

'Hollywood East' opening soon at Montclair State University

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Montclair State University will be opening its new School of Communication and Media building next month.



(Photo: Ricardo Kaulessar/NorthJersey.com)

Four broadcast-ready studio and control rooms with 4K and HD technology. A presentation hall with six remote cameras and Dolby Surround Sound. Top-notch stage and audio sound laboratories.

When classes resume on Sept. 5 at Montclair State University, students will experience these state-of-the-art accouterments and more when MSU's School of Communication and Media building opens.

The official opening of the \$60-million-plus facility occurs on Tuesday, Sept. 26, from 11 a.m. to 2 p.m. It is the first extensive display of a three-year partnership with Sony Electronics that has enabled the state's second-largest university to have access to the latest production equipment from the company, along with training from company professionals. It's a relationship that has Montclair State University President Susan Cole touting the new building as "Hollywood East."

"Hollywood East has arrived on the campus of Montclair State," said Cole in a statement. "Our School of Communication and Media's new state-of-the-art home has radically changed the New York metropolitan area production landscape.



Montclair State University's new School of Communication and Media building will have its grand opening on Sept. 26.

"Our students will be able to enter the workforce with the confidence that comes from knowing they have received outstanding pre-professional training on the latest technology in up-to-the-minute facilities," stated Cole, "while regional filmmakers and media professionals will be able to realize their creative vision in our extraordinary new studio and production spaces."

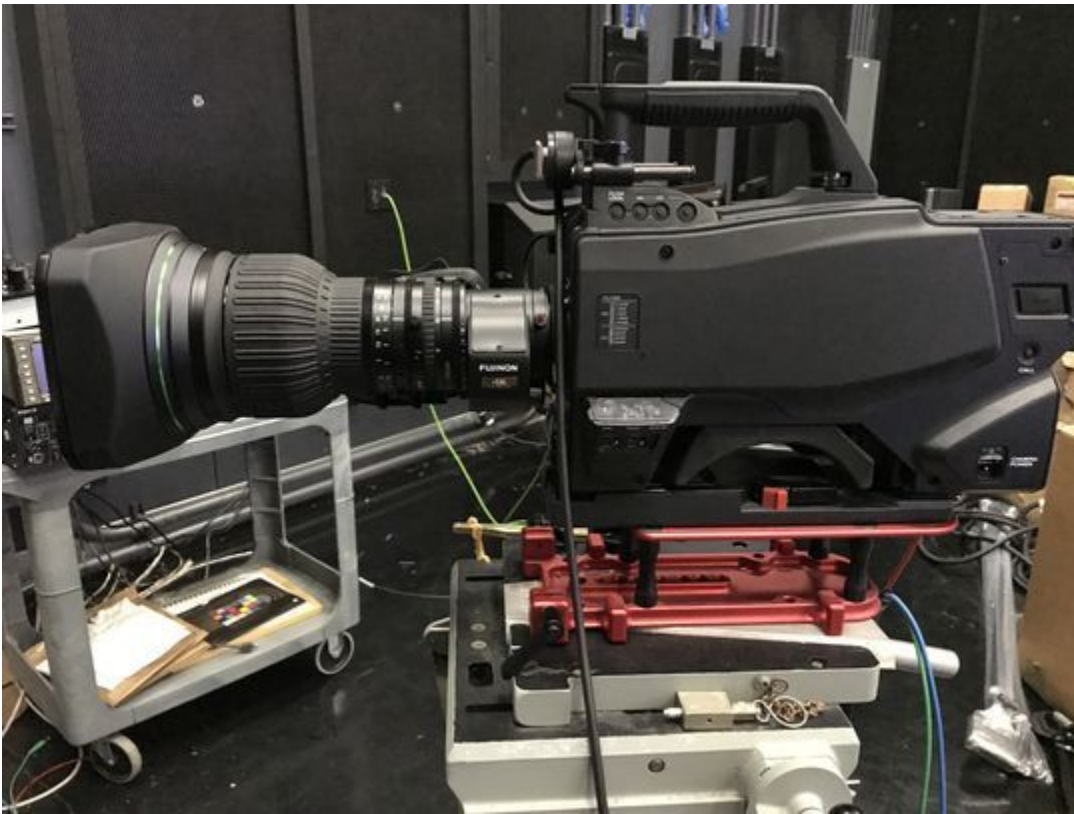
John Garmendi, strategic business development manager for Sony Electronics, who is based out of its office in Park Ridge, hailed the new building.

"This rivals any network broadcast facility. I think that is the most striking thing about the facility," observed Garmendi. "If you didn't know you were in a school, you would think you were at one of the networks."

Garmendi pointed out that the cameras, broadcast switches and other equipment provided by Sony are the same found in television-network studios.

The partnership between Sony and Montclair State is similar to one that Sony has with American University in Washington, D.C., where the Media Innovation Lab is outfitted with Sony broadcast and production equipment.

NorthJersey.com journalists were given a tour of the new building by MSU Dean of the College of the Arts Dean Dan Gurskis; Nicholas Tzanis, director of Broadcast and Media Operations at the College of the Arts, and Keith Strudler, the new director of the School of Communication and Media.



Sony cameras, such as the one pictured, will be used by students working in Montclair State University's new School of Communication and Media building. *(Photo: Ricardo Kaulesar/NorthJersey.com)*

Tzanis, who has more than 30 years of experience in television broadcasting, oversaw the construction of the school. He's pleased with the final result.

"There is a sense of satisfaction that you always get after you complete some things, especially of this magnitude," Tzanis said. "We're all anxiously awaiting for day one when the students arrive and the faculty arrives, and see their reaction."

Getting the grand tour

Walking into the new School of Communication and Media building, people will notice an atrium at the entrance with 12 display screens that will show video feeds from production studios, stages and other areas of the building. Below the screens, there are stairs that also function as bleachers to accommodate overflow crowds for events.

Across the way is a news studio that has work-stations staffed by as many as 26 students. Gurskis said the studio will be used by NJTV for events such as the pre-show and post-show for the New Jersey lieutenant governor's debate that will be held on campus on Oct. 16.

Gurskis said the new facility, constructed over a four-year period, will help prepare students for a career in production and in related fields after they graduate MSU.

"For our students, it provides them with a competitive advantage of having experience of working with state-of-the-art, and often, beyond-state-of-the-art tools that will serve them as they leave campus and pursue their careers both here in New Jersey and also across the river in New York City," Gurskis said.

He said the building is 98 percent complete, and will be at "99.5 percent" by the time school opens next week.

There's the 197-seat presentation hall where the debate will occur. Then onward to one of the four control rooms, followed by looking into the "Jersey City loft set," one of the three studio sets that will be the locales for talk shows and other programs. Along the way, there is a Foley stage where non-digital sound effects will be created, a film studio, a screening room, and conference room and work spaces for students and faculty alike.

Strudler appreciated having started in a new job with the advantage of working in a new facility with the latest equipment and spaces allowing for quality work.

"It's a unique and rare opportunity to be able start in a position like this, in a facility like this," Strudler said.

In addition to the facility's focus on visual media, the college's radio station, WMSC 90.3 FM, will have several studios, audio labs and a performance space for live bands.

Joe Amditis, associate director for the Center for Cooperative Media, an MSU-based nonprofit organization focused on sustaining and growing local journalism, said the new building will become a hub for a variety of disciplines. Amditis sees it as a locus for the center's news partners.

"It's great to have everyone in the same location," Amditis said. "We're hoping to have more of our partners used this as a central office or satellite office space."

Anabella Poland, general manager for WMSC, said the new building will help bring departments together to work on projects.

"We're all in the same place, so that helps with more collaboration between not just the [university] newspaper and radio station, but also with other professors and just being in touch with one another," Poland said.

"We have nothing but potential," observed Strudler. "The future is right here."

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