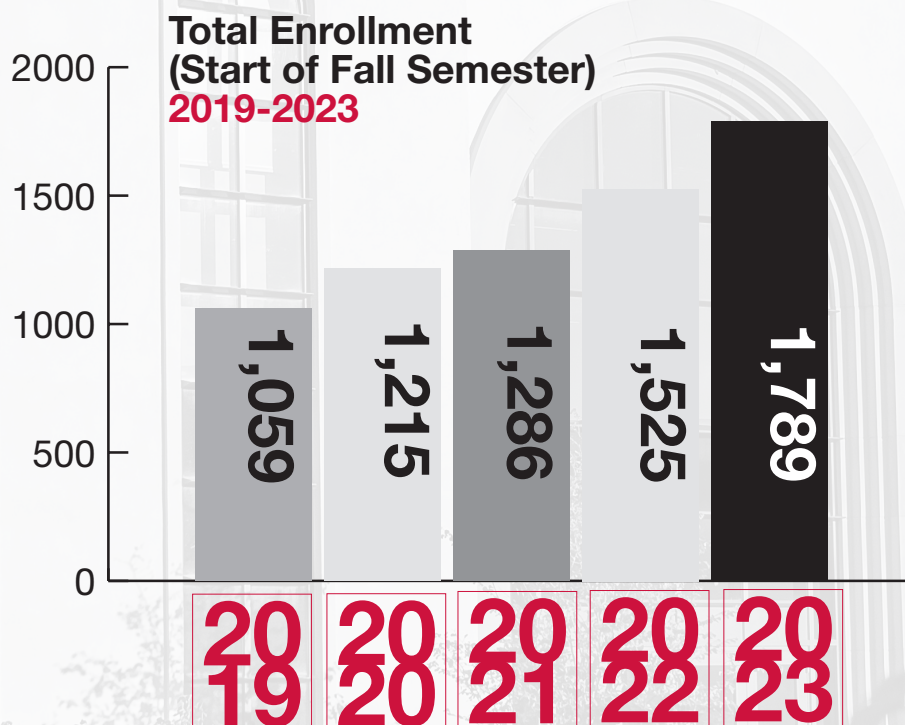
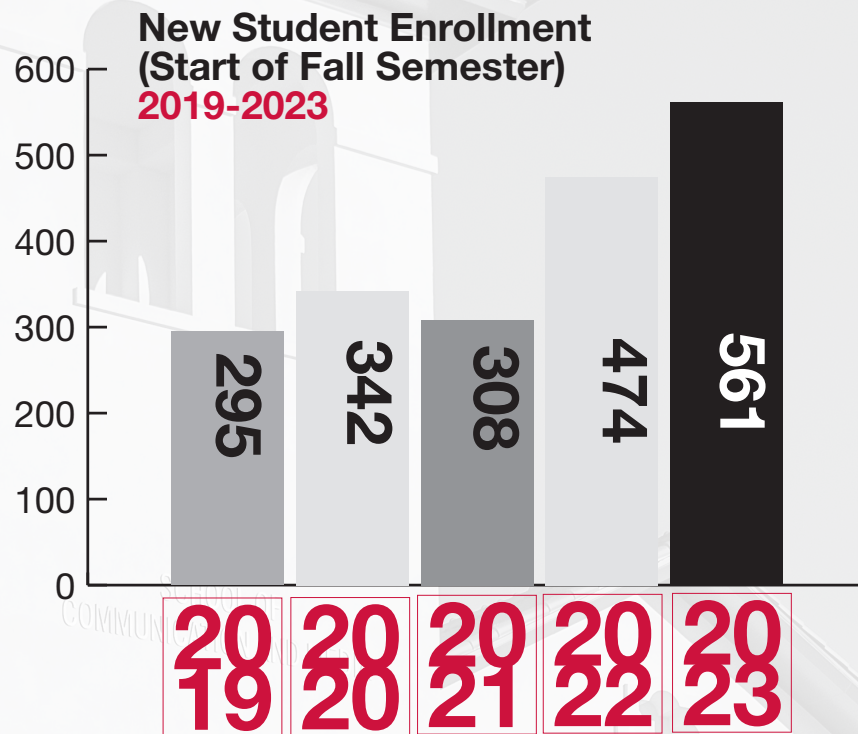


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# ENROLLMENT DATA



# Monthly Student Achievements, Faculty Highlights, Special Events, Exciting Partnerships and New Initiatives

July

As part of [the University's inaugural Pre-College program](#), SCM welcomed nearly three dozen students for a week-long residential learning experience in Social Media and Film & Television. Rising sophomores, juniors and seniors at regional and out-of-state high schools participated in the program, which included field trips to New York City, group projects, social activities and instruction from faculty in their areas of expertise.



A study released by **Dr. Bond Benton** from the [Joetta DiBella and Fred. C. Sautter III Center for Strategic Communication](#) at Montclair State University and Professor Daniela Peterka-Benton from the Department of Justice Studies demonstrated the extent to which Buffalo mass shooter Payton Gendron's manifesto – the public statement for why he perpetrated the attack – was derived from hate content he consumed online. Specifically, the study showed over 80% of the rationale sections in Gendron's manifesto came from extremist spaces



he reported visiting. The study was one of 10 social media data analytics studies from **Dr. Benton** and colleagues **Dr. Jin-A Choi, Professor Keith Green, Dr. Yi Luo** and student researchers from the Center for Strategic Communication conducted during the Academic Year. Other studies included lighter topics such as a second study on the [cultural phenomenon of Pumpkin Spice](#) and another that suggested that [the buzz](#)

[surrounding a possible appearance at the Super Bowl by pop icon Taylor Swift](#), along with unfounded conspiracy theories, would lead to record TV and streaming ratings. These studies [led to multiple media interviews by faculty members resulting in hundreds of millions of earned media impressions globally](#).

## August

Eleven former and current students from WMSC-FM received nominations for six College Broadcasting Inc. (CBI) awards. In October, [it was formally announced](#) that the students' outstanding work was recognized with two firsts, a third and three fourth place awards, highlighted by wins in the "Best Feature News Reporting" and "Best Promo" categories.



### Associate Director Dr. Todd

**Kelshaw** officially welcomed more than 550 new SCM freshmen and transfer students to campus at two orientation sessions. Supported by CART Career Services, the SCM advising team, Broadcast Media Operations, faculty and staff, the students learned more about the clubs, media organizations, special events and programs that make SCM one of the leading communications programs in the country.

## September

Pairing students with mentors working in high profile media and communications roles at NBCUniversal, The Simpsons, ABC News, Walt Disney Company, adidas, Yahoo, the New York Giants and many others, the sixth annual [SCM Mentoring Program](#) launched with

more than 100 SCM alumni, faculty, staff, mentors, mentees and distinguished guests. Over the years, the program has helped place dozens of students in jobs and better prepared them for the workforce through one-on-one meetings, mock interviews, networking advice, and resume and cover letter tips. The program was founded and is run by retired Montclair **Professor Marc Rosenweig**.

A [Red Hawk Sports Network](#) team of students, guided by Sports Communication and SCM faculty, produced a live, 10-camera show surrounding athletic events at Homecoming on September 30. The show, which can be [viewed here on SCM's streaming service Hawk+](#), consisted of game action and analysis from student broadcasters. Every on and off-camera position was filled by School of Communication and Media students.

## October

WMSC-FM joined the [13th annual World College Radio Day \(WCRD\) celebration](#). The station hosted 35 hours of special event programming dedicated to the theme “Where All Voices Are Welcome.” The program featured exclusive celebrity interviews, golf cart karaoke, and live music performances. The station was only one of 32 college stations contributing a 30-minute slot to the 24-hour marathon.

[SCM’s ongoing partnership with NBC Universal’s NBCU Academy](#) was highlighted this month as students participated in the Virtual Summit, “Knowing Your Audience.” This panel discussion helped students better understand how communication from the newsroom to the boardroom matters in all aspects of strategic communication. Launched in 2021, NBCU Academy provides tools, resources, and platforms for young, underrepresented voices in partnership with 30 Hispanic-Serving Institutions, Historically Black Colleges and Universities, and colleges and programs with significant Latino, Asian American and Pacific Islander, Black, Indigenous and tribal populations.

## November

NewsLab students produced and aired two separate programs surrounding food: “[#FOCUS: Food Our Stories](#),” which brought together people of different backgrounds in the SCM and Montclair communities for a discussion of culture and identity over a delicious meal.

A second show, #FOCUS: Food, Setting the Table” explored stories and trends about food, including food accessibility, dining on campus and New Jersey Diners. In addition, the first NewsLab episode streamed live from SCM’s new, state-of-the-art digital studio. The vMix studio is a multi-camera digital studio that can be entirely controlled by one person, allowing for a group of as little as two students (one to run vMix and one to be in front of the camera) to work on a production that would normally require a larger team. The feeds from the cameras, microphones, and other inputs are imputed into vMix software that allows recording and/or live streaming to various platforms including Hawk+, SCM’s digital streaming service.



The annual [Dannis B. Eaton Speech Competition: Red Hawk Talks](#) invited students to address a topic important to the Montclair community, and propose visions and solutions to related issues that confront our society. The topic of the competition, held in conjunction with SCM’s Public Speaking Resources Center, was “My Food” and was inspired by the School of Communication and Media’s #FOCUS: Food project. Freshman major Dianna Paul won the competition.

## December

SCM students **Charlotte Bigotto** and **John Schell** were [named finalists in the Coca-Cola Refreshing Films Program](#) for a short film script they wrote. The duo was one of four teams selected for the honor out of 60 participating schools and more than 900 entries. Provided with a \$20,000 budget to produce their film called “Super Connections,” Charlotte and John teamed up with students, alumni and professors to film their spot in a local movie theater. The film was shown nationwide in theaters throughout North America during the spring and summer. SCM **Professors Stuart MacLelland** and **Guy Nicolucci** guided the students from the application through the post-production process.



As part of an ongoing partnership with ESPN, 20 Red Hawk Sports Network students and alumni participated in the annual Heisman Trophy presentation at the Jazz at Lincoln Center in New York City. Group members were stand-ins for ESPN’s production team, with a handful of students having the unique opportunity to seat-fill during the live broadcast.

## January

The spring semester marked the continuation of another high-profile program designed to enhance student learning and opportunities, [SCM’s](#)

[Semester in L.A. program](#). Between the fall and spring semesters, more than 20 students participated in the program, which is a semester-long experience for full-time SCM students who take 12-15 credits in Los Angeles, including a paid internship in their field of study. Film and TV, Animation/VFX, Social Media and PR, Communication and Media Studies and Sports Communication majors participated in the program. **Professor Jaime Stickle**, who is based in Los Angeles, leads this innovative program.

[The Montclair Film Forum Speaker Series](#) kicked off the spring semester with three screenings in January. During the ‘23-’24 Academic Year, students, faculty, staff, film professionals and members of the community enjoyed 32 films in Presentation Hall. The series is an initiative dedicated to the preservation, growth and enrichment of the art of film through research, education, professional development and community programming.



## February

Students in **Professor Mary Scott's** Sports Sponsorship and Promotions class [participated in USA Today's Ad Meter competition](#) which gauges public sentiment around Super Bowl commercials. Students at only four other sports communication, advertising or marketing programs at universities across the country were selected to participate. The 2024 contest was the 36th annual event and is the industry's leading opinion tool for gauging public sentiment around Super Bowl ads.



Students and the local community enjoyed a panel event “How Will Media Impact the 2024 Election?” Held in Presentation Hall, the event focused on what students need to know to navigate media coverage in the upcoming presidential election and how to deal with misinformation through the media. Professors **Dr. Harry Haines**, **Dr. Joel Penney** and **Mark Effron** from SCM were joined by Professors Dr. Brigid Callahan Harrison and Dr. Fanny Lauby from Montclair's Political Science department.



## March

[Over Spring Break in Arizona as part of a class](#) led by Professors **Steve McCarthy** and **Tom Franklin**, 16 student journalists traveled to Arizona to compile 10 news packages on a variety of topics including immigration, Arizona cowboy culture, spring training, homelessness and drought and water policy. Before an enthusiastic crowd in April in Presentation Hall, the students screened their “Arizona Stories, Border, War and Politics” show, which can also be viewed on Hawk+.

In partnership with the Red Hawk Sports Network, [The Coccia Institute](#) announced a new partnership with Serie A USA to promote the Italian Soccer (football) League on campus, starting with a viewing party of a match between Napoli and Juventus. This event launched a collaboration between Serie A, The Coccia Institute, and SCM, and will feature other on-campus watch parties and events.

## April

As part of SCM's ongoing Speaker Series and in conjunction with the MBA Executive Speaker Series, **Don Katz** led an exciting discussion around urban transformation and technology. Katz is the founder of Audible and is widely recognized as a business visionary, highlighted by his inclusion on "America's Top 25 Disruptive Leaders" list by Living Cities.



At a ceremony in SCM's Presentation Hall, **Dr. Keith Strudler** presented nearly \$25,000 in scholarships to 37 students across all majors in the program. The annual and endowed scholarships are supported by alumni, faculty, staff and friends of the program who continue to support SCM's mission and empower its students. SCM partner NBCU awarded another 12 scholarships totalling nearly \$3,000.

## May



A team of Montclair State School of Communication & Media students [finished second in the prestigious Bateman Case Study Competition](#), hosted by the Public Relations Student Society of America (PRSSA). The national contest challenges student teams to design, implement, and measure a public relations campaign to support the goals of a real-world client. The Montclair team of **Rianna Cafaro** ('24), **Gabriella Castillo** ('24), **Diana Ochoa-Perez** ('24), **Kaylee Seitz** ('25) and **Gina-Marie Zoccoli** ('25) advanced to the finals of the competition against teams from BYU and winner University of Florida. PRSSA received 45 campaign entries. A key part of this campaign was "Living In Full Color: An Intimate Conversation on Culture," an on-campus event for students and the Montclair community featuring panelists

from Telemundo, WNBC, Montclair Student Development and Campus Life, and Montclair Counseling and Psychology Services. The panelists engaged in a conversation with students on multiculturalism and 21st-century diversity to explore the challenges and opportunities in navigating multi-ethnic and cross cultural identity in today's world.



Season One of *Cooking with Koppell*, a show where **President Jonathan Koppell** prepares a meal with a member of the Red Hawk community – be it a family recipe or a dish that reminds them of home, launched on Hawk+. SCM students were involved in every stage of the production process to bring the shows to life, from research and pre-production work to post-production editing and graphics.

The project evolved into a class for 11 undergraduate students, highlighting the hands-on learning philosophy that is a hallmark of Montclair's academic experience. [All three episodes of Season One are streaming on Hawk+, while Season Two will stream in the fall of 2024.](#)

## June

SCM student journalists, guided by **Professors Mark Efron** and **Vernard Gantt**, [won three Folio Awards at a ceremony](#) that recognized their outstanding storytelling efforts in the Newscast, Arts and Culture, and Talk Show categories. The Folio Awards are “the gold standard for the best in news and social media,” and 2024 marked the fourth straight year SCM students received recognition for their work. Eight SCM students represented 17 other students from three teams at the ceremony.

As the Academic Year came to a close, faculty, staff and administrators said goodbye to 341 students who officially “left the nest.” Now forever part of the SCM family, the class of 2024 was the largest in school history and was followed by the class of 2028, as 564 freshmen and transfer students enrolled in SCM for the Fall of 2024.

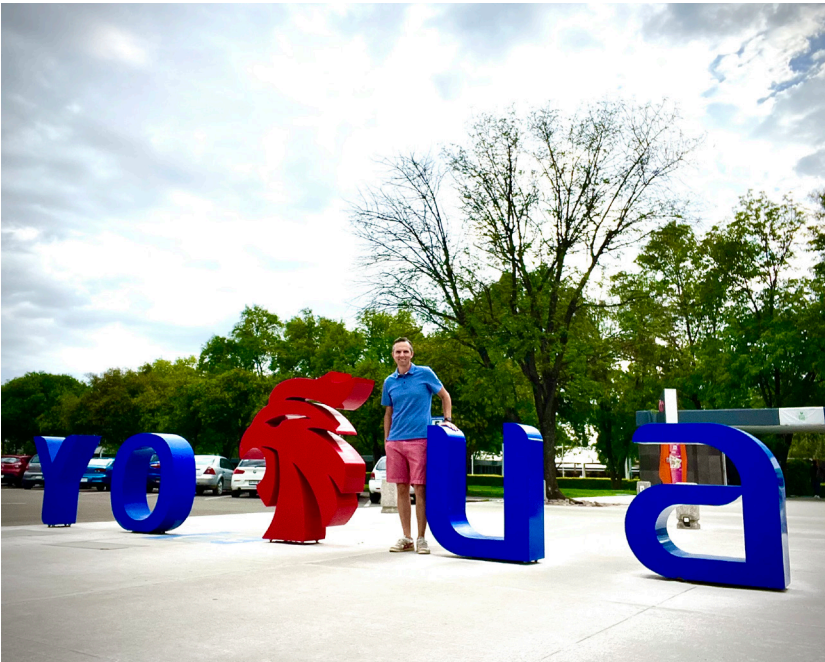


# Other Faculty and Staff Highlights

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**Professor Kelly Whiteside** and **Dr. Stephen Andon** presented at the International Association for Communication and Sport Conference in March 2024 about experiential learning in Sports Communication programs and the growth of the Red Hawk Sports Network. In August, Dr. Andon was a guest of the Universidad Autónoma de Aguascalientes' (UAA) Department of Communication in Mexico, where he delivered in a lecture in

Spanish "Periodismo deportivo en la era de la comunicación digital, (Sports media in the era of digital communication)." **Dr. Joel Penney** was a panelist at the European Lab conference on the "Impact and Future of Independent Music Journalism." **Professor Guy Nicolucci** wrote and produced The Murdaugh Murders which aired on Tubi.com. Professor **Lauren Carr** won 18 awards at various film festivals around the world. **Professor Stuart MacLelland** directed "Blind Injustice" for The Cincinnati Opera Company. **Dr. Jin-A Choi** presented at seven global conferences on various social media topics and **Dr. Chris McKinley** led two presentations about misinformation at the National Communication Conference. **Professor Chloe Sarbib** directed an independent fiction podcast "This Is Not a Love Story," Episode 1: "Say Anything."



**Professor Roberta Friedman** produced documentary films "The Best of Jazz from Detroit" and "Each One Teach One: Detroit Mentorship Legacy." Panel discussions followed both screenings at The FREEP Documentary Film Festival in Detroit. **Dr. Harry Haines** was interviewed for a multi-part documentary series (UK) focusing on the gay military experience in the Vietnam War and the post-war experience of gay veterans in New York City at the Continental Bath House. **Professor Kelly Whiteside** served on the College Football Playoff Selection Committee for the second consecutive season. **Stacy Gitlin**, who is an Assistant Teaching Professor and the Faculty Advisor for the Red Hawk Sports Network, won a Sports Emmy Award for "Outstanding Live Special" for her work on the XXIV Olympic Winter Games in Beijing. **Professor Tara George** received a Distinguished Adviser award by the National College Media Association for her work with The Montclarion.

# Media Organization Awards

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In addition to the notable achievements from the media organizations shared above, **WMSC** students and alumni won [six College Broadcasters Inc. \(CBI\) awards](#) and [two Intercollegiate Broadcasting System Awards](#), including first-place honors in four categories. Student journalists at **The Montclarion** won seven New Jersey Press Foundation (NJPF) awards through the 2023-2024 New Jersey College Newspaper Contest, including two first place awards. **Hawk Communications**, SCM's PR/Strategic Communications agency class, held its inaugural Distinguished Alumni Awards for current students and alumni. Six Montclair graduates excelling in public relations and social media roles were honored for their contributions to the agency and its clients while students, and to recognize their professional accomplishments.



# Other Partnership Highlights

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[Montclair's partnership with NBCUniversal's NBCU Academy continued](#) with new courses, events and special opportunities for SCM students. SCM Professors and NBC executives created an online Spanish Language Journalism course available to NBCU Academy

partner institutions, while three students were guests of NBC Sports for the 2023 Sunday Night Football opener between the Giants and Cowboys at MetLife Stadium.



