

PRACTICES EXCHANGE

NEWSLETTER

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<https://yeswemustcoalition.org>

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COVID-19 Response Update

We know that all of you are making extraordinary efforts to support your students, faculty and staff and keep them safe during this unprecedented health crisis. In order to provide a forum for YWMC members to share strategies and raise questions to which others may have answers to, we have continued to hold an Open Forum via our Zoom platform for members every Thursday at noon. More than half of our members have taken advantage of this community gathering, and we welcome any additional institutional members of the Coalition who wish to join the conversation. We have also recently implemented an Open Forum for YWMC Faculty on Fridays at 11:30am ET. In addition we have compiled a document based on suggestions from recent literature and the practices of experienced online practitioners at YWMC member schools on best practices for creating online courses that are effective for and supportive of low-income students. You can read and download this document (in pdf format) *Supporting Low-Income Students in Online Courses*, on the Yes We Must Coalition website (<https://yeswemustcoalition.org/publications-webinars/#reports>).

YWMC MEMBER SHOWCASE: University of the Ozarks

Located at the foot of the picturesque Ozark Mountains in Clarksville, AR, **University of the Ozarks** is continuing its robust 186-year legacy as an innovator and trailblazer in higher education. First established in 1834 by Presbyterian missionaries in Cane Hill, AR, Ozarks is the oldest university in Arkansas and one of the oldest west of the Mississippi River. The University moved to Clarksville in 1891 and has led the way in social justice, equality and inclusion throughout its history — the first university in Arkansas to admit women (1875), the first historically white college in the state to enroll African-Americans as undergraduates (1957), the first college in Arkansas to integrate athletics (1964), and the first college in the nation to develop a program for college students with learning disabilities (1971) with the Jones Learning Center, which continues today. The University joined the Yes We Must Coalition in 2019.



The University's mission, "True to our Christian heritage, we prepare students from diverse religious, cultural, educational and economic backgrounds to live life fully," is reflected in the

demographics and programs at Ozarks. With a student body of approximately 850, Ozarks is one of the fastest-growing universities in the region with record enrollments including 40 percent enrollment growth over the past five years. The University serves college students from a variety of backgrounds, with students coming from 25 countries and 30 states. In 2019, Ozarks was ranked the No. 1 most diverse small college in the South by U.S. News & World Report. One hundred percent of Ozarks students rely on financial aid, nearly 60 percent are Pell-eligible, more than 50 percent are first-generation and 55 percent come from historically under-represented groups. In recent years the University has made a commitment to assist high-need students by focusing on affordability, accessibility and reducing student debt. This emphasis has led to initiatives like tuition freezes and enhanced scholarship opportunities, including the Frontier Scholarship, which benefits up to 80 students each year.



Ozarks is renowned for its innovative academic programs, including the unique LENS (Learning Environment for New Synthesis) in which students pick their major from one of three general academic areas or “lenses” (humanities, social sciences, or natural sciences and mathematics), and then one or more minors from the other two areas. This approach provides students a broader and more customized liberal arts foundation by encouraging them to explore a diversity of disciplines. In addition, the recently implemented Compass iPad initiative

provides iPads to all students, faculty and staff, promoting accessibility and equality through technology. Ozarks students receive personalized attention and support through a student-to-faculty ratio of 16–1, small class sizes and a Student Success Center that offers an umbrella of academic support for all students. Led by its nationally recognized Jones Learning Center, Ozarks was ranked among the top 10 “disability-friendly colleges in the United States,” by College Choice, an independent online publication dedicated to helping students and their families find the right college. Outside the classroom, students have access to the Ozarks Outdoors program, which combines recreational, environmental and academic experiences throughout the breath-taking Ozark Mountains, as well as to more than 30 student clubs and organizations. Following graduation, Ozarks students are finding success as evidenced by a 95 percent rate of employment/graduate school placement since 2015.

As it has for the past 186 years, University of the Ozarks continues to be guided by its Christian core values of justice, growth, service and hospitality as it serves as a shining light, calling successive generations to dig deeper, reach further and pursue their full potential regardless of background or financial circumstances. For more information about Ozarks, please visit <https://ozarks.edu>.

Institutional Resources/Practices

First-Year Parent Engagement Program

Bloomfield College (NJ) recognizes the importance and value of parental engagement in the overall college experience of students, especially during the first year. Six years ago, Bloomfield launched a new initiative to enhance relationships between parents of first-year students and the College. The First-Year Parent Engagement Program (FYPEP) provides support services and resources to help parents to the transition from high school to college by their

college-bound students. More than half of Bloomfield College's students are first-generation. The College is committed to empowering students, particularly those who have been traditionally excluded from higher education, to realize their intellectual and personal goals and to achieve economic stability and social mobility. The College believes that parents/guardians/family members are extensions of their students and should have the chance to learn about the culture of higher education in general and the Bloomfield community in particular. Typically about 100 parents participate in the FYPEP over the course of a year.

The goals of the FYPEP are:

- To help families become familiar with the resources and services at Bloomfield College;
- To provide parents with ongoing educational resources and information to effectively support their students during the first year;
- To provide opportunities for parents to engage in social, educational and cultural activities with other parents, their students, and other members of the campus community on and off the college campus.

First-year parents and guardians are provided with numerous resources that focus on how to prepare for their student's transition from high school to college and how to be supportive and understanding of their student's new college experiences. Parents also serve as a support network for each other to encourage and support one another throughout their student's educational journey. Discussion forums are held frequently on topics such as how to support your college student; effective strategies prior to enrollment; important dates and institutional procedures; navigating financial aid; understanding commuter and resident student expectations and experiences; staying connected with and supportive of the first-year student; and managing difficult conversations about grades and relationships. Parents are also invited to Parent Orientation and a series of social events throughout the year including a Commuter Student Parents' Breakfast, a Resident Student Parents' Brunch, Family & Friends Day, and a Parent Lunch and Jazz Summit.

The FYPEP seems to have had a positive impact on the students whose parents participated in the program. Those students demonstrated a better understanding of academic and social responsibility and performed better academically in comparison to their peers who did not have parents/guardians engaged in the program. Parents also reported that the program was extremely helpful in giving them a better understanding of their students' experiences, as well as providing them with the opportunity to connect with other parents of first-generation students to share questions and concerns. For further information, contact: Rose Mitchell, Assistant Vice President for Student Affairs, rose_mitchell@bloomfield.edu.

YWMC Webinar Series

There's still time to register for the next YWMC Webinar, Constructing Internships to deepen Engagement with Employers, taking place on **Monday, April 27th**, at 1pm ET. To register, go to the following link: https://zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_Jm8qf9aWRE6C2dpjudLU6g

Webinars are free of charge. Recordings and accompanying slides of past webinars are available on the YWMC Website (<https://yeswemustcoalition.org/publications-webinars/#webinars>).

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. Send brief descriptions to Nia Lane Chester, YWMC Program Manager. niachester@gmail.com.