



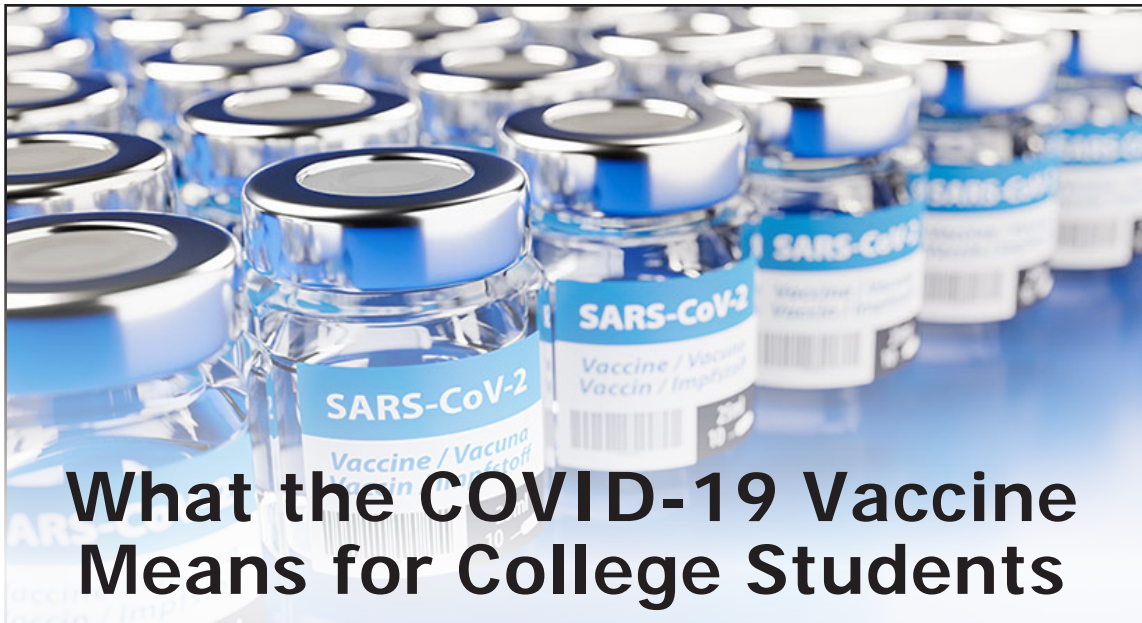
# THE OUTLOOK

MONMOUTH UNIVERSITY'S  
STUDENT-RUN NEWSPAPER SINCE 1933

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## What the COVID-19 Vaccine Means for College Students

IMAGE TAKEN from Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health

With the COVID-19 vaccine now being distributed across the U.S., University health officials said that it will help bring colleges back to normalcy.

RIYA AJMERA  
CONTRIBUTING WRITER

Monmouth University health officials have encouraged students and faculty to receive the COVID-19 vaccination as it becomes available in order to return to normal campus life.

“College students should seriously consider getting vaccinated,” said Director of Health Services Kathy Maloney. “This is not just for one’s own health

but for the health and well-being of family members, friends, and the greater community. Vaccination is our primary defense against the COVID virus. If we can eliminate people serving as hosts for viral replication, we can reduce case incidence on campus and in the community.”

About 39 million doses have been administered in the United States, surpassing the approximate 26 million positive cases as reported by the Centers for Disease Control and

Prevention (CDC)’s COVID-19 Data Tracker. The CDC also stated that about 59 million doses have been delivered. As for progression, the latest rate of administered shots was reported as 4.69 million doses a day, according to the Bloomberg Vaccine Tracker.

“The vaccination effort in this country got off to a slow start but it is picking up steam,” said

VACCINE cont. on pg. 3

## After 46 Years, Patti Swannack Is Retiring

MELISSA BADAMO  
EDITOR-IN-CHIEF/ FEATURES EDITOR

Patti Swannack, Vice President for Administrative Services, will be retiring after the spring 2021 semester. Swannack currently oversees facilities management, campus planning and construction, human resources, student employment, and the Monmouth University Police Department (MUPD).

“I truly can’t tell you how quickly the time has gone,” Swannack said, reflecting on her 46 years at the University. “It’s been incredible. I really believe that if people work hard, they can really advance themselves. I never in my wildest dreams thought that I would end up being Vice President. A lot of it’s being in the right time and right place, but a lot of it’s hard work.”

The University has performed over \$325 million in construction and renovation

projects under Swannack’s leadership, according to Monmouth’s website. These include installation of the largest solar energy system in higher education east of the Mississippi River, construction of four residence halls and three academic



PHOTO COURTESY of Monmouth University  
Patti Swannack currently serves as Vice President for Administrative Services.

RETIREMENT cont. on pg. 2

## Remembering Dr. Jack Burke

MELISSA BADAMO  
EDITOR-IN-CHIEF/ FEATURES EDITOR

Dr. John (Jack) Burke, former Associate Professor and Chair in the Department of Music and Theatre Arts, passed away on Dec. 10 at the age of 75 due to cancer. Burke taught at the University for about 25 years, served 15 years as the Chair of the Department of Music and Theatre Arts, and served over a decade as Director of the Theatre Arts program before retiring after the spring 2020 semester.

“He touched the lives of thousands of students beginning with his days as a high school teacher and his subsequent 25 years at Monmouth University,” said Stan Green, Professor Emeritus of Anthropology and Former Dean of the School of Humanities and Social Sciences. “I had the honor and privilege to work closely with Jack and most importantly to have him as a friend who gave me joy through his work and our at-

tendance of many plays.”

During his time teaching at the University, Burke developed a partnership with the Two River Theatre in Red Bank, creating opportunities for students to participate in professional theatre. Most recently, he directed his last play “Gemini” in Lauren K. Woods Theatre in March 2020.

“Jack was the creative heart of the theatre program,” Green said. “He ran the department pretty much by himself and built it from nothing. Monmouth has a lot of things to be grateful for from Jack’s work.”

Green, who described Burke as an empathetic, sensitive, and humble person, noted that his legacy on the University is also marked by his impact on students. “He was among the most student-oriented professors at Monmouth. He saved a lot of Monmouth students,” Green said. “If he saw that students were having problems, he would work with them as best as

he could. He spent so many hours with students both individually and at rehearsals.”

Katherine Fernandez, a senior music student, worked closely with Dr. Burke as the assistant director of “Gemini” last March. “I really appreciate my time spend working with Dr. Burke,” she said. “With so much knowledge of the theatre world, he had so many stories to tell. He also gave me a lot of freedom when it came to being his assistant for ‘Gemini,’ and I was able to gain more hands-on experience than if I had been assisting someone else. When working with him, I was treated like a creative partner, not just someone who wrote down notes and performed tasks. Dr. Burke will be missed, and I cherish the wisdom and experience he had passed onto me during our time together.”

BURKE cont. on pg. 3



PHOTO COURTESY of Rekha Datta

Dr. Jack Burke, recently retired Professor of Music and Theatre, passed away on Dec. 10, 2020.

### INSIDE:

#### NEWS

Walter Greason, Ph.D., Presents Research On Historical Diversity

Pg. 2

#### FEATURES

How Our Furry Friends Can Help Reduce Pandemic Stress

Pg. 6

#### SPORTS

Deion Hammond Breaks 30-Year Record

Pg. 14

#### INDEX

News	2
Editorial	4
Opinion	5
Features	6
Lifestyles	7
Entertainment	8
Politics	10
Club & Greek	11
Sports	14



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# Greason, Ph.D., Presents Research On Historical Diversity

ISABELLA HANNA  
STAFF WRITER

Walter D. Greason, Ph.D., Associate Professor and Chair of the Department of Educational Counseling and Leadership, presented his research on the historical diversity of Union County in a virtual presentation co-sponsored by the Union Public Library and Vauxhall Historical Society on Tuesday, Feb. 2.

In addition to his work as a professor here at Monmouth, Greason is one of the most prominent historians and urbanists in the United States and a respected lecturer and social activist across the world. Over the past thirty years, he has spoken in an array of academic settings, ranging from hundreds of college campuses to numerous scholastic conferences. He has authored six books and published over a hundred additional academic articles and essays, largely centered on the racial wealth gap and varying trends of economic globalization.

In his presentation, Greason introduced his love of history and how he came to specialize more distinctly on the ever-changing demographic of New Jersey.

“There are lots of requirements to teach New Jersey history, yet most of the folks who live here don’t even know the content.”

Before delving into the specifics of Union County, Greason explained what

had initially fascinated him about New Jersey.

“The farming villages originally established here have become massive arteries of traffic, and I didn’t understand how that could have happened. So, for the past 15 years, I’ve studied how the suburbs transformed New Jersey,” said Greason.

Greason went on to explain that most historians focus on Newark and the industrial epicenters located in New Jersey.

“Ironically, the garden state became prosperous because of the cities.”

“Nevertheless, instead of viewing the suburbs as communities who reside on the edges of industrial centers, it is more accurate to

see them as infringing on the countryside from where they evolved,” explained Greason.

Greason’s studies are mainly based upon wealth accumulation, economics, public infrastructure, industrial enterprises, and ultimately, the overall connection to the global economy. Specifically, in this lecture, he analyzed how union county is actually a blueprint for the entire country.

“The process of immigrants coming from Italy, eastern Europe, and those of Jewish descent, transformed what it meant to be successful in New Jersey,” elaborated Greason.

From there, entrepreneurship and power in neighborhood businesses allowed

people to make the American dream a reality. This would be assisted in the development of railroad channels and the Garden State Parkway.

According to Greason, this foundation for ethnic divisions sets the story of the last 20 years, and directly relates to African American affluence in this county and across the country.