Another NBC collaboration is an SCM partnership with partnership with **NBC 4 New York** and **Telemundo 47**, which also continued with an SCM class on News Producing featuring SCM professors and executives from both stations. The stations also facilitated high-profile events, including An Evening., including “An Evening with NBC/MSNBC's Steve Kornacki.”



This partnership also included campus visits, office hours with students, mentorship, and a pipeline to job and internship opportunities. Recent SCM alumnae **Emma Caughlin**, **Ashleigh Corby** and **Julia Egan** landed jobs with NBC 4 New York as a direct result of the partnership.

## SCM Alumni: Share Your Success With Us!

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Speaking of hiring, if you are an SCM alum and recently got a new job or promotion or simply want to update us on your career, please share your great news with us [via this Google form!](#)

On a related note, SCM faculty and staff placed hundreds of students into high-profile internship positions across the country, including 192 roles directly from the **CART Career Services** team. Students worked at a variety of organizations including the New York Red Bulls, Coyne PR, Nike Communications, FOX, CNBC, Warner Music Group, NBCUniversal, Klein Creative Media and dozens of others.

# Fresh Faces and a Fond Farewell

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As SCM's rapid growth continued, we welcomed three new faculty members to the team, **Alan Blanco**, **Nicole Pometti** and **Chloe Sarbib**.

Blanco is an independent filmmaker from Brooklyn who is teaching introductory through thesis-level courses. He won an award at the 2014 Tribeca Film Festival for "Manos Sucias" a film produced by Spike Lee which he co-wrote and photographed. In other roles, he has collaborated on many projects that were screened at Sundance and at festivals in Athens, Zurich and California.

Pometti specializes in Post Production, teaching editing courses and the Cooking with Koppell class at Montclair. Before joining SCM, she spent more than 10 years as a Video Editor and Producer, working in corporate, reality tv, documentaries and film. She also

co-hosts the "Remakes, Reboots and Revivals" podcast.

Sarbib is an accomplished screenwriter and director based in Brooklyn whose short films have played and won awards at Oscar and BAFTA-qualifying festivals in the U.S and internationally. She has also directed for TV, including "In the Dark" which is streaming on Netflix.

**Associate Professor** Roberta Friedman retired. She was a fixture in the Film & Television program and recruited dozens of famous guests to campus to showcase their important work as part of the weekly Film Forum series and to speak to her classes. She was proud of her work with the University Senate and was instrumental in winning numerous grants to further her work. She found joy teaching her students about the latest in the film industry while furthering her craft, including two feature documentaries films.

# During the 2024-25 Academic Year, Keep an Eye Out for...

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In August, **President Jonathan Koppell** and **Provost and Senior Vice President for Academic Affairs Junius Gonzales** announced that SCM will become a standalone college in July 2025.

This represents a wonderful milestone, one that will place us among a new group of peer institutions and programs. This news also acknowledges our continued growth, our new and successful programs, the breadth of our academic offerings, our impactful industry partnerships, our award winning co-curricular programs, and our persistent efforts to be at the forefront of innovation and increasingly among national leaders in our disciplines.

Over the past two years, faculty and staff have worked tirelessly to **launch a new Master of Arts degree in Strategic Communication and Media**. Targeted to today's modern student who desires more flexibility and online, asynchronous courses, this degree program will offer future-facing topics that are not featured in the current program, and introduce SCM to new audiences outside of our immediate geographic footprint. Starting in Fall 2025, students can enroll in the 30-credit program in the Fall, Spring, or Summer semester to fit their needs. The degree can be completed as quickly as one year. This degree program replaces the popular, but more traditional Master of Arts in Public and Organizational Relations.

All of these amazing accomplishments by our students, faculty and staff are a testament to our community's commitment to excellence. It's an exciting time to be part of the SCM family, so please continue to visit our website and engage with us on social media (@Montclair\_SCM) for more details.



Finally, if you would like to recognize a professor or staff member who impacted your career or to support research and infrastructure to support our rapid growth, **please consider making a gift in any amount by [visiting this link](#)** on our website.