

PRACTICES EXCHANGE

NEWSLETTER

APRIL 2022

<https://yeswemustcoalition.org>

Issue 47

This year the Practices Exchange Newsletter is dedicated with appreciation and admiration to the memory of Dr. Nia Lane Chester, the newsletter's founding editor and program manager of the Yes We Must Coalition.

Higher Education in These Times In order to provide a forum for YWMC members to share strategies and raise questions with one another during these uncertain times, the Yes We Must Coalition will continue the Open Forums begun last year. Each month we will offer a general session, open to anyone at a member school. Information regarding links to these sessions is sent out via the email lists for YWMC Google Groups. We welcome all members who wish to join the conversation.

Growing the Coalition If you know a school that should be a member of the Yes We Must Coalition, please connect us with them. Growing numbers make us stronger in the work we do together and the voice we raise on behalf of low-income students. Please get in touch with Gloria Nemerowicz, President, at glorianemerowicz@yeswemustcoalition.org.

YWMC MEMBER SHOWCASE: Lees-McRae College



Lees-McRae College is a college of opportunity, nestled in the mountains of western North Carolina, with a long history of service to the Appalachian region, which it has called home for over a century. Founded in 1900 by the Rev. Edgar Tufts, Lees-McRae was originally designed as an educational alternative to the local public schools. In its first iteration, Lees-McRae was known as The Elizabeth McRae Institute and served as a boarding school for local girls. When a boys' department was opened in the nearby town of Plumtree in 1903, Tufts added the name of Susanna Lees, an influential early donor, to the school — making Lees-McRae one of the few institutions of higher education to be named for two women. The Lees-McRae Institute became co-educational in 1927 and was converted to a junior college in 1929. Lees-McRae began offering four-year degrees in 1990 after the Commission on Colleges of the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools granted it the status of senior college. In 2018, the college added its first graduate program, and in 2021 awarded its first master's degree in Teaching in Secondary Education. Lees-McRae College joined the Yes We Must Coalition in 2021.



In 2005, Lees-McRae College became home to the second New Opportunity School for Women (NOSW). Originally founded in 1987 by Lees-McRae College alumna Jane Stephenson ('57) in Berea, Kentucky, the NOSW seeks to “improve the educational, financial, and personal circumstances of low-income women” in the Appalachian region. During the past three decades, over 900 women have completed the school’s three-week residential program with 76% of graduates employed, enrolled in further education, or both. Graduates find the experience life altering.

One of the foundational tenets of a Lees-McRae education is an extensive experiential curriculum with unique offerings that are tied to the Appalachian area. Among our most popular and distinctive academic programs is Wildlife Rehabilitation, which allows students to work side-by-side with seasoned veterinarians and rehabilitators to care for injured and orphaned wildlife. All students in the program participate in a capstone summer clinical working at the May Wildlife Rehabilitation Center. Open 365 days a year, the May Wildlife Rehabilitation Center is

staffed largely by students who, over the course of their training, learn and then implement all aspects of wildlife rehabilitation and eventually become mentors to younger students.

Another signature academic program, Outdoor Recreation Management, leverages the many natural amenities in our area to prepare students for a wide range of careers in the outdoor industry, with specific training in leadership and an emphasis on environmental stewardship. We have also recently established a partnership with The Bahamas Agriculture and Marine Science Institute in Andros, Bahamas, to bring even more experiences to our students, including conservation education and sustainable agriculture.

The College motto — “In the Mountains, Of the Mountains, For the Mountains” — is a “north star” for the College that is as relevant today as it was a century ago. This motto embodies a commitment to service through promoting opportunities to underserved populations. It is embodied in the location-based experiential curriculum, echoed in the historic buildings that frame the campus, and lived daily by our campus community. We remain, at heart, a college of opportunity committed to living the promises of our founder to the community and region that surrounds us. For more information, please contact Alyson Gill, Provost, at gilla@lmc.edu.

Institutional Resources/Practices

Supporting Academic Achievement for Under-Represented Populations through the CSTEP Program

The Collegiate Science and Technology Entry Program (CSTEP) at **Vaughn College** is funded by a New York State Education Department grant. The CSTEP grant is designed to increase the number of historically underrepresented or economically disadvantaged students in academic programs at the college level that lead to careers in STEM or professional licensure. Vaughn College received the CSTEP grant in Fall 2020 and is contracted to have this grant for five years. Engineering and Technology Assistant Professor and CSTEP Project Director Dr. Amir Elzawawy and CSTEP Assistant Director Cecelia Izzo have run Vaughn’s CSTEP program since it began. CSTEP supports 100 CSTEP scholars annually by providing academic and career development opportunities to students in engineering programs and Vaughn’s aircraft operations (flight) license degree.

CSTEP strives to support students in a variety of ways. Students are offered free CSTEP-specific tutoring, extended workshops led by faculty members and industry professionals on multiple topics, laptop loans, \$100 stipends for software and educational supplies, and an opportunity to participate in the CSTEP summer research program

In addition to academic support, CSTEP provides career development opportunities such as internship support and stipends, financial support to attend professional conferences, industry speaker series, resume and cover letter development, and interview preparation. Several CSTEP students have already succeeded in a variety of internships from SpaceX and NASA, the Federal Aviation Administration and more. CSTEP strives to assist economically disadvantaged and historically underrepresented students so they have the experience necessary to succeed in STEM-related careers once they graduate.

For example, one CSTEP member, a mechatronic engineering major from the Class of 2022, was able to attend the Society of Women Engineers (SWE) Conference in October 2021, where he networked with companies and went on job interviews. This helped him jump-start his job

search prior to graduation this spring.

Another mechatronic engineering student, from the Class of 2024, commented on the opportunities she's had through being a part of CSTEP in this way. "As part of the program's inaugural cohort in fall 2020, I was able to participate in the CSTEP research program as a first-year engineering student. In my role as a research assistant, I was tasked with doing the 3D CAD drawing. My drawing was used to create a prototype of the different layers of the heating pad we were designing. This research opportunity gave me great experience in the field of engineering and also helped boost my resume. When CSTEP helped me attend the SWE conference in October 2021, multiple recruiters from American Airlines, Boeing, EATON, and United Airlines inquired about these CAD drawings, and this helped me stand out as a candidate for summer internships."

CSTEP is consistently assisting students in their academic and professional endeavors in engineering and aircraft operations. As the CSTEP program expands, it aspires to not only continue the services currently being provided but also increase the number of scholars that participate in the program. Vaughn's CSTEP program will receive NYSED funding until 2025, at which time the College intends to reapply for the CSTEP grant

For more information, please contact Kyle Mercadante, Learning Specialist, Division of Academic Success, at kyle.mercadante@vaughn.edu, or Cecelia Izzo, Assistant Director, CSTEP, at Cecelia.izzo@vaughn.edu.

Submissions for Future Issues

YWMC members are encouraged to submit examples of policies, practices and/or resources that you have found to be effective in promoting student success and that you would like to share with your YWMC colleagues. We are particularly interested in examples of how members are addressing issues of social and racial justice. Send ideas for the newsletter to Barbara Kirby, Operations Manager, barbara@yeswemustcoalition.org.