

PRACTICES EXCHANGE

NEWSLETTER

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Issue 55

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: Mercy College



Mercy College (NY) was founded by the Sisters of Mercy in 1950 and today is a private, non-sectarian, non-profit institution offering undergraduate and graduate education to some 10,000 students at campuses in Westchester, New York City, the Bronx, and online. Mercy became a member of the Yes We Must Coalition in 2015.

By mission, Mercy College is committed to transformative education that provides not just access to college but *success throughout college*, all the way to earning a college degree. As current President Tim Hall states: "At Mercy we take seriously our responsibility to be elevators of social mobility, dramatically altering the life courses of our students and their families through transformative skills and knowledge. Here, we are allergic to thinking that some students just

don't have what it takes to be successful; instead, we offer comprehensive supports to make sure all students can succeed.”

Wells College attracts students from throughout the United States and around the world, with a majority coming from New York State. Approximately 35% of students identify as students of color. Wells is committed to making the education it offers affordable. About 98% