

A Slice of Success for Saint Peter's Journalists



From left, first row: Adrienne Romero '20, Georgia Kral, Neidy Gutierrez '20 and Ernabel Demillo, M.S. From left, back row: Madison McCool and Ayinde Merrill of New Jersey Civic Information Consortium

When Adrienne Romero '20 and Neidy Gutierrez '20 graduated in the middle of the pandemic, they weren't too sure what was next for them career-wise. But, both having a passion for writing and creating things, they decided to take a chance on themselves and their talents. Four years later, their award-winning news site, *Slice of Culture*, is thriving.

"We both noticed that there just wasn't much coverage of our communities anymore," Gutierrez said. "Where we live, there are a lot of cultures. A lot of people come from different places and they all have unique stories. We just believe that should be something that's told."

It was in those conversations walking between classes that *Slice of Culture* was born. Wanting to highlight areas in Hudson County that don't always get coverage, *Slice of Culture* originally began as a food website but quickly pivoted.

"Someone recently asked me, 'What is culture?'" Romero said, "And that's one of the reasons why we chose culture to be in our name—because it's just such a broad word. You can talk about the fashion culture, the sporting culture, food culture and there's really no definite answer. So really, I would say the meaning behind our publication is just that it is always evolving."

Four years into running their publication, Gutierrez and Romero say that their goals are to be a trusted platform for local news in Hudson County and to reach the younger generation. Both communication and media studies majors with journalism minors, they say their experiences at Saint Peter's shaped the journalists they have become today.

Ernabel Demillo, M.S., chair and lecturer of communications, has been a champion of Gutierrez and Romero, as well as their publication, from the very beginning.

"I noticed that they had been doing some content that pertained to civic engagement and stories about the local communities—the Hudson County community, and specifically Jersey City," Professor Demillo said. "So when I saw an email from the Society of Professional Journalists about nominating a media site for best grassroots journalism, I said, 'I think you guys are perfect for this.' And sure enough, they were awarded Best Grassroots Journalism by one of the most prestigious journalism organizations."

Along with awards from the Society of Professional Journalists, New Jersey chapter, Romero and Gutierrez have also been awarded three grants in partnership with Saint Peter's from the New Jersey Civic Information Consortium—the most recent of which has enabled them both to make *Slice of Culture* their full-time job, as well as hire paid interns.

One of their goals, the women say, is to create a pipeline with universities so that they can bring in interns for civic engagement stories or help with the business or communication side of the publication. To date they have had interns from Montclair State University, Seton Hall University, and of course, Saint Peter's. Currently *Slice of Culture* boasts 10 alumni, a former employee and one current Saint Peter's student on their team who are either interns, contributing members or regular team members.

The number of young people contributing to *Slice of Culture* is something that Professor Demillo says is one of the most exciting aspects of the publication.

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"A strong local news environment is really what you need to have a strong democracy," she said. "If people don't know what's going on in their own community, they won't know how to vote. So, to have young people, especially, really care about what's going on with their community, will also make them civically engage and participate. This kind of journalism is training young people to be good citizens."

When asked what their favorite part of running *Slice of Culture* is, both respond readily: the people. "We are doing this to share these stories and highlight these businesses. We want to highlight any of the positives here in Hudson County—and be able to inform people. It's definitely about the people."

Check out the latest coverage and news on Hudson County at sliceofculture.com. 