

FAMILY SCIENCE & HUMAN DEVELOPMENT

Department Newsletter

JUNE 2026

FSHD Faculty Honored with Presidential Excellence Awards

The Family Science and Human Development (FSHD) Department proudly congratulates two faculty members chosen to receive a 2026 Presidential Excellence Award. These prestigious awards salute outstanding achievement in research, teaching, and service, as well as a deep commitment to advancing the university's mission.

Dr. Soyoung Lee, Associate Professor, was honored with the *International Pedagogy and Research* award which recognizes distinguished work in:

- Integrating global and intercultural perspectives into curriculum design, pedagogy, and mentoring.
- Research, scholarship, or creative activity with international or comparative dimensions that build Montclair's global profile.
- Demonstrating meaningful impact on international visibility and the on-campus student experience.



Dr. Soyoung Lee

Dr. Lee's work as a family scientist is grounded in the belief that families must be understood within their social, cultural, and historical contexts. At Montclair, she brings this perspective into her courses – *Comparative Studies of Global Families* and *Working with Diverse Families* – where she encourages students to critically examine assumptions, engage diverse family systems, and recognize their own cultural and familial histories as sources of strength. Her global pedagogy includes innovative cross-institutional teaching collaborations in the US, as well as international teaching experiences in Korea and Indonesia. Extending this commitment into research, she has been selected as a 2026 Korea Foundation Fellow. Beyond teaching and research, she is also an active leader and community-engaged scholar, contributing to university, local, national, and international initiatives that advance equity, global engagement, and critical understanding of immigrant and multicultural families.

Dr. Sei Eun Kim, Assistant Professor, received Honorable Mention in the category for *Teaching, Early Career, Full-Time Faculty*. The criteria for this award include:

- Quality of Teaching – using innovative teaching practices, implementing experiential or community-based learning.
- Impact on Student Learning – connecting teaching practices to measurable improvement in student performance and/or engagement.
- Impact on Student Success – enhanced level of preparedness for subsequent coursework, progression to advanced coursework or graduate programs, student participation in conferences and competitions, internship and job placement, student leadership, alumni success stories.



Dr. Sei Eun Kim

As a skilled scholar with primary expertise in youth and adolescent development, Dr. Kim encourages critical thinking through engaging, evidence-based, and challenging course content. Her course materials and assignments reflect real world issues impacting current trends, policies, and research in the FSHD field. She incorporates multiple teaching modalities to support diverse learning styles, fostering an equitable and inclusive learning environment where all students feel seen and valued. One student described her class as a "place of comfort."

The Presidential Excellence Awards were introduced in 2025 to celebrate the exceptional contributions of faculty and staff who go above and beyond to help students, colleagues and the local community. "As we continue to navigate a time of transformation in higher education," said University President Jonathan Koppell, "it is essential to acknowledge the leaders who are paving the way for success." ■

**** Congratulations Dr. Lee and Dr. Kim ****

A Windowless Room Changed My Life

By Dr. Brad van Eeden-Moorefield

Happy Pride! I want to share something more personal because I think it partially speaks to why we are all in this field, albeit in a different way for many of you. Specifically, this is about the importance of finding community, visibility, and your voice.

I came of age as a gay man and a first-generation college student in the 1990s. I went through my entire undergraduate education without ever encountering a reading, a class discussion, or a mentor that reflected my queer experience or my community. I can tell you from lived experience how profoundly that absence shapes a person and their education.

What started to change things for me was a resident assistant, Ashley, who took me to the campus LGBT group meetings (the LGBT acronym was less inclusive then). Those meetings were held in a windowless room in one of the oldest buildings on campus, with poor lighting outside. That space was strategically chosen so that students who were not yet out could attend without being seen, so that for a brief time each week, people could simply exist as themselves with less fear.

In that room, I found belonging. I found community. I found friends who taught



me about the critical importance of safety, visibility, acceptance, and inclusion. It was central to my success as a student and to all the work I have done since.

I share this because many of you likely have your own version of that story — a moment when an institution failed to see you, and perhaps a moment when someone such as Ashley helped you find community and belonging anyway. Take a moment to think about yours.

I have carried with me all that I learned in that windowless room across my career, both in community health and

while teaching in university settings. It drives the way I show up and show out. It drives me to get out of my comfort zone and speak up, to advocate fiercely, and to push back against the harm institutions create when they maintain systems and norms rooted in heterosexism, ableism, whiteness, and other forms of exclusion. It also drives me to enact various strategies in and outside of the classroom to help ensure everyone can see themselves in the readings we read, discussions we have, and all parts of the learning and growing process. To create and hold a sense of community is such a powerful experience. That sense of community becomes a pathway toward both personal and professional growth.

I still think about that windowless room and what it represented, not just safety, but possibility. Someone created that space so students could survive, connect, and grow into themselves. In many ways, our work today asks the same of us. Pride month reminds me that even small acts of visibility, inclusion, and care can profoundly shape another person's sense of belonging and future. I encourage each of you to take a moment and consider the spaces you create and identify the many possibilities of new spaces you can open for others. ■

Pride Month: A Time to Highlight LGBTQ Services at Montclair

Since 1970, June has been designated as LGBTQ Pride Month to celebrate the lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender community. It is the perfect time to acknowledge the array of programs and services offered by Montclair State University to create an inclusive, supportive campus environment.

LGBTQ Minor: The College of Humanities and Social Sciences offers a [minor in](#)

[LGBTQ Studies](#) where students critically examine and creatively explore the construction and maintenance of gendered identities, sexualities, and related discourses and practices, in a variety of contexts.

Counseling Referrals: While it is not necessary for trans people to have a counselor who is also a gender identity specialist, someone specializing in gender

may be more trans-inclusive, friendly and knowledgeable about trans-related issues and concerns. For general counselor referrals, students may visit [Counseling and Psychological Services \(CAPS\)](#) in Russ Hall.

Preferred Name: Recognizing that some individuals prefer to be known by a

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FSHD Introduces Hybrid Class with Immersive Weekend Session

To meet the growing demand for greater flexibility and accessibility with classes, the Family Science and Human Development Department has created an exciting opportunity for students to take part in a special offering of FSHD 141, *Interpersonal Relations*, designed with both flexibility and focused engagement in mind. In this class, students learn about relevant and up-to-date information about meaningful human relationships throughout the life cycle.

The first four weeks of the course (CRN 47614) will be in an asynchronous format, from August 28 through September 24, enabling students to build a strong foundation with the material while working on their own schedules. The class will then meet in-person for an immersive weekend:

- Friday, September 25 from 10:00 am – 5:00 pm
- Saturday, September 26 from 9:00 am – 5:00 pm
- Sunday, September 27 from 9:00 am – 5:00 pm

This intensive weekend is designed to deepen understanding through discussion, collaboration, and applied work. It's a unique chance to focus fully on the course material in a concentrated, engaging environment. Following the in-person weekend, students will have about a week to complete and submit a final paper, providing time to reflect on and integrate what was learned.

This format is ideal for those who appreciate flexibility but also value meaningful, in-person academic engagement. It enables students to balance other commitments while still benefiting from a rich, interactive experience. Anyone looking for a course structure that is both manageable and impactful is strongly encouraged to consider enrolling. This course satisfies SEEDS Interactive Communication student learning outcome in alignment with the Self Discovery and Self Care value. ■

FSHD 141-18 *Interpersonal Relations* Hybrid/Weekend Class - Fall26

August 2026

28 Fri Begin 4 weeks asynchronous work

September 2026

25 Fri Meet in-person 10am - 5pm

26 Sat Meet in-person 9am - 5pm

27 Sun Meet in-person 9am - 5pm

28 Mon One week to reflect and write



FSHD participated in the university's Denim Day at in support of Sexual Assault Awareness Month. Visitors to our table enjoyed a hands-on pinwheel-making craft, picked up some denim giveaways, and learned more about career opportunities associated with a major in FSHD. Our table was staffed by Department Chair Dr. Lyndal Khaw (center), along with our wonderful student workers, Noelani Brown (left) and Aya Ashkar.

LGBTQ Services (continued from page 2)

name other than their legal name, university policy permits students and employees to be known within the Montclair community by a preferred name. Read the [policy here](#).

Daughta Speaks: This student organization focuses on awareness of the Black LGBTQ community and hosts events that highlight political and social issues.

Safe Space Program: The LGBTQ Safe Space Program provides a visible network of support where students can talk with a non-judgmental, understanding and trustworthy person. Locations are designated with a decal containing a green circle with a pink and black triangle and the label *LGBTQ Safe Space*.

Medical Coverage: Hormone therapy prescriptions and gender confirming surgeries are covered in the [University Student Health Insurance Plan](#) which is available to all students. For more information, email info@univhealthplans.com or call (833) 251-1705.

For more information about programs and services on campus, visit the [Queer Community Program](#) page, stop by the Student Center Annex, Room 113B, or call (973) 655-5114. ■

On Resilience: Caribbean American Heritage Month

By Alicia Rivera, MPH

Celebrating the *resilience* of communities has the covert recognition that they are facing disproportionate adversity. Resiliency is not found passively, or handed through comfort. It is often the result of facing adversity, and then sustained through a commitment of *choosing* joy despite challenges.



The resilience found in Caribbean immigrant communities and their descendants in the United States has been fought for and earned through perseverance, courage, and community. It is sometimes the result of a, *sometimes*, delusional commitment to making it work by all means necessary. I welcome us all to sit with the lived realities of what it means to be resilient as we observe Caribbean American Heritage Month.

