



2024

MONTCLAIR
CULTURS

PRSSA Bateman Submission

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Celebrating and embracing cultural diversity is fundamental to building a more inclusive and understanding society, where individuals feel respected, valued, and empowered to share their unique perspectives and experiences. Montclair State University is a diverse community, with more than **60%** of our campus representing a broad range of cultures.

The *Culturs* challenge sparked a need for us to understand where our campus sits in the world of in-betweeners and uncover societal issues within hidden diverse communities.

While diversity is a cornerstone of the school, our research and conversations with key cultural opinion leaders revealed a pressing need for greater representation and voices to be heard within our community. It was eye-opening to hear first-hand the personal stories, experiences and challenges of our culturally-fluid and multicultural peers - something we were not fully aware of prior to the project.

“We can do better as a culturally diverse institution. We need to be hearing stories from our own students as well as finding representation on campus.

We need to be in the community and make our voices heard. If we see ourselves represented, it will give us more confidence.”

Latin American Student Organization (LASO)

We made it our mission to address the realities and needs of these individuals.

In collaboration with *Culturs*, we launched **Montclair Culturs: Soar Together**, a campaign designed to showcase cultural diversity, amplify the voices of our campus community, and foster a deeper understanding and appreciation of multiculturalism.

Over the course of the campaign, we hosted groundbreaking events that took our campus community by storm. Our *Cultur-ella* festival hosted nearly **500** attendees celebrating music and dance from around the world. We influenced over **500** students and staff to take a pledge to embrace diversity on campus and produced “Living In Full Color: An Intimate Cultural Conversation,” in partnership with NBCU Academy. This event featured WNBC 4 New York and Telemundo 47 talent, Montclair State’s Diversity Leaders and community in a meaningful, emotional conversation. This was then shared with the New York Metropolitan Area through a Telemundo evening news segment, reaching almost **250,000** viewers, and our broader campus through our youtube channel.

We are proud that the *Montclair Culturs: Soar Together* campaign successfully transcended cultural boundaries and united students around the celebration of diversity. We surpassed our goals and, more importantly, reshaped cultural perceptions and sparked interest and connection across our campus. Ultimately, we inspired a commitment to continue these actions beyond the conclusion of our campaign.

CAMPAIGN HIGHLIGHTS

- **538** students took our pledge to celebrate and embrace our rich cultural diversity on campus.
- Nearly **1,000** students left their thumbprints on the **Cultural Print Map** showcasing their heritage representing more than **50** countries.
- *Montclair Culturs* garnered over **500,000** impressions.
- **450** students attended **Cultur-ella**, a first of its kind cultural festival.
- The team recruited **24** ambassadors for *Culturs* Magazine.
- Across *Montclair Culturs* social media channels **16,000** accounts were reached

SITUATION ANALYSIS

With its inspiring mission to enhance community and foster human connection for culturally fluid communities of multiethnic, multicultural, mixed race, and geographically mobile people, *Culturs* is focused on reaching college/university-age audiences. This effort aimed to generate significant awareness of 21st-century diversity, providing safe higher educational spaces for cultural in-betweeners where students can feel seen and heard.

Culturs challenged us to:

- Make *Culturs Magazine* a household name and build a network of ambassadors to create a larger, more engaged community.
- Garner campus media coverage to introduce *Culturs* media and its nuanced messages of diversity and benefits to higher education.
- Create plans to establish a partnership with participating universities to offer brand visibility on campus that will educate students, faculty, and staff on the cultural in-between.

With our highly-diverse campus, we were excited to develop a plan to introduce and integrate *Culturs* and its mission with our peers, key cultural opinion leaders and decision makers. Starting from a place of little to no awareness of *Culturs Magazine* or the term “in-betweener,” we discovered that the challenges of hidden identities not feeling seen and heard was a very real issue facing our campus. We were successful in educating, elevating and driving awareness of *Culturs* and its mission with students, faculty and staff; however, it’s worth noting that as a State University, there is a policy prohibiting us from establishing an official partnership with *Culturs*. We credit this project and *Culturs* as inspiring connection, conversation and a commitment to continuing these efforts and progress.

THE RESEARCH

Secondary

Our initial research focused on two key areas: first, to get a greater understanding of the in-between community in the context of today's world; and second, to identify and learn more about the cultural groups, organizations, services and leading voices on our own campus. We connected with a broad range of student-led cultural organizations including Latin American Student Organization (LASO), Mexican American Student Association (MASA), Dominican Student Organization (DSO), Korean Culture & Language Association (KCLA); services including Montclair Military and Veteran Resource, Connecting Across Cultures and the Office for Social Justice and Diversity; and key leaders such as Dr. Soufleris, VP for Student Development and Campus Life and Dr. Katia Paz Goldfarb, Associate Provost for Hispanic Initiatives and International Programs. These groups and individuals became crucial partners for our program, providing insights, personal experiences, credibility, engagement and reach.

Primary

We set out to better understand our campus community and their personal perspective on their culture, 21st century diversity, representation on campus, and establish a baseline for familiarity and connection to the *Culturs* mission and community.

Survey

We developed and distributed a survey to the student body through faculty, social promotion, campus newsletter and the PRSSA club, receiving 282 responses and findings including:

64.5%

who identify as multi-ethnic have felt out of place or not fully belonging

60%

feel their culture is represented on campus, but don't feel seen or really heard

80%

said they would like to see more culturally based media and initiatives on campus

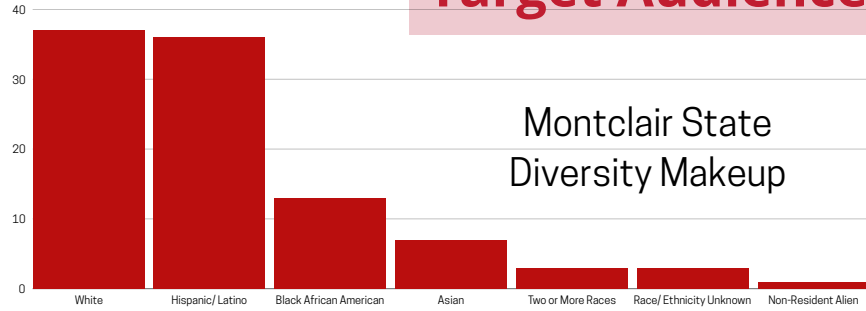
55%

had not heard of the term in-betweener, yet they have an understanding of feeling in between

89%

had no familiarity with **Culturs**

Target Audience



- Our primary audience was Hispanic/Latinx and Black individuals, accounting for 49% of the campus population
- Our secondary audiences were first-generation Americans, culturally fluid individuals, and those affiliated with the military.
 - We also targeted the entire student body.

Focus Groups & In-depth Interviews

We conducted four focus groups with nearly 65 representatives from LASO, PRSSA, Spanish Journalism and PR Campaigns classes and discussions with Dr. Sudha Wadhvani and Dr. Katia Paz Goldfarb to gain more insights on:

Navigating multicultural identity in today's society

Staying connected with their heritage and ethnicities

Challenges they face and recommendations to address them

These discussions revealed the following insights:

- Many perceive the term "in-betweener" negatively. They reject being labeled by ethnic identities and instead consider themselves as part of a unified culture.
- Food, music, art, and language are major bridges between cultures.
- Looking to debunk stigmas and stereotypes around societal multicultural definitions.
- Students find it difficult to embrace their cultural identities in fear of not appearing "enough" in one culture or another.
- Social media is critical to staying connected, sharing stories, and forming a community.
- Multiculturalism is a fluid process that changes depending on surroundings, causing some parts of an identity to be in conflict, compounded with issues of belonging or questioning of who we are.
- The need to create "safe spaces" where students who are struggling with these issues can express themselves and get support from trained professionals and their peers.
- Hidden identities can affect how one is perceived. There is a need to amplify and elevate the voices of students, organizations, and programs on campus who may feel like they are in the shadows.

"As a first generation Mexican American, I actually relate to being 100% Mexican. However, in the U.S., I'm not American enough and in Mexico I'm not Mexican enough. I feel like I don't fit in here or there."

Montclair State University student, '24

CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

CHALLENGE 1

More than **50%** of those who identify as multi-ethnic felt out of place or not fully belonging to one or more cultures. There was a strong desire to share multicultural experiences and stories as part of an effort to feel connected to their roots.

OPPORTUNITY 1

Celebrate hidden diversity and culturally fluid individuals through the creation of a digital platform, events and interactive activities on campus to amplify the voices of these siloed communities.

CHALLENGE 2

More than **80%** of students surveyed were unaware of *Culturs* Magazine and its mission, indicating a significant challenge. To address this, we needed to effectively introduce *Culturs* to Montclair State University.

OPPORTUNITY 2

Create a month-long campaign that establishes *Culturs* as a household name and bring high visibility to the brand through various community building activities, events, branding and initiatives.

CHALLENGE 3

Through our research and focus group discussions, we learned that multicultural students and campus organizations feel unheard.

OPPORTUNITY 3

Curate an educational panel featuring students from diverse cultural backgrounds, leading cultural faculty and local media outlets to foster an open discussion on culture and different global perspectives.

KEY MESSAGES

1. *Culturs* is a global lifestyle network that celebrates the cultural in-between and enhances community for culturally mobile populations.
2. *Montclair Culturs* is a month-long campaign designed to educate, celebrate, and share the diverse and rich cultural stories of our campus community.
3. Share your personal story and connect with our larger campus community through **@Montclair_Culturs** on Instagram as we **#SoarTogether**.

CAMPAIGN NAME AND BRAND IDENTITY

Montclair Culturs

In order to introduce *Culturs* to our campus, we felt it was important to incorporate the client name directly in our campaign while leveraging the recognizable Montclair State University brand.

#SoarTogether is our call to action that represents our campus community rising together, while also connecting to our school's mascot Rocky The Red Hawk.



Our logo features Rocky soaring across the globe, engaging with different cultures to cultivate a sense of unity and belonging.

CAMPAIGN GOAL Provide a platform that celebrates and connects the rich cultural diversity of our campus community.

OBJECTIVE 1: By March 5th, the team will reach 500 cultural leaders from Montclair State University to share their voices and embrace our mission.

Rationale: *With a campus comprising of 60% diverse backgrounds, our goal was to learn from, collaborate with and bring together key students, cultural organizations, and professional staff to foster a strong sense of community.*

Strategy 1: Create partnerships with students, faculty, alumni, and diverse student organizations to give them a voice and engage in our campaign.

- **Clubs:** Montclair Student Government Association is dedicated to serving the university's student body with over 100 clubs. We will invite cultural clubs including LASO, DSO, MASA, KCLA, Daughta Speaks, and Military Services to participate in research, conversations, and storytelling initiatives.
- **Professional Staff:** Invite cultural leaders on campus to provide insight; Junius J. Gonzales - Provost & Senior Vice President for Academic Affairs; Dr. Dawn Soufleris - VP for Student Development & Campus Life; Dr. Sudha Wadhvani - Coordinator Equity, Inclusion, and Community Initiatives; and Dr. Katia Goldfarb, Associate Provost for Hispanic Initiatives and International Programs.

Strategy 2: Invite students to participate in our campaign through survey and direct conversations.

- **Survey:** To optimize the campus community, we will hang flyers with QR codes, secure a spot in student e-newsletter Red Hawk News, and use social media to link students with our initial survey where they will be directed to questions about their own culture and *Culturs Magazine*. We will offer a \$25 VISA gift card as an incentive.

Strategy 3: Create an intimate conversation to enable select students, faculty and partners to discuss 21st Century Diversity.

- **Living In Full Color: An Intimate Conversation on Culture:** Collaborate with WNBC 4 New York, Telemundo and NBCU Academy to curate a conversation on multiculturalism and explore the challenges and opportunities in navigating multi-ethnic and cross-cultural identity in today's world. Select students representing cultural and military organizations, key faculty and media partners will be invited to share their unique perspectives. The conversation will be moderated by Associate Provost Dr. Katia Paz Goldfarb.

OBJECTIVE 2: Increase awareness of *Culturs* and their purpose by 75% through owned, partnered, and earned media by March 5th.

Rationale: *Our research showed that there was little to no recognition of Culturs at the onset of our campaign.*

Strategy 1: Create a dedicated platform for our owned digital media and storytelling

- **@Montclair_Culturs (#SoarTogether):** Establish an Instagram page titled *Montclair Culturs* to actively involve Montclair State University campus and broader audiences in learning about multiculturalism, *Culturs* and sharing diverse student stories through a robust calendar of reels, stories, and feed posts.
- **#SoarTogether:** A hashtag designated for all of our social platforms to encourage engagement and sharing.
- **Podcast:** Create a podcast called *Soar Together* to be shared on Spotify and YouTube. This podcast will feature diverse Montclair State University students and faculty in 15-30 minute episodes to share their cultural experiences and stories.
- **LinkTree:** Create a LinkTree to host digital scrapbooks, our cookbook, and links to all of our socials (Instagram, Spotify and YouTube).
- **YouTube:** Utilize this platform to share video formats of the podcast and the Living In Full Color event broadcast for those not in attendance.

Strategy 2: Recruit on-campus macro and micro-influencers to participate and provide reach for our campaign.

- **Influencers:** Invite popular Montclair State University student influencers to perform at our events and to participate in our campaign, @jerseyyjoie (288k followers), @lilisanaxo (17.9k followers), @minyaemckenzie (2.1k followers), and @kangelaguerro (2.8k followers). (Followers based on Instagram)
- **Mascots:** Include our beloved mascot Rocky The Red Hawk and pupscot Pebbles in our campaign for greater reach and engagement.

Strategy 3: Partner with campus social media accounts for reach and awareness

- **SCM Social:** Collaborate with the School of Communication and Media Instagram (2k) to create promotional pieces for our campaign.
- **RHOMS:** Collaborate with Red Hawks of Montclair State University (RHOMS), an Instagram account with 7.2k followers created by students to feature students, staff, and alumni personal stories.
- **Red Hawk Life:** Ask Red Hawk Life, a university social media entity created to inform students on campus initiatives, to share information about our campaign on their Instagram stories (7.3k followers).
- **Hawk Squad:** Invite Hawk Squad, an Instagram team that shares content highlighting on-campus events and SGA organizations (2.8k followers) to our planned events.
- **MontclairStateU Socials:** Invite our school's social media to create a TikTok about our campaign and events. They have 22.9k followers.

Strategy 4: Pitch and secure earned coverage of our campaign across Montclair State and Tri-state area media outlets

- **90.3 WMSC Upper Montclair:** Target Montclair State's nationally acclaimed radio station's most popular daily show *Morning Buzz* and its bilingual show *Aquí Planeta Tierra* for interviews with Bateman team members to promote our campaign.
 - Create, produce, and secure the airing of a :30 PSA to promote our campaign.
- **Montclarion:** Pitch our student-run digital newspaper to feature the team and the campaign.
- **Telemundo47:** Invite Telemundo47, the Tri-state's most prominent Spanish-language network, to cover the cultural conversation panel with students, campus faculty, and influential media personalities.
- **Photo Essay:** Collaborate with students from various School of Communication and Media courses to create published media highlighting our events and campaigns.

Strategy 5: Provide visibility and exposure for *Culturs Magazine*.

- **Backdrop:** Create a 5'x7' mosaic backdrop featuring the colorful *Culturs Magazine* covers for photo opportunities at our events and to showcase the diverse range of *Culturs* topics.
- **Magazine:** We will display the *Culturs Magazines* at all events we host so students can explore the content.

OBJECTIVE 3: By March 5th, we will inspire action and participation by 1,000 students in *Montclair Culturs initiatives*.

Rationale: *By engaging with our campaign, we believe that we will have a greater, lasting impact with our target audience.*

Strategy 1: Create an event that brings together and celebrates the cultures of our campus.

- **Cultur-ella:** Inspired by Coachella, we will create a campus-wide festival to celebrate cultures through dance, music and art. It will feature performances by the LASO dance troupe, Montclair West African Drumming, Daughta Speaks Voguing, and influencer Jersey Joe. We will invite guests to make and exchange bracelets representing their culture(s) with our "Threads of Culture" program. We will offer cultural clubs, cultural and military services to table at the event and promote their organizations and share essential information.

Strategy 2: Showcase the rich diversity and heritage of our campus community

- **Cultural Print Map:** Create and mobilize a 4'x6' world map encouraging individuals to dip their thumb in colorful ink and place their fingerprint on the countries of their heritage. The map will serve as a conversation piece, a connection point for our students with the end result expected to showcase the vast global ethnicities represented on our campus.

Strategy 3: Leverage the importance of food in connecting the traditions of culture.

- **Melting Pot Meals Cookbook:** Create a digital and print cookbook featuring family recipes and stories from our campus community. Contributions to the book will be submitted by students, faculty, and alumni to share their stories and connections with their recipe. The cookbook recipes and cooking videos will be shared on @Montclair_Culturs social pages. Recipes will be made and served at the *Living in Full Color* event.

Strategy 4: Garner further commitment to respecting and learning about new cultures.

- **Pledge:** Through engagement with the Cultural Print Map, we will encourage participants to scan a QR code to pledge to celebrate and embrace our rich cultural diversity on campus.
- Within the landing page for the pledge, we will offer the opportunity to apply and serve as an ambassador. The Google Form will collect students' emails, names, pronouns, and reason why they want to be an ambassador.

EVALUATION AND MEASUREMENT

OBJECTIVE 1

By March 5th, the team will reach 500 cultural leaders from Montclair State University to share their voices and embrace our mission.

RESULT: EXCEEDED

We reached a total of **1,720 students**. Working with 8 cultural organizations on campus, we reached 1,390 active club members. At our *Living In Full Color* event, we hosted 30 students and cultural leaders to participate in an intimate conversation. In our survey and focus groups, we connected with over 300 students.

OBJECTIVE 2

Increase awareness of *Culturs* and its purpose by 75% through owned, partner, and earned media by March 5th.

RESULT: EXCEEDED

In our original survey, only 8.2% of respondents knew of *Culturs Magazine*. Through owned, earned and shared media, we garnered more than **500,000** impressions, including Telemundo47, coverage by all of our campus media outlets and a :30 PSA. Our post campaign survey indicated that 73% of respondents are now aware of *Culturs*.

OBJECTIVE 3

By March 5th, we will inspire action and participation by 1,000 students in *Montclair Culturs* initiatives.

RESULT: EXCEEDED

2,027 students participated in our campaign, and provided recipes for our *Melting Pot Meals*, attended *Cultur-ella*, stamped our Cultural Map Print, participated in our pledge, and signed up to be an ambassador.

THE BUDGET

Gift card #1	\$29.00
World map	\$38.00
Stickers	\$60.00
Map stand	\$23.00
Logo Design	\$25.00
Cultur-ella decorations	\$26.00
Cookbooks	\$89.00
Gift card #2	\$10.00
Total	\$300.00

THE REACH

INFLUENCERS	11,460
SOCIAL MEDIA	58,493
EARNED MEDIA	315,311
PARTNERS	115,274



500,538

IN KIND

Catering	\$139.28
Printing	\$20.00
Total	\$159.28

CONCLUSION

The **Montclair Culturs** campaign soared beyond expectations, leaving an undeniable mark on our campus community and beyond. Our partnership with *Culturs* infused our campaign with a sense of purpose and passion that elevated it from a mere initiative to a monumental movement. The blend of meaningful partnerships, traditional media, unique events, and a robust social media presence allowed this campaign to fly to new heights by celebrating cultural diversity and giving a voice to those who so often go unheard.

Empowering students to share their stories and learn, the *Montclair Culturs: Soar Together* campaign successfully built a community and platform for cultural pride, a safe space for voices to be amplified, and a program that fostered genuine and lasting connections. Watch our campaign highlights [HERE!](#)

As we continue to spread our wings, let's remember that together, we can achieve anything—because when we soar, we **#SoarTogether!**

Don't take our word for it...

"I was literally tearing up for the duration of the discussion because it was just so heartwarming being in that room and taking in all the stories that were told."

Montclair State University student

"The 'Living in Full Color' event was engaging and thought-provoking. Hearing the stories shared by our students solidified for me that how we determine success must be defined in diversity, equity and inclusion. I hope we can continue the conversation -- there was so much to talk about! ¡Muchas gracias por un evento exitoso!"

Dawn Meza Soufleris, PhD

"Discussing the importance of inclusion without the erasure of culture was an important conversation to have and continue."

Audriana Thomas, multimedia journalist, NBCU Academy

16K

accounts were reached through Instagram

73%

of surveyed students have an understanding of *Culturs* after the *Montclair Culturs* campaign

54,167

impressions through Instagram

243,311

Living In Full Color coverage reach on Telemundo

538

took the cultural pledge

"Witnessing individuals from various walks of life and cultures come together was very exciting and enjoyable. It's heartening for us as students to know that there is diversity on our campus and that people value and embrace our individuality."

Mexican-American Student Society

"I'm inspired to know I'm not alone. My goal in 2024 is to take back my culture."

Montclair State University Student

"We are committed to continuing these important discussions with more students, faculty and representatives from WNBC and Telemundo47."

John Durso, VP Communications, NBC New York

"We need more conversations in safe spaces where we can find ways to celebrate each other and our points of view."

Dr. Katia Goldfarb