“Even after the civil rights reform in the 50s and 60s, there was no African American business ownership, yet those European immigrants from the 1930s and 40s began to dominate the corporate atmosphere,” said Greason.

The ability of the African American demographic to accrue wealth is not a matter of ethnic differences but

rather it is the corporate barriers that prevented them from moving upwards.

Greason explained, “Due to numerous riots in Union County in the 70s and 80s, white flight was the capital flight, meaning there were no partnerships to form or opportunities available to benefit from the state’s capital expansion.”

These are examples of economic collapse that prevent society from capitalizing on untapped potential across the nation.

“If we are going to reinvest in our backyard so as to profit all people, it comes down to education,” stated Greason.

“We have to ask the question: How do we make the next generation savvy?”



PHOTO TAKEN by Anthony DePrimo

Greason introduced his love of history and his path to specializing in New Jersey’s demographics.

# Patti Swannack Announces Retirement Following Spring 2021

RETIREMENT cont. from pg. 1

buildings (McAllan Hall, the Plangere Center, and Rechnitz Hall), renovation of the Edison Science Building and Guggenheim Memorial Library, restoration of the Great Hall, construction of the 70,000 square-foot Monmouth Park Corporate Center in 2013, and oversight of the OceanFirst Bank Center, the University’s largest construction project.

“I truly can’t tell you how quickly the time has gone,” Swannack said, reflecting on her 46 years at the University. “It’s been incredible. I really believe that if people work hard, they can really advance themselves. I never in my wildest dreams thought that I would end up being Vice President. A lot of it’s being in the right time and right place, but a lot of it’s hard work.”

Swannack joined Monmouth’s human resources department in 1975 and was promoted to director of human resources and executive director before assuming her current position in 1994, according to the University’s website. During her tenure, Swannack also received a bachelor’s degree in management from Monmouth University in 2002.

The Vice President decided to retire after this semester because the University is currently in between renovation projects. “I would hate to be involved in the middle of a project and retire,” she said. “That’s why I thought it was a good time.”

Most recently, Swannack has

been working with President Patrick Leahy, Ed.D. to create a more student-friendly space in the Great Hall by adding a coffee bar and expanding the number of seats on the first floor, with an anticipated completion date of summer 2021.

Beginning in 2006, Swannack’s supervision of the solar energy system on about 13 campus buildings has saved millions in utility costs for the University, therefore allowing funds to be allocated to other on-campus projects. “Our utility costs are flat. We have added a half a million square feet, and our utility costs are what they are 15, 16, even 17 years ago. I think that’s a win,” Swannack said. “I’ve always instilled in my staff to save money, because every dollar we spend is tuition dollars.

When we do that, we could put that money into a student activity, an academic class, or hiring a faculty member. And I think that’s really important.”

President Leahy said that he believes that Swannack’s influence on the University will be felt for decades to come. “VP Swannack has tirelessly dedicated her entire professional career to Monmouth University, and when she retires in June, she will have left an indelible imprint on virtually every square foot of our beautiful campus,” he said. “Since first joining the University over 45 years ago in an entry-level position, VP Swannack has charted pathways to professional success at Monmouth not only for herself, but also for countless other women under the

University’s employ. We all owe VP Swannack a debt of gratitude for her loyal service to Monmouth, and for her pioneering efforts to promote gender equity across the University community.”

Kara Sullivan, Assistant to The Vice President & Special Projects Coordinator, has worked alongside Swannack for the past 22 years, an experience she describes as exhilarating. “Under Patti’s leadership, the transformation and beautification of the campus is astounding,” Sullivan said. “She has served the Monmouth University community tirelessly. The lives she has impacted are countless. It is difficult to imagine a Monmouth University without her. I wish her a healthy, happy and well-deserved retirement.”

Swannack reflected on her staff, saying, “[Monmouth] is a great place. The faculty are phenomenal, and I’ve had a staff that’s unbelievable. I could not have done anything that I’ve done without all of them that have my back.”

“It has been such a pleasure working for Patti during the 24 years of my career here at Monmouth,” said Tim Orr, Construction Manager for Campus Planning and Construction. “I have seen first-hand how dedicated she has been to making Monmouth the best higher education institution it can be. Her unfailing support of her staff, Monmouth’s Students, and the rest of the University community has always been evident and

appreciated. I will be forever grateful for all the support Patti has given me and all that she has taught me during my time under her direction. She will be sorely missed and always remembered for her loyalty to Monmouth University and its mission.”

Michael Wunsch, Director of Compliance for Administrative Services, said that Swannack paved the way for and inspired others to work hard. “For the last six years I’ve worked for Patti, she has been a great boss, a dedicated leader, and an amazing mentor,” he said. I cannot thank her enough for the important role she has played in my career at Monmouth. She always has a clear vision of what we need to do to succeed as a University and her focus has always been to ensure the students have a positive experience. Her presence will surely be missed.”

“My policy has always been an open door,” Swannack said. “I see some of my staff members two or three times a day, let alone a week. I talk to every single department head that reports to me on a daily basis, if not more frequently. I’m here to help them and work with them to get whatever we have to get done. I know that some folks are really, really sad that I’m leaving.”

As an Ocean Township resident, Swannack plans to spend her retirement reading and visiting the beach after her last day on June 30.



IMAGE TAKEN by Anthony DePrimo

University President Patrick F. Leahy said Swannack’s influence will be felt in the campus community for decades to come.



Dr. Burke Passes Away

Athletic Director McNeil Honored During Women’s Sports Event

BURKE cont. from pg. 1

Senior music student Samantha Ventola also worked with Burke during last year’s production of “Gemini.” She said, “Doc Burke was more than just a professor or director. He was your biggest supporter and mentor. He shared his wisdom and knowledge with all his students...he offered the best advice and gave us unforgettable opportunities to create art with our peers. He often shared stories of his time in the industry and little funny anecdotes of theatre that were unlike any I’ve heard before. He will be greatly missed.”

“Students really recognized his passion for conveying a story and developing a character. Jack was very passionate about that.” added Joe Rapolla, Specialist Professor and current Chair of the Department of Music and Theatre Arts.

Burke brought renowned New York actors to campus, such as *Breaking Bad* and *Malcolm in the Middle*’s Bryan Cranston, who performed in the Shadow Lawn production “Chapter Two” in 2008. Burke is also credited with directing the Shadow Lawn productions “Big: the Musical” (2015), “Teddy and Alice” (2012), “The Au Pair Man” (2010), “Da” (2006), and “Butterflies Are Free” (2006).

Aside from theatre, Burke also had a love for Irish literature, being a first generation Irish-American born in Jersey City. “Jack was an expert in Irish literature, plays, poetry, novels, and history,” Green said. “That’s one of the things that connected us, since I am an Irish archaeologist and historian. That was a very important part of his world. He had family in Gallway, the west of Ireland.”

Burke received his Ph.D. in theatre from Michigan State University, where he developed his lifelong interest in the craft, according to Green. Faculty members who worked with Burke during his tenure have recognized his impact on the University.

“Jack was a beloved faculty member who put Monmouth University’s Theater Program on the map. He will be sorely missed,” wrote Interim Dean of the School of Humanities and Social Sciences, Richard Veit, Ph.D., in a statement.

“He was a great energy,” Rapolla concluded. “He was responsible for getting the spotlight shown on theatre at the University. We are grateful for our time with Jack and that his legacy will live on at the Woods Theatre.”

MATTHEW CUTILLO  
MANAGING/ NEWS/ LIFESTYLES

University Vice President and Director of Athletics Marilyn McNeil, Ph.D., was honored as a guest speaker during the 2021 National Girls and Women in Sports Day virtual celebration on Wednesday, Feb. 3. The event was hosted by the New Jersey Association for Intercollegiate Athletics for Women.

Tara Rienecker, President of the New Jersey Association of Intercollegiate Athletics for Women, gave opening remarks.

“Today celebrates you, the student athlete, [as well as] your parents, family, coaches, friends and fans that have supported you throughout the years,” Rienecker began. “I’m a proud New Jersey high school and college athlete myself, and I’m excited to celebrate and congratulate the amazing student athletes and honor award winners from new jersey schools.”

The ceremony’s theme is “Lead Her Forward,” set by the Women’s Sports Foundation. “All of you are sitting here today because of the women before you who have blazed a trail in sports,” Rienecker said.

“Their trials and triumphs have laid the groundwork for you to be a high school or college athlete, a professional athlete, an olympian or work in the field of sports and athletics today,” she continued. “Believe in your abilities, fight for your rights as female athletes and you will achieve great things. Although things might look different this year, we did not want to forget all that we have overcome. We celebrate you, your families and your triumphs in sport and in life.”

Rienecker then introduced Mc-

Neil as the celebration’s keynote speaker.

“I’m honored to be here with you today, and in awe of all of your accomplishments,” McNeil began. “This year’s National Girls and Women in Sports Day has a theme, it’s called ‘Lead Her Forward,’ and I have two points I’d really like to make.”

First, McNeil urged listeners to celebrate women in sports and to share that celebration by bringing your younger sister, niece or even grandmother to a game. Watching women’s sports on television is great as well, McNeil explained.

“Celebrate their abilities and their beauty as athletes,” McNeil said. “Buy your niece a ball, a glove, a bat, and watch her explore and grow.”

McNeil’s second point was an encouragement for others to join an athletic profession in some capacity.

“After 53 years, I will retire along with my good colleague Sabrina Grant,” McNeil said. “We have loved this gig and you can too. You have so many employment choices today. Remember as accomplished awardees today, what you learn from your sports participation. How to compete, work hard, and be disciplined. Win with grace, lose with respect. To be a teammate sometimes means step up and sometimes means step down. This is the best classroom ever. We need more women to do this. You won’t regret it. Good luck. Congratulations, and lead her forward.”



PHOTO COURTESY of Monmouth University  
McNeil urged listeners to involve family members in sports.

Vaccines Bring Hope Of Normal Campus Life

VACCINE cont. from pg. 1

Maloney. “It was difficult in the beginning when supplies were limited and demand was great. This required health agencies to establish a priority order for distribution. We still have more demand than supplies. However, as more vaccines become available and the number of distribution centers increase, we will be able to vaccinate anyone seeking the vaccine. I strongly encourage all members of our campus community to get vaccinated once it becomes available to them.” Maloney received both doses of the Moderna vaccine.

The Pfizer-BioNTech and Moderna COVID-19 vaccines are the vaccine options currently available and authorized by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA). Because they are both mRNA vaccines, they function in the same way. Both include lipids, which create a greasy outside pocket to contain the mRNA and allow it to get inside the immune cells.

“The mRNA vaccine is very simple. Just a piece of RNA that will produce an immune response to create antibodies,” said Danuta Sz wajkajzer, Ph.D., a Senior Lecturer in the Department of Chemistry and Physics and a biophysical chemist by training, who has worked on proteins and DNA interactions for many years. She has already received her first shot for the COVID-19 vaccine and is waiting for her second one.

Although the mRNA vaccines are new in treating COVID-19, mRNA vaccines have been undergoing study for years in relation to cancer-based research. Both vaccines have been reported through clinical trial data being about 95 percent effective at preventing the COVID illness when both shots are taken. However, it is still unclear to what extent the vaccines will prevent contraction and transmission of the virus. It is known that those vaccinated have been protected for at least 4 months.

As stated by the CDC, the vaccines will not cause a positive COVID-19 test since the vaccines do not use the live virus that cause COVID-19.

Both vaccines result in similar side effects including tiredness, headaches, muscle and joint pain, chills, and fever. A rare effect observed was the development of Bell’s palsy (temporary facial paralysis) for four of the 30,000 participants in the Moderna clinical trial and four of 43,000 participants in the Pfizer clinical trial. The exact cause and/or tie to the vaccine is unknown; however, the conditions are reported to be benign and mild where the patients recover in several weeks.

Despite these side effects and possible risks, Haider Husaini, a freshman business student, supports the vaccine due to the worse long-term consequences associated with recovery from COVID-19. “I think college students should get the vaccine not only to protect themselves in the present, but also in the future,” said Husaini, who learned about mRNA through his drug sciences course last semester.

Husaini continued, “Whether you are symptomatic or asymptomatic, the long-lasting effects are the cause of a wide array of problems in the long run. The lung damage that the virus inflicts on a cleared COVID patient is worse than that of a long-time smoker. I think people among our age group need to consider the

toll the virus takes on a person, young or old.”

Moderna is eligible for those at least 18 years old, whereas Pfizer-BioNTech is allowed for people at least 16 years old. This age difference is dependent on the clinical trials done by each company which determined what age was suitable for a safe vaccination. The immune systems of younger individuals process differently and may require alternate dosage amounts, which is why the age regulations exist for safety purposes. However, considering the vaccination priority consists of healthcare workers, essential workers, and one step in a full return to campus. The COVID vaccine, like every vaccine created, does not make anyone completely immune. I urge every student to wear a mask, specifically a surgical mask or an N-95 mask. This is because the new variants can penetrate the cloth masks. I also suggest not going out unnecessarily. A large reason as to why this virus’ reign has extended is because people attend large gatherings,” said Husaini.

Returning to normalcy is a future that many Monmouth individuals hope to see .

“Once vaccination begins for college students, you will see the number of cases on college campuses decline.”

-Kathy Maloney, Director of Health Services

those that are 65 and older, the age requirements may not have much significance as of now.

“It would be great if we all get vaccinated,” said Sz wajkajzer. “This would produce a herd immunity and the virus will be eradicated. This will allow to get back to the past ‘normal’. It is much harder to teach via Zoom. Students need structure and focus to be motivated. Let’s think about all in-person classes, labs, meetings, trips, parties etc. all without masks and social distancing. I miss seeing faces of my students. The human interactions are essential for learning.”

“I think that the vaccine is only

“I believe college students should get the vaccine because college students are in enclosed spaces together in some cases, large quantities,” Alfano said. “Monmouth has done a really good job of limiting capacity on rooms and spacing everyone out, but the more that are vaccinated, the closer we are to being able to go back to some level of normalcy, hopefully.” Alfano has received both doses of the vaccine.

William Schreiber Ph.D., Chair of the Department of Chemistry and Physics, has an equal desire towards normalcy, but with some safeguard. “I am hopeful that vaccination, and continued precautions, will enable us to return to normal operations by the fall semester, and perhaps, to some extent, over the summer,” he said. “However, we have a long way to go in terms of vaccine availability and distribution for that to happen. Those things can’t be predicted with any certainty right now. College students, especially those who live on campus, are inherently in a high-risk group because of the difficulty of maintaining proper distancing at all times, the use of many common facilities, and also because it is easy for any of us to let our guard down for a moment in terms of wearing masks.”

college students, you will see the number of cases on college campuses decline. As state-wide cases decline, there will be loosening of restrictions by state governments. For colleges this would herald the beginning to having more in person classes, larger group activities, spectator sports, study abroad opportunities, and social gatherings. We need a robust vaccination effort from every member of our community in order to achieve herd immunity. We need herd immunity in order to return to a sense of normalcy,” said Maloney.

Sonya Alfano, a senior chemistry student, hopes for the same outlook.



THE OUTLOOK

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The Release of the New COVID-19 Vaccines

EDITORIAL STAFF

The COVID-19 vaccines have been rolling out since Dec. 14, and there has been a constant debate about whether people want to receive it yet.

The FDA (United States Food and Drug Administration) has approved two COVID-19 vaccines to be released to the public. One is the Pfizer/BioNTech vaccine and the other is the Moderna vaccine. The United States vaccination program plans to have 100 million people vaccinated by April.

Whether or not people

a young person who currently has the antibodies and is better equipped to fight it off. I don't see a sense of urgency for myself to be vaccinated as soon as possible."

Some U.S. citizens feel that the distribution of the vaccine is not being released properly, and that high-risk groups are not receiving it as quickly as they should.

One editor feels that the vaccine is not being distributed properly because most sign-ups do not ask for medical history.

However, a few editors feel that the vaccine is being distributed properly

campuses should distribute the COVID-19 vaccine to their students.

One editor said that the vaccine should be distributed on campuses, as they could build herd immunity. Another said that it would be a good option to help slow the spread of the virus, since college students typically live within close proximity of one another and are constantly socializing.

"It is not a secret that the spread has been increased on campuses because young people love to go out, so if college aged students were protected, the spread would definitely be

"As someone who has lost a grandparent from the virus, I wish the vaccine had been developed faster and saved my grandfather's life."

want to get the vaccine as of now is still up for debate. One editor said, "I am planning on getting the vaccine whenever it becomes available to me. The more who get vaccinated, the faster we can move on from this virus."

Another editor also said that they will be receiving the vaccine because it will slow the spread of the virus and decrease the overall fear of going out.

One editor highlighted the importance of distributing the vaccine to those who need it most. "I do not plan on receiving the vaccine until further down the road," the editor said. "As of now, I'd rather see the dosages be allocated to the immunocompromised or elderly, rather than me,

as of right now, and that the focus should be on those who have a higher risk of being severely infected by the virus.

One editor said, "It's reassuring to know that in the state of New Jersey, more vaccines have been distributed than positive [test] results, which is an astounding and promising statistic."

Another editor said, "I think that New Jersey's vaccination eligibility phases make the most sense; vaccinate those who are most at risk first due to limited supply such as healthcare workers, people aged 65 and older, and people with pre-existing conditions."

Another option for debate is whether college

slowed," said another editor.

With the new vaccine comes hope for the future and what the year 2021 could potentially bring. One editor hopes that by the fall 2021 semester, students can return to the physical classroom and there will be life on campus again. Another said that they hope it is effective and saves many lives.

"As someone who has lost a grandparent from the virus, I wish the vaccine had been developed faster and saved my grandfather's life," said an editor. "Regardless, it's comforting to know that this vaccine has the potential to save so many people from suffering the way my grandpa did."

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# Mental Health and Online Classes: *Good or Bad?*

GIANNA FERRARO  
CONTRIBUTING WRITER

Colleges across the country have abruptly ditched in-person classes this past year and have switched to hybrid and online instruction. Students have had to adapt to this new way of learning by changing their routines and learning environments. As a result of these quick changes, students have had difficulty adjusting to the new normal, resulting in a worsening mental health.

The lack of in-person lectures and extended screen time has led to a lot of mental health issues across campus. There are several studies that show a direct connection between anxiety, depression, and increased screen time. With a majority of classes held solely online, students are missing out on all sorts of social interactions. Walking to class with friends, small talk with a professor before the beginning of class, and attending social events held at the University. These small interactions begin to add up and make a majority of students feel isolated.

In addition to missing out on social interactions, online learning has impacted mental health because of Zoom fatigue. This past year, most students have experienced the feeling of back to back classes. Spending hours on video calls can be extremely draining. There is limited motivation and focus when you're spending hours staring at a screen.

Learning through a camera has made it easier than ever to lose focus during a lecture. There are endless distractions around us at all times, and it can be tough to resist the temptation to go on so-



PHOTO COURTESY of Anthony DePrimo  
Andrew Lee, Director of Counseling and Psychological Services converses at parent orientation.

cial media during a long lecture. Combine lack of focus with bad time management skills, and it can lead to missing assignments, deadlines, and important information about the lecture. Missing these important tasks can result in grades dropping drastically. For students that struggle with learning online, motivation to get work done is lower than ever before.

Additionally, unhealthy sleeping patterns have been an issue for students, especially in asynchronous classes. There is lack of structure to the day when the class is asynchronous. There is no reason to get out of bed and go to class, or even get online for it. If time is not managed properly, students can find themselves doing work into early hours of the morning and losing a good amount of sleep.

When students are learning in a classroom setting, there is more motivation to do well in the class,

increased social interaction, open communication between students and the professor, and students are more likely to be alert and attentive throughout the lecture. Since most professors prohibit cell phone use during class, there are minimal distractions and students are more inclined to pay attention. The classroom is a more active and involved setting that allows students to learn efficiently and interact with their peers.

For a majority of students across the country, online classes have been a tough transition. Switching to remote learning has clearly impacted the mental health of many students. Being a student nowadays is difficult, and everyone is trying their best to overcome and adapt. It's normal to feel anxious and stressed, especially during unprecedented times like these. However, if these feelings become overwhelming, please don't be afraid to seek help or assistance.

# Freshmen: Missing the Experience?

JOHN PAPAGNI  
CONTRIBUTING WRITER

This year's freshmen are definitely missing out on the normal college life experience due to COVID-19. One of the main reasons I say this is because they are lacking social interaction. Classes are either in person, hybrid, or exclusively online. Even with some classes being in person it is very rare for a freshman to have one of those classes. It is usually upperclassmen or science majors who get the privilege of having in person classes.

Freshmen are also not getting to know their teachers personally or truly understand the work that the teacher is assigning them. What about next year, if possible, how will students transition from all online classes to all in-person classes?

As a college freshman this is all I have known so far. Attending classes through zoom and submitting assignments virtually has become my life. I do not believe I have experienced what true college life is like yet.

Clubs are another big part of college and most of them are all being held online without any human interaction or have been canceled due to COVID-19 related restrictions. Clubs allow for the student to create a space that is truly their own, meet new people, and explore different outlets.

Freshmen aren't getting to know one another. They do not have the chance to hang out with one another because no one can enter dorms that they don't belong to. Another restriction that freshmen

face is the fact that the lounges have been completely shut down.

Attending sports games are a thing of the past. Due to limited capacity students cannot attend games, an experience some might say is crucial. Experiencing the hype and enjoyment of a football or basketball game has not happened once in the fall semester and it is unlikely it will happen this semester.

I remember when I got accepted to Monmouth around November to December of 2019 and my parents took me out to a basketball game that was happening at Monmouth. It was a blast to see the game in action and the number of people that attended practically filled up the entire stadium.

The online events that Monmouth holds here are nice because you have a chance at winning prizes, however, students are online most of the week, and the last thing they want to do is attend another zoom meeting.

Fraternities and sororities are big parts of college life that people are missing out on as well. The chance to make a bond with people that you will know for the rest of your life while helping one another through tough times and the parties that they hold is a huge part of the college experience that freshmen are missing out on.

The freshmen at Monmouth University obviously understand that there is a global pandemic occurring and that all the restrictions and precautions that the staff has placed are for our wellbeing, however, I wish things were different as I will never be able to redo my college experience.

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# How our Furry Friends Can Reduce Pandemic Stress

DENISSE QUINTANILLA  
STAFF WRITER

Although some students' mental health has suffered due to the COVID-19 pandemic, there has been something that helped them get through these tough times: pets. They play a huge role in relieving stress, anxiety, and loneliness during these difficult times.

Lindsay Mehrkam, Assistant Professor of Psychology and the Principal Investigator of the Human-Animal Wellness Collaboratory (HAWC) at Monmouth University, described the meaning of an emotional support animal and the benefits that it can have on the mental health of a student.

"An emotional support animal (ESA) is an animal that provides comfort to an individual just by being present. ESAs can be a wide variety of animal species," she said. "By definition, they do not receive specialized training to perform a specific task."

Whether it's a pet or a licensed emotional support animal, our furry friends can help us get through periods of stress. "Animals can have an extremely positive impact on students' mental health during this pandemic. They offer us compan-



Pets can play a role in helping our mental health during the stressors of the pandemic. Pictured: student Isabella Lainez's Rottweiler named Nala (left) and Labrador Retriever named Tana (right).

ionship and comfort, reducing feelings of isolation and loneliness," Mehrkam said.

Mehrkam herself has reaped the benefits of owning a pet during these difficult times. "As a dog owner myself, long trail walks on the beach are my favorite parts of the day with my dogs and set the tone for the rest of the day. They help keep me accountable for my own exercise, breaks, and general well-being," she said.

Christopher Mckittrick is the Assistant Director of Counseling and Psychological Services at Monmouth. As a professional who interacts with students on a daily basis, he has noticed how much of a help an emotional support animal can be.

"The expectation that the student has of the animal is one of the most significant indicators of successful relief," he said. "If a student is expecting and willing to be active and involved in the animal's care while also actively engaged in their own self-care, I have seen students successfully minimize symptoms common to disordered depression and anxiety."

Mckittrick also offered suggestions for activities students can do with their pets. "Depend-

ing on the type of pet, physical activity (walking, playing fetch, etc.) can help move the energy surrounding emotional responses to events. Practicing mindfulness during the interaction is incredibly powerful and works very well if you have fish or animals living in an aquarium or tank," he explained.

Many students share this same sentiment, stating that their pet has been a great companion during the pandemic.

Isabella Lainez, a junior communication student, noticed that the COVID-19 pandemic greatly impacted her mental health. "I noticed a lot of buildup of anxiety and stress in general and specifically about the unknown/when things didn't go according to plan," she said.

However, Lainez was able to rely on her two furry friends to comfort her—a Labrador Retriever named Tana and a Rottweiler named Nala who came into her life during the pandemic.

"Getting Nala during the pandemic helped because she was something to focus a lot of attention around and almost gave a new sense of structure as the day revolved around her and her needs as a puppy," she said.

"[My dogs] acted as a way to lighten the mood, served as a calming presence, and allowed me to ease the stress by going for a walk or playing."

Demi Ardic, a junior sociology student, has also felt the impact of the pandemic on her mental health. "I am the kind of person that thrives off of socializing, so it really made me depressed," Ardic said.

Ardic was able to alleviate that stress with the help of her purebred German Rottweiler. "He has just brought me joy and a sense of security back. I have to be on a schedule to feed him/take care of him so he really helps me plan out my day and make me feel more productive," she said.

Amanda Crocco, a junior English education student, agreed, "I definitely hit a low point during the beginning of the pandemic when we were all forced into lockdown." However, during those dark moments, her two cats provided a sense of escapism from reality.

"My cats have helped relieve my moments of stress by cuddling with me," she said. "I learned early on in the pandemic that purring is a cat's way of 'healing' you. Every time they

sat on/near me and was purring it made me feel safe, like as if they knew I needed stress relief."

"While COVID-19 has limited physical and social interactions, pets can remind students that they are connected to something other than themselves," Mckittrick said.

"Pets are always a good investment," Lainez added. "The emotional support they give just by being there is helpful to anyone, especially those who are lonely, bored, or stressed."

For those who do not own pets, Mehrkam believes those individuals can still benefit from the mental health support animals provide. "Even those students who don't have pets can still benefit from exposure to animals in natural settings. For example, a recent study showed that birdwatching can increase feelings of happiness," said Mehrkam.

Caring for our mental health is of utmost importance, especially during these challenging times. If you are lucky enough to own a pet, whenever you are feeling down, play, cuddle or do an activity that helps you get out of your head. You'll never be alone as long as you have a tail wagging by your side.



PHOTO COURTESY of Amanda Crocco  
Student Amanda Crocco's cats have helped relieve some pandemic stress.



PHOTO COURTESY of Demi Ardic  
Student Demi Ardic's German Rottweiler enjoying a snow day.

## Safe Ways to Celebrate Valentine's Day in 2021

MELISSA BADAMO  
EDITOR-IN-CHIEF/FEATURES EDITOR

This Valentine's Day, love is in the air...but so is COVID-19. While typical date ideas like eating at a restaurant and going to the movies might be off the table for some couples, there are still plenty of ways to safely celebrate with your significant other this year.

**1- Make a home-cooked meal.** Nothing says "romance" more than spicing up the kitchen with your favorite person. You can try out new recipes, pop a bottle of champagne (if you're of age), and celebrate the national day of love. Rather than sitting inside a restaurant, you and your partner can remain safe while enjoying dinner in a more intimate setting that consists of just the two of you.

**2- Go ice skating.** This is a super fun winter activity that is perfect for beginners and

skilled skaters alike. Holding hands as you glide across the rink can be a safe, romantic way to spend the day with your partner if you are looking to avoid large crowds.

**3- Go on an ice cream date.** Who said this sweet treat can only be enjoyed in the summer? Many beloved ice cream shops in Monmouth County are open all year around, such as Jersey Freeze in Freehold, Hoffman's Ice Cream in Long Branch, and Coney Waffle in Red Bank. This can be the cherry on top of your perfect Valentine's Day.

**4- Have a movie night.** Valentine's Day is the perfect time to cozy up with your significant other and watch your favorite rom-com (with some popcorn, of course). You can always switch on the classics like *Sixteen Candles* or *Pretty in Pink*. Or, you can browse through Netflix's new releases such as *To All the Boys: PS I Still Love You*, *The Kissing Booth 2*, or

*The Prom*.

**5- Have a game night.** Get competitive this Valentine's Day with board games, card games, or video games for a playful evening with your significant other.

**6- Do some arts and crafts.** Tap into your artistic side this Feb. 14 with some crafts such as painting, scrapbooking, or crocheting, which makes for a perfect low-key date.

**7- Enjoy the outdoors.** Take advantage of the great outdoors for a safe date amid the pandemic. Bundling up and going for a hike together can rejuvenate your spirits this Valentine's Day.

**8- Exchange gifts.** Of course, you can't end the day without exchanging gifts with your significant other. There's always the classic chocolate, roses, and teddy bears, but there are also unique ways to tell your partner how much they mean to you. This can be a handwritten let-

ter or a music box that plays the song that reminds you of them.

Whether you're in a long-term relationship or even met

during the pandemic, these safe date ideas can set the scene for a night of romance this Valentine's Day and beyond.



GRAPHIC MADE by Angela Mascia

Although Valentine's Day 2021 falls in the middle of the pandemic, there are still plenty of at-home activities to celebrate this day of love with your significant other.



# Getting To Know Your Professors In The Remote Age

JESS PAK  
ASSOCIATE LIFESTYLES EDITOR

Can you believe that this semester will be the third semester and one year anniversary of virtual learning due to the COVID-19 pandemic? Who would have been able to imagine us holding zoom meetings as opposed to in-person meetings, using the “unmute” button to answer a question instead of raising our hands, and not worrying about how your class will judge the bottom half of your outfit because you could be wearing jeans or pj’s for they know.

There is a ton of convenience, functionality, and

safety with having classes through zoom, but students often find it a struggle to get to know their professor through an online class especially if it is completely asynchronous. In order to get to know a professor, you must speak up and make your presence known, but being the center of attention can instill awkwardness and can even make you feel bothersome. But by taking small steps to making yourself known to your professor, it can make your learning experience and their teaching experience all the more beneficial.

Some important factors to consider when getting to know anyone is to be open-

mined and engaged in what they are saying. Asking questions about the lecture or even making comments about the content stated is a good way for your professor to put a personality to a name and face.

Mary Anne Nagy, Vice President of Student Services, states her position on this topic when she holds meetings herself.

“The first thing I would suggest is to participate as much as you possibly can and demonstrate your interest in the topic your professor is discussing. Whenever I run a meeting I look for people who are participatory and I like to see what they think.

That way it gives me clues on what kind of person they are. Active listening is essential for people to hear what other people are saying, by listening to your professor you can find out what kind of person they are and vice versa,” said Nagy.

Similarly, junior biology student Emily Vasquez expressed her thoughts on getting to know her professors in a similar regard. Vasquez states, “I get closest to my professors when I participate in class in general. Zoom has been an awkward thing to get used to, but expressing the desire to understand and make the class a more conversational experience cre-

ates a more stimulating environment for both student and teacher. Also, if you happen to get on the call early and the professor is talking about something random while waiting for people to log on, hop in the conversation if you can, it’s fun.”

Another thing students can do to get to know their professor better is to attend their office hours. Whether it’s to get help on an assignment or just to chat about something related to the class, showing up to a professor’s office hours gives them a better understanding of who you are and will overall strengthen the relationship between both of you two.

Spencer Johnson, a junior computer science student, explained his position on getting to know his professor through office hours. Johnson says, “The most important thing to a professor is to show initiative about the material. Asking questions through email, going to office hours, and showing that you care can really help your classes. Even if you mess up and get that 78.0, it can get rounded to a 79.5 simply because the professor knows that you tried and that number doesn’t represent your work ethic.”

Making an impression through a webcam isn’t the most ideal way to get to know someone by any means. But by taking a few steps and showing your interest and overall concern to your professor, we can make an all virtual age a more human one.



If you want to know your professors better, be an engaged listener during class time. IMAGE TAKEN from Pexels.com

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# Phoebe Bridgers Delivers Smashing SNL Performances

ALEX DYER  
ENTERTAINMENT/ASSISTANT NEWS EDITOR

Multiple Grammy nominee Phoebe Bridgers took the Saturday Night Live stage Feb. 6, bringing her Midwestern “Omaha sound” to New York City.

Comedian Dan Levy of the acclaimed comedy Schitt’s Creek hosted SNL last weekend. While his spot is well-deserved (Schitt’s Creek having swept the Emmys and garnered plenty of Golden Globe nominations), another rising star, Nebraska’s angsty folk princess Phoebe Bridgers, introduced an audience of millions to her music when she performed her hit “Kyoto,” which is nominated for both Best Rock Song and Best Rock Performance.

For her second performance of the night, Bridgers played “I Know the End,” a song which begins softly but crescendos into cacophony, similarly to the “Wall of Sound” production process originally popularized among Motown artists and the Beach Boys’ Brian Wilson.

In the days following her SNL appearance, however, Bridgers has faced some frankly unfair criticism from the public and from figures in the music industry for the ending of her performance of “I Know the End,” during which she smashed her guitar and amplifier.

At the end of the main body of the song, the arrangement collapses in on itself and the music becomes aggressive, swirling into

a chaos which is reminiscent of both the themes of her acclaimed album Punisher, like grief, loss, and feelings of abandonment and disillusion with modernity. Once the climax of the song hit, Phoebe took off her guitar and started whacking her amp with it, invoking rock guitarists before her.

Strangely, though (or perhaps not), instead of focusing on the artistry and musicianship she displayed, many took issue with the

smashing of her instrument, including rock insiders.

Guitarist David Crosby of classic rock band Crosby, Stills and Nash came out of the woodwork to give his opinion on Twitter, writing, “Guitars are for playing ..making music...not stupidly bashing them on a fake monitor for childish stage drama...I really do NOT give a flying F if others have done it before, it’s still STUPID.”

Within rock n’ roll, perhaps

more so than other genres, there exists a culture of masculinity which has guided its history and, more strikingly, the composition of its artists. This masculinity has led to well-documented feats of aggressive showmanship, notably the smashing of guitars (which was pioneered by the Who’s Pete Townshend). For all the many male artists or groups in the genre, the women of the genre have had no choice but to try and keep pace with that aggression and machismo.

The problem within this arises when examining the double standard between the male-dominated rock industry with the women artists therein. The reason female rock artists like Bridgers face such repudiation from within stems from the inherent exclusivity of the rock n’ roll genre. When women are forced to match that macho intensity that arises from being a predominantly male musical movement, they face accusations of being “childish” or—and this is an incredibly common complaint—that they are “trying too hard.”

The underlying issue, then, is that women in rock are both encouraged to strive for success in a cutthroat industry and discouraged from “trying so hard.” The gatekeeping that goes on in the world of rock is, unfortunately, still alive and well. By making the standards for female rock musicians so high, traditionalists have built and tried to maintain an overwhelmingly masculine barrier around “their”

genre. But that isn’t the direction it’s heading!

It’s okay if you watched the performance’s end and thought to yourself, “That was a little extra.” Acts of destruction like that don’t appeal to everyone, and that’s to be expected. Nothing has universal appeal.

However, that is not what these critics are doing. By writing off Phoebe Bridgers’ actions as puerile, wasteful, and “stupid,” stalwarts in the genre like Crosby and disapproving commenters on social media are trying to dissuade female performers—who represent the future of rock—from contributing to the catalogue of great. In other words, in their resolution to belittle talented women like Bridgers, these insiders who have been in the industry for so long are actively dooming the very same rock n’ roll culture that produced them and nurtured their opinion in the first place.

Phoebe Bridgers already is a rock star (just ask the Recording Academy!), and historically, smashing guitars is just something rock stars do from time to time. To levy attacks against components of her stage act and presence in spite of her talent completely undermines the struggle of women in rock since its inception.

Let Phoebe Bridgers smash her guitar! To suggest that this is childish and somehow an affront to rock culture is to perpetuate a silly double-standard and enforce an obsolete status quo.



IMAGE TAKEN from Instagram: @phoebebridgers  
Phoebe Bridgers faced backlash after smashing her guitar during a Saturday Night Live performance.

## Bhopal: A Prayer for Rain World Cinema Series

MATTHEW CUTILLO  
MANAGING/NEWS/LIFESTYLES EDITOR

The World Cinema Series recently held a discussion on the film “Bhopal: A Prayer for Rain” as part of its “A Delicate Balance: Global Communities and the Natural Environment.” theme on Tuesday, Jan. 26. The discussion featured an introduction from Professor Thomas Pearson, as well as words from Datta Naik, Ph.D., Professor of Chemistry, and Marina Vujnovic, Ph.D., Associate Professor of

Communication and an expert on global communication.

“Bhopal: A Prayer for Rain,” is a docudrama that analyzes the Union Carbide plant chemical leak in Bhopal, India, that killed as many as 10,000 people in the city and its surrounding areas.

“[The director, Ravi Kumar] discovered that hardly any of the younger generation knew about the Bhopal disaster,” Pearson explained. “He decided this was a film that had to be made, and he set about working up a script with David Brooks Miller. In the process of writing

the script, Kumar busied himself by researching the technical facts for the film and analyzing the documents of the court proceedings.”

Naik outlined the history of neglect which led to the Union Carbide plant chemical leak incident. “In 1980, demand for Carbaryl pesticide started to decline due to availability of competing pesticides,” Naik explained. “The 1984 drought further cut the demand, but production continued.”

Maintenance and safety measures were neglected as

profitability of the company declined. Pollution within the plant was high because small control mechanisms were not repaired or maintained, Naik said.

“[During 1981], some phosgene splashed on a worker who died within 3 days due to inhalation of the deadly gas,” Naik said. “In 1982, more phosgene leaks occurred, exposing 24 workers who did not wear protective equipment. In addition, there were numerous incidents of Methyl Isocyanate (MIC) leaks affecting several workers. Leaks of other toxic chemicals also occurred. Workers’ warnings about the problem were not taken seriously.”

Other safety neglect issues which lead to the disaster include a flare tower being under repair during the time of the leak. A warning alarm sound was also deactivated as to avoid panic among nearby citizens.

Vujnovic has used the corporate case of the Bhopal disaster as a case study in her global communications course.

“We say, well, accidents happen, right?” Vujnovic began. “But when we look and trace, we see that accidents actually rarely happen. There is neglect, or errors that are committed not once, but multiple times in instances like this.”



IMAGE TAKEN from Der Spiegel  
The industrial disaster that occurred in Bhopal during the 1980’s happened at the Union Carbide chemical plant, the remains of which are seen here.



IMAGE TAKEN from Amazon  
Carbaryl, which is used as an insecticide on crops, was being produced in the Bhopal plant before the deadly chemical leaks.



# FRAMING BRITNEY SPEARS: The Dark Side of Pop Royalty

CAITLIN CALLAHAN  
CONTRIBUTING WRITER

Britney Spears is arguably one of the most influential pop stars to ever live. So it is a wonder to most how she ended up where she is today.

*Framing Britney Spears*, a recently-released Hulu documentary from the *New York Times*, takes a deep look into the situation she is in. Some close to Britney participated in the documentary, and it includes countless interviews from fans, legal teams, and journalists. The documentary tells the story of Britney's rise to fame as well as her very public personal life. They also delve into her current situation with her conservatorship. Currently, Britney is still under conservatorship of her father, Jamie Spears.

The documentary shows the

legal battle that played out in court as well as what can still be done to help pop star Britney Spears. An interesting point the documentary brings up is the misogyny Britney has faced her whole career. They show interviews from her early career of her being asked incredibly personal questions including "Are you a virgin?" and being asked at just 10 years old, "Do you have a boyfriend? Why not?"

There are many other examples shown of the media actively trying to make her a villain. The film places emphasis on Britney's true talent and work ethic, and she is praised by former coworkers and friends. They try to focus on the real Britney as well, who is an independent woman who worked for what she has. Yet she is not able to celebrate her success due to the strict rules of her father's conservatorship.

They also look into how Britney was painted in the media when she shaved her head and attacked paparazzi in 2007. Since then, Britney has been called "crazy" and "unstable" by the public just from these images. In reality, the clips shown of Britney being asked these uncomfortable questions prove how resilient she was. In all her responses she refused to answer and expressed discomfort. It can be assumed this is why paparazzi continued to bother her.

The "Free Britney" movement was started by loyal fans who began to notice strange posts made by Britney on her social media. They included her alone in a big house, sometimes just staring at the camera. This led to many fans sharing their thoughts on the app TikTok. Since then thousands have posted their supports as well as shown up to the court to defend Britney. Britney is currently still under conservatorship until September 2021, and she has been subject to this arrangement since she was 26 years old.

According to court documents, Britney has explicitly asked for Jamie to be "suspended immediately". Felicia Culotta, a long time friend of Britney's as well as her former assistant says in the documentary, "To be honest, I didn't then, nor do I now, understand what a conservatorship is, especially for somebody Britney's age, and for somebody capable of so much that I know firsthand she's capable of."

A former lawyer of Britney's claims that Britney at the time knew fully what was happening and could make sound decisions for herself, even going as far as to say who she wants to be in control.



IMAGE TAKEN from BBC

The "Free Britney" movement has emerged among fans following controversy regarding the nature of Spears' conservatorship.



IMAGE TAKEN from E!

Britney Spears has been under the conservatorship of her father Jamie (left) since 2008.

"The second thing was, she said, 'I don't want my father to be the conservator.' That was her one request," he claims. "She wanted a professional, somebody independent. Britney did not want her father to be the conservator of her person, the person who makes decisions about her medical care, treatment, et cetera. She also didn't want him controlling her finances." Britney has vowed not to perform as long as her father is in control of her life.

Arguably one of the most heartbreaking parts of this is Britney's true lack of control over her life. This is shown at the end when a message that reads "The *New York Times* attempted to reach Britney Spears directly to request her participation in this project. It is unclear if she

received the requests."

The documentary really explores all the misogyny in the music industry, specifically through clips with Britney and interviews with those close to her. It also shows the real Britney, who was really just a child when she was thrown into this.

Even at the height of her fame, according to the documentary, when Britney first got her hands on some of her money she went right back to her hometown in Mississippi to share the wealth. It's the hope that this documentary will shed more light on her situation and hopefully let people see the real Britney. All that everyone can hope for is that Britney is able to be her own person starting September 2021 and she can go back to performing and doing what she loves.

# Sakamoto Days: The Secret Life of a Former Killer

MATTHEW CUTILLO  
MANAGING/NEWS/LIFESTYLES EDITOR

"Sakamoto Days" is a new manga published by Shonen Jump and Viz Media.

It follows Taro Sakamoto, a former hitman who put his career on the backburner after falling in love with a shop clerk. He settled into his new life as a quiet, reserved father and husband, but his reputation comes back to bite him after a few courageous acts reveal his true identity.

The manga is action-orientated on its surface, but a comedy at its heart. The extent of Taro's hitman skills is pushed to laughable heights, like deflecting a bullet shot his way by spitting out a piece of gum to change its path.

Sakamoto Days shows its action with these beautiful, lightly scuffed lines around movement.

The perfect amount of blur is applied to imply the action to the reader, but it doesn't take away from any of the artwork. It makes it seem as though we're seeing a paused frame from the middle of the

action, and not something specifically drawn for that single moment. I never once had any trouble identifying what was happening. The contrast is perfect between the background, foreground and gestures of the characters.

Speaking of the characters, the cast is light but deep in charm. The series is only on its 10th chapter, so there's still room to grow, but the main group seems to be settled.

Shin, an aspiring young hitman who was ordered to take out Sakamoto, ends up working at the store as a clerk. Sakamoto is won over by Shin's ambition and loyalty to his boss, helping to free him from his hitman obligations so long as he helps around the store. The two have a great dynamic. Sakamoto is gravely quiet and Shin is loud and bombastic, but the two work together well and play off each other in a natural way.

I was originally skeptical of Lu Xiaotang's inclusion, the rich heir to a family dynasty that Sakamoto and Shin intervene to save from a few thugs. She originally seemed to be a temporary, arc-only character,

but her personality has really flourished in the few chapters of which she's been an active cast member.

At only 10 chapters, I'm ex-

cited to see where this manga goes. Its humor is sharp, the action is beautifully drawn and the premise is a thousand times more original than

most of Shonen Jump's current lineup. I hope the series gets to spread its wings and doesn't face cancellation for being too out of left field.



IMAGE TAKEN from Shonen Jump

New Shonen Jump manga *Sakamoto Days* follows the life of a former hitman as he takes up the mantle of convenience store clerk.



# The Biden Administration’s Plan for COVID-19

GEORGEANNE NIGRO  
POLITICS EDITOR

Since Joe Biden was elected as President on Jan. 20th, the people of the United States have been wondering what his plans are regarding the COVID-19 pandemic and getting the country back on track.

With the COVID-19 pandemic still being a current issue people all over the world are facing, the United States has suffered tremendously. For example, the pandemic has caused an economic crisis and has left 10 million Americans unemployed.

Joseph Patten, Ph.D. Associate Professor of the Political Science department, said that there is a major COVID relief bill being worked on right now, that would include a \$1400 stimulus check to most families who are making under \$150,000, to help students get back to school, and to get the economy up and running.

Patten said, “So, COVID is really the center of everything. Of course, including the healthcare fund, and also in terms of the economy getting people back to work.”

He explained how there are different areas of the pandemic that the Biden Administration needs to focus on. One of them being the healthcare in the U.S., and the hundreds and thousands of people who have died.

“There seems to be chal-

lenges there with the new administration. That of course is first and foremost,” said Patten.

Jennifer McGovern, Ph.D. Assistant Professor in the department of Political Science and Sociology, said it seems that Biden wants to have a more coordinated federal effort for decision making. Whereas, she said that former President Trump was content to leave much of the decision making up to the states.

“So, as you know we do have state’s rights and even within that Biden seems to actually want to use data to

actually coordinate response among the states, or at least to advise the states on how they should respond,” said McGovern. “I didn’t seem to feel that Trump’s administration was doing that. They were kind of leaving it up to governors.”

Patricia Dempsey, Specialist Professor in the School of Nursing, also noticed that Biden has developed a centralized federal government response team.

“The Biden administration will support states and local governments with disease management guidance and financial support,” said

Dempsey. “The Biden administration is working to increase public awareness and to decrease vaccine hesitancy. Most importantly, President Biden will work to ensure equitable distribution of COVID-19 treatments and vaccines.”

McGovern highlights the fact that Biden signed an executive order which enabled a mask mandate on federal property. She also noted that this was something that was not mandated under former President Trump.

“I know Trump’s administration was big on getting the vaccine ready, which

they obviously were successful at, but it seems that Biden is a bit more focused on the distribution. Which makes sense given the timing,” she said.

In regard to the Biden Administration’s plan on getting people vaccinated, the president’s plan is to administer 100 million shots in 100 days and to grow the access to vaccines to more Americans.

Dempsey said that the Biden Administration is purchasing and releasing millions of COVID-19 doses.

She said, “For example, this week’s weather event shuttered six mass vaccination sites in NJ for two days. The Biden administration is planning to increase immunization sites, enlist pharmacies to aid in vaccination administration, and to utilize mobile units. The mobile units will play a pivotal role in providing access to immunization in remote and rural areas.”

Dempsey also said that she is hopeful the nation will move forward together during this pandemic under the Biden Administration.

“The task before the Biden administration is great, as they are starting at square one. Rejoining the World Health Organization and restoring the National Security Council for Global Health Security are steps in the right direction,” she said.



IMAGE TAKEN from ScienceMag.org

President Joe Biden made a mask mandate, which requires mask-wearing on federal property grounds.

# American Rescue Plan Moves Closer to Rollout

ALEX DYER  
ENTERTAINMENT EDITOR

The Senate came closer to passing President Joe Biden’s \$1.9 trillion economic relief package on Friday, after Vice President Kamala Harris broke a 50-50 tie between the legislature’s Democrats and Republicans.

Via an ongoing process known as budget reconciliation, which allows the Senate to forgo the 60-vote majority rule, Democrats have successfully secured funding for the divisive bill and will soon move forward with concrete legislation on the package.

President Biden proposed the American Rescue Plan in the week before his Jan. 20 inauguration. According to WhiteHouse.gov, the bill, which would be the administration’s first major piece of legislation, is “an aggressive, two-step plan for rescue, from the depths of this crisis, and recovery, by investing in America, creating millions of additional good-paying jobs, combatting the climate crisis, advancing racial equity, and building back better than before.”

On Sunday in an appearance on CNN’s State of the Union, newly-minted Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen predicted that if the plan comes to fruition, the United States could see rapid economic growth culminating in pre-COVID unemployment rates.

“I would expect that if this package is passed that we would get back to full employment next year,” said Yellen. “[I]f we don’t provide additional support, the unemployment rate is going to stay elevated for

years to come.”

Meanwhile, many in the GOP have expressed their concern for the cost of the package. Republican lawmakers recently countered the American Rescue Plan with a \$600 billion stimulus package, which was swiftly rejected by Democrats. A group of ten GOP Senators, including Mitt Romney (R-UT) and Susan Collins (R-ME), outlined their plan in a Jan. 31 letter to Biden.

“In the spirit of bipartisanship and unity,” reads the senators’ letter to the President, “we have developed a COVID-19 relief framework that builds on prior COVID assistance laws, all of which passed with bipartisan support.”

Bill Cassidy (R-LA), who co-signed the letter, criticized the Biden administration for rejecting

the bill so quickly, claiming on Fox News Sunday, “The President’s team did not reach out to anybody in our group, either Democrat or Republican, when they fashioned their proposal. So if you want unity, if you want bipartisanship, you ought to start with a group that’s shown it’s willing to work together for a common solution. They did not.” Of the ten senators that signed the letter, all are Republicans.

Robert H. Scott III, Ph.D, Professor of Economics, ultimately believes that the path to economic revival lies within vaccination.

“The US and global economies are still weak,” Scott said. “We need to get people vaccinated quickly if we want to have the economy start growing again. I think this will happen and when it does I expect the

economy will surge from pent-up demand.”

“In the meantime,” Scott continued, “there is considerable unemployment and under-employment in America. I am a big fan of providing extra financial help to people who are unemployed—and continuing this policy until the pandemic truly subsides. The government is spending a lot of money during the pandemic—a few trillion dollars, so far. The government was already in debt and this compounds the problem.”

Other experts believe that Biden’s plan doesn’t go far enough. Ken Mitchell, Ph.D., Department Chair and Professor of Political Science, contrasted the American Rescue Plan with the current pandemic relief plan in the United Kingdom.

“Biden’s recovery plan isn’t big

enough, unfortunately,” said Mitchell. “By comparison, the UK populist, far-right, conservative Prime Minister Boris Johnson—since the start of the pandemic—has the government paying 80 percent of all salaries to encourage people to stay home until conditions permit. So, under a ‘far right’ government, all British people have access to healthcare through the National Healthcare System and have guaranteed income. Biden’s \$1.9 trillion is a step in the right direction but still fails to meet the challenge facing the country.”

Mitchell also outlined the three biggest problems he sees with the plan. “First,” he said, “significant tax increases on the wealthy are needed. Stock markets have boomed, tech companies have never had it better, etc., it’s no profile in courage to hand out \$1.9 trillion in debt that future generations (not the current generation) will repay.”

“Second, interest rates are basically negative; Biden should borrow another \$2 trillion to fund infrastructure,” continued Mitchell. “Airports, trains, bridges, etc. are all crumbling. It’s a total embarrassment and limits economic productivity.”

“Third, aid to states and other institutions must come with strings attached,” he said. “Returning to the status quo pre-COVID is intellectually dishonest. Inequality, regressive taxation, high university tuition, crumbling infrastructure, reckless tax cuts by Republicans, and wasteful government spending by Democrats landed the USA in the mess we find ourselves in.”



IMAGE TAKEN from Associated Press

President Joe Biden and Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen discussed the American Rescue Plan on Jan. 29.



# Get to Know the Directors of Fraternity and Sorority Life

LILY HOFFMANN  
CLUB AND GREEK EDITOR

When thinking of Greek life at Monmouth University, what immediately comes to mind is probably the thrill of sorority recruitment, the excitement of entering a brotherhood, endless philanthropy events and a sense of community. However, none of these would run smoothly if it were not for the Office of Fraternity and Sorority Life.

The Office of Fraternity and Sorority Life was birthed in 2019 from the Division of Student Life. Upon its creation two essential leaders joined the team as Director, and Assistant Director. The dynamic duo, Tara Fuller and Tyler Droste respectively are the glue that hold together the functions of Greek Life here at the University.

Though you may have seen their faces and heard their names, who are these two? And what exactly do they do? I got the chance to ask them some

questions and better get to know them.

My first question for the pair was in regards to their educational background and involvement prior to their positions at the University. Fuller attended the University of Maryland and majored in Multicultural Leadership. She too was involved in sorority life and is a proud sister of Alpha Delta Pi. Fuller later attended Rider

University to receive her masters in Organizational Leadership.

As for Droste, he studied Health Sciences at Quinnipiac University. The brother of Pi Kappa Phi had aspirations of working in Exercise Science, but ultimately chose the path of Higher Education and Student Affairs.

Since coming to the University in 2019, Fuller and Droste have worked

hard in many areas. For Droste, he said that he has a wide range of responsibilities. “There are some days where I will have meetings with students to discuss chapter/council initiatives, other days I will be creating curriculum for office-led initiatives.” Droste also is a faculty advisor for Greek Senate.

Fuller added to Droste’s remarks saying, “There are different ‘seasons’ (i.e. recruitment/intake, officer transitions, new member education, etc.) in fraternity and sorority and those often dictate my calendar. I also work on external relationships, like alumni, advisors and inter/national headquarters staff who work with and oversee our chapters.”

While reflecting on their time and duties at the University, Fuller and Droste recalled some of their favorite memories, and most rewarding moments.

Droste said, “The most rewarding experience for me has been seeing our

students overcome these challenges [of being virtual] as they’ve continued to hold events, recruit members and advance the FSL mission. It hasn’t been easy, but seeing their success makes all the work worth it.”

Fuller echoed Droste by saying that it has been particularly rewarding to see the chapters adjust to the circumstances by continuing to hold virtual and socially distanced events like Meet the Greeks.

She said, “The most rewarding part of my job has been getting our student leaders to a place where they’re willing to try new things. The COVID restrictions have pushed them to a place where they needed to adapt, but they are doing a great job of thinking differently each time we meet.”

Thanks to Fuller and Droste, the future of Greek life at Monmouth looks promising! For more information on the Office of Fraternity and Sorority Life, visit their webpage, or follow them on Instagram, @monmouthfsl.



Fuller (far left) and Droste (far right) pose alongside students at the NGLA conference in February 2020.

## Interdisciplinary Education Interest Group is an A+ For Education Majors

HAILEE KALLE  
CONTRIBUTING WRITER

Only a few weeks before the fall 2020 semester concluded and winter break began, students and staff from the Education program began to establish a remarkable interest group for education majors here at Monmouth University.

The group is called “Interdisciplinary Education Interest Group.” Currently on Monmouth’s campus, there are no other clubs or organizations that help students navigate through the education program and all that it

of her hopes for the future of the group include leaning on each other for advice for exams such as the Praxis and EdTPA, and sharing tips and tricks for endeavors like student teaching.

President of the group and senior Interdisciplinary Studies for Education student Joey Signorile, explains the group in more detail and why it will have such an amazing impact on the students of the Education program. Signorile touched upon how the group is open to anyone interested in the field of education at any level and that she hopes to guide each student

new to Monmouth so it was hard learning everything and picking up the specifics, and I hope that by joining this club we can have freshmen join who we can help succeed in the ISEE program.”

Signorile also elaborated on the goals and future events of the group that will take place. She said that the group is still in the preliminary stages and they are allowed to host two interest meetings while they draft the constitution and finish the necessary paperwork.

“Once we complete the process and hopefully become a club, we plan to have

“Once we complete the process and hopefully become a club, we plan to have events and fundraisers to benefit students and schools”

entails. Due to this, the main goal of the group is to bring support and guidance to all students within the different concentrations of the education program.

Future goals of the group include certification test and assignment preparations, promoting different educational skills, providing counseling and instruction to those who may need it, as well as just being a place where education majors can come to connect and create relationships with other students in their field of study.

Kate Terracciano is a junior studying Interdisciplinary education. She said that some

through their unique experience at Monmouth.

In regards to the group’s creation, Signorile said that “Our club was created to help students understand and succeed in the many steps it takes to become an educator and make students aware of information they may not have known.”

Danielle Oxnard is a junior in the Interdisciplinary Education program who has also been a part of the group’s formation. In terms of her own goals for the club, she said, “I hope that I can give advice to the incoming freshman joining this program. This program is somewhat

events and fundraisers to benefit students and schools” said Signorile. She said that the group plans on hosting two meetings per month for about 30 to 45 minutes, which will consist of helping members with upcoming practice tests, observations, lesson planning, projects, etc.

“We are all passionate and helpful people who want to share that with others,” said Signorile. The group has another interest meeting coming up on Wednesday the 17<sup>th</sup> at 4 p.m., and is open to all. The zoom link will soon be available so stay on the lookout!

## MASKING UP AGAINST COVID WITH CUS

LILY HOFFMANN  
CLUB & GREEK EDITOR

It’s time to mask up! Corazones Unidos Siempre Latin Sorority Incorporated’s chapter at Monmouth University will be holding a PPE drive this month to honor Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. The “Wear the Mask” initiative will run from February 1 until the fifteenth of this month.

Each year during Black History Month, the Latin organization hosts a donation drive to pay tribute to the works of Dr. King. This year is the organization’s fifth MLK Day of Service donation drive.

Like most things, the “drive” will look a little different due to circumstances related to the pandemic. Traditionally, the drive would take place on campus so students could help assemble whatever was being donated. However, this year, the sisters of CUS will be collecting monetary dona-

tions as a way to assemble COVID-19 pandemics for the less fortunate.

Yarleny Mejia is a sister of CUS, and has contributed greatly to the organization of the drive. She said, “Students can help by donating \$5 towards latex gloves, \$3 towards masks or hand sanitizer, and \$2 towards pocket tissues.”

In addition to monetary donations, students can help support the cause by sharing the virtual flyer that the organization has posted to their Instagram account.

Mejia stressed the importance of PPE donations saying, “It’s important to donate PPE because those who are less fortunate do not have the resources to provide themselves with these COVID essentials that have turned into a daily necessity.”

For more information on the drive, check out the CUS Instagram page, @cus\_gammabeta.



A Monmouth Student wears a mask on move in-day in September.



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# Deion Hammond Breaks 30-Year Record

JACK MURPHY  
ASSOCIATE SPORTS EDITOR

Monmouth won both of their contests on the road against Manhattan this past week. On Friday, they beat the Jaspers 70-65 while they narrowly escaped them by a score of 71-69 in overtime on Saturday.

The Hawks were led by their seniors on Friday as three of them scored in double digits. Melik Martin, Deion Hammond and George Papas scored 18, 16 and 14 points respectively.

Martin started the game by scoring the first five points giving the blue and white an early 5-0 lead. The Hawks would lead the majority of the first half and a late Hammond three would give them a four-point lead at the end of the first half.

The Hawks picked up right where they left off in the second half as they started out with an 11-2 run. Monmouth held a sizeable lead for the majority of the final 20 minutes as it was not until the final couple minutes Manhattan started to claw back but it proved to be too little too late as Monmouth outlasted the Jaspers by five points.

Martin was a single rebound shy of a double-double. “I’ve been coached a lot more to crash the boards on the offensive end and get us some more possessions,” said Martin. This is Martin’s 17th career game in double digits in the score column, and his sixth time in the last seven games.

Hammond drained his 260th three-pointer of his career in the blue and white, tying the program’s record for the most triples made by a Hawk in their time with the program.

Monmouth outshot their opponent as they made 47 percent from the field compared to 36 percent from their opponent. The

“I’m super excited that I got the record that stood for 30 years.”

DEION HAMMOND  
Senior Guard



PHOTO COURTESY of Monmouth Athletics

Senior Guard Deion Hammond set the All-Time three point record that was set by Dave Caloway 30 years ago.

Hawks’ defense also held the Jaspers to under 25 percent from behind the arc.

In their second matchup, Hammond would pass the 30-year-old record for most threes as a member of the Monmouth Hawks. “I’m super excited that I got the record that’s stood for 30 years,” said Hammond. “That’s amazing to me. There’s nothing to do now but keep pushing. I was just happy to hit a shot in the game, and I started feeling it after they called timeout and we went back to the huddle and coaches were really excited for me.”

“Deion had a bunch of good looks tonight and he knocked down the one at the end of the shot clock,” said head coach King Rice. “We’re super happy because that’s a big-time record to get and maybe it will last another 30 years.”

Hammond led the Hawks with a 15-point performance and Martin finished with his second double-double in three games.

Monmouth was able to capitalize off Manhattan’s mistakes as they scored 24 points off turnovers. The Hawks were down four however but were able to erase that lead by the end of regulation sending the game to overtime at a score of 61-61.

Late into overtime, Martin drained a triple from the wing to give the Hawks a four-point cushion. This would prove to be enough for the Hawks to earn their 10th win on the season, the first team in the Metro Atlantic Athletic Conference (MAAC) to reach this mark.

Coming up next for the Hawks is a two-game homestand against Fairfield. Their opponent currently sits on the bottom of the MAAC standings with a record of 3-8. The times have yet to be announced for Friday and Saturday’s matchups at OceanFirst Bank Center.



PHOTO COURTESY of Monmouth Athletics

Senior forward Melik Martin earned MAAC Player of the Week Honors for his tremendous performances against Manhattan.



PHOTO COURTESY of Monmouth Athletics

Senior forward George Papas dropped 14 and 12 points in the Hawks’ games this weekend against Manhattan.



# Women’s Basketball Gets Their First Win

MARK D'AQUILA  
SPORTS EDITOR

It was a busy week for women’s basketball who played three games in the span of five days, featuring a home game against Siena on Wednesday and a road set against Quinnipiac this past weekend. Wednesday’s matchup between the Hawks and Saint Bernard’s was quite the battle as a 61-60 final score resulted in Monmouth’s first win of the season by the skin of their teeth. Junior guard Jen Louro came up clutch in the end with a game-winning basket with just

2.2 seconds left on the clock. The layup was the difference between a win and a loss for the blue and white as Louro finished with 9 total points along with six assists and a three pointer. “I’m really happy for our team to close it out and get the W tonight,” said head coach Jody Craig. “We stayed together through the rough times and executed on both ends down the stretch. These are big steps for our young group.” Monmouth’s success was led by a huge fourth quarter where they scored 16 points including huge shots from the Metro Atlantic Ath-

letic Conference (MAAC) Rookie of the Week, freshman forward Belle Kranbuhl. She led the team in scoring against Siena with 16 points on 8-of-12 shooting from the field. Not only did she score, but Kranbuhl stuffed the stat sheet with her first career double-double after hauling in 12 boards and four blocks. Freshman guard Jania Hall cannot be forgotten either as she came up clutch in the fourth with double-digit points finishing with 13 on the night. The story of the game was rebounding for Monmouth as they

out-rebounded Siena 49-30 on the night and had two players with double-digit boards. Sophomore forward Saule Kaupyte was one of the two as she grabbed a career-high 13 rebounds as well as three assists. The weekend was a much different story against Quinnipiac who is currently in second place in the conference with a 9-5 record. Game one on Saturday was a 68-54 victory for the Bobcats who dominated in the fourth quarter from the free throw line nailing nine in the quarter to lead them to the win.

There were some bright spots for the Hawks however, who held the halftime lead thanks to a career day from Hall who scored 14 points on 5-of-10 shooting from the field. Kranbuhl contributed in a big way as well leading to her Rookie of the Week honors with 10 points and six rebounds. “We exerted a lot of energy overcoming some foul trouble in the first half, then didn’t respond well when QU stepped up their pressure in the second,” said Craig. “We have to play a complete game to beat a good team.” They were unable to make that happen however in the back half of the back-to-back against Quinnipiac. Sunday’s series finale resulted in a 38-53 loss for the Hawks despite a strong final quarter where they outscored their opponent 13-5. Kranbuhl dominated in the loss to cap off a phenomenal week of play with her second double-double of the week scoring 10 points, 10 rebounds, and five blocks. “We were really out of sorts to begin this game,” said Craig. “They were quicker to the ball early and we became frazzled. We had way too many wasted offensive possessions. It was good to see us finish on a positive note with something to build on for next week.” There is still plenty of time for the Hawks to go on a run here with eight games left in regular season play. Saint Peter’s is next up on the schedule with a two-game set slated for Saturday, Feb. 13 and Sunday, Feb. 14.



Freshman forward Belle Kranbuhl earned Metro Atlantic Athletic Conference (MAAC) Player of the Week honors after notching her first and second career double-doubles in a dominating week of play.

# Cross Country Season Set to Take Flight

JOHN SPINELLI  
STAFF WRITER

As many college athletic programs around the country begin to compete again, the local Monmouth University Hawks prepare for a potential winter cross-country season. Head Coach Mike Nelson, who is going on his second year as coach at the local college, said, “I’m both excited and a little apprehensive about the potential season. Anything

could happen but I think if protocols are safely executed, like testing, wearing masks, etc. racing as a full team is a huge possibility.” He continued, “I want the men and women to know that this season is not the same from seasons in the past; arbitrary features like time might not be as important. Just go out there, have fun, and run your best.” Monmouth, like most other universities, had to suspend

their athletic competitions last spring due to the COVID-19 outbreak. However, with new additional safety precautions, athletes at Monmouth University were allowed to practice as a team during last year’s fall semester. Nelson explained how the season is going to unfold, “The plan now is we want to complete two meets before the championship in March. We plan on hosting a home meet at Monmouth Park Racetrack

on Feb. 13. Then another meet either in New York state or a race on the track (possibly a 5k or 8k) with another team. These are subject to change but we will see how it plays out.” Junior Lou DiLaurenzio, one of the captains, noted, “We’re looking forward to this season, obviously it’s a little different from most years but we’re training to the best we can.” He added, “It’s an odd season because we only have

three races this year, but we will use every opportunity to earn some good performances.” The Metro Atlantic Athletic conference (MAAC) is scheduled to host the Cross Country championships for Mar. 5 at Seaview Golf Club in Galloway, New Jersey. The team’s Outdoor Track and Field season is also around the corner. As of now, their opening meet is scheduled for Mar. 13.



The MAAC is scheduled to host the Cross Country Championships on Mar. 5.



Junior Lou DiLaurenzio is “Looking forward to this season” despite it looking different than most.



Monmouth Cross Country athletes were able to practice this fall on campus in preparation.





# ***DASHING THROUGH THE SNOW***



Men's basketball swept Manhattan this past week to win seven of their last eight games as they climb the standings with a 10-4 conference record.

Cross Country prepares for their much anticipated winter season.