As we celebrate, I think of someone close to me who left her home country in the Caribbean at age 46, with four school-aged children and nothing guaranteed on the other side. She was not chasing adventure or seeking a life of luxury. She was escaping financial hardship, emotional harm, and a future that offered her family no way forward. Caribbean immigrants and their descendants come to this country fueled with the hope of opportunity, and often in escape from something that was no longer survivable.

The children of the woman I described grew up to become educated, present in graduate programs, in professional spaces, in communities, making an impact and giving back. Social mobility, or even just its possibility, is what has historically drawn people into the United States. As a recently graduated Master's in Public Health student and an FSHD graduate assistant who is part of the Caribbean community, I notice, in my journey, that the outputs of resilience are far more celebrated than the quiet acts of resilience itself. The sacrifices that have led to the contributions in the making of this country—

our systems, infrastructure, and culture—get lost in a society that is focused on the bottom line.

This month is an invitation to bring some of that humanity back. We must not forget that Caribbean Heritage is rooted in not just collective resilience, but chosen joy. It is found in the “Little” vibrant neighborhoods across the NYC boroughs, including but not limited to Little Caribbean, Little Jamaica, Little Haiti, and Little Dominican Republic—where language, food, and music run the streets, even through heightened social and political surveillance. Resilience and joy go hand in hand, and this month, I invite us to partake in experiencing the narratives of those who rose, not through individualism, but through collective courage to face adversity with a smile.

*“Hay que mover la colita,
para que se vayan las penas
y se alegre el corazón.”*

*“You’ve got to shake your hips,
so your troubles fade away
and your heart fills with joy.”*

~ Wilfrido Vargas
lyrics from *A Mover La Colita*
(*Shake Your Booty*)

The following list of media is rooted in my own experience and nowhere near complete, but consider this a starting guide to your own observance this month.

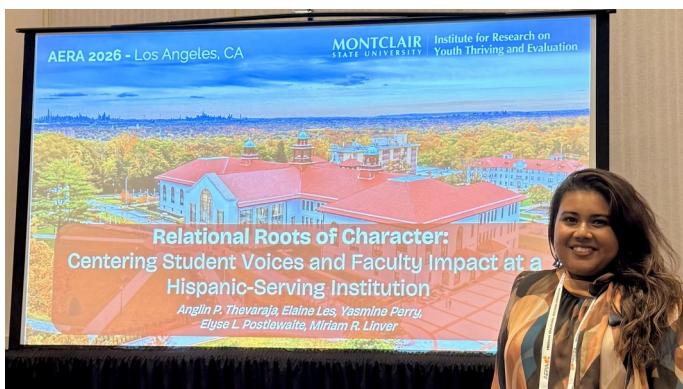
- **Listen:** A joyful playlist with themes of history, social issues, love, and resilience, rooted in the sounds of the Dominican Republic, Cuba, and Puerto Rico. (Spotify) <https://tinyurl.com/kmywdvyn>
- **Read:** *Breath, Eyes, Memory* by Edwidge Danticat; *For Brown Girls with Sharp Edges and Tender Hearts* and *Tias y Primas (Aunts and Cousins)* by Prisca Dorcas Mojica Rodríguez
- **Watch:** “Real Women Have Curves” (2002); “Past Lives” (2023) ■

Our Achievements

Five FSHD doctoral students recently gave four presentations at the 2026 Eastern Evaluation Research Society conference including an award-winning presentation by Yasmine Perry. Pictured (l - r) are **Yasmine Perry, Anglin Thevaraja, Luisa Engeldinger, Nicole Sochaczewski and Morgan Tamayo**, with their mentor **Dr. Jennifer Urban**. Their presentation topics were:



- A methodological reflection from a mixed-method evaluation: Are interviews always necessary to evaluate conceptual understanding?
- Character-minded evaluation: Integrating virtues and evidence in a relational systems framework
- Who do we become through evaluation? Faculty reflections on character, mentorship, and institutional support
- Embedding AI responsibly: Designing and evaluating coursework for ethical AI use in the classroom



FSHD doctoral student **Anglin Thevaraja** presented *Relational Roots of Character: Centering Student Voices and Faculty Impact at a Hispanic Serving Institution* at the 2026 American Educational Research Association (AERA) conference in Los Angeles.

Career & Internship Insights

Don't Skip the Summer

CCHL Career & Internship Advisors are available all summer to provide career services support. Summer is a great time for students in all grade levels to improve your resume and cover letter, practice interviewing skills, discuss career paths, and learn about internship opportunities.

Don't hesitate to contact the advisors to schedule an in-person or virtual meeting during their summer hours: Monday through Thursday, 8:00 am - 5:30 pm.

- Email: CCHLcareer@montclair.edu
- Drop in: University Hall 1170
- Call: 973-655-7866
- Make an appointment on Handshake: <https://www.montclair.edu/cchl/student-success/student-success-center/career-services/>

FSHD Department Offers Two Minors

Gerontology minor:

Explore the study of aging and how it relates to other fields. [click here](#)

Family Science & Human Development minor:

Learn more about this interdisciplinary field. [click here](#)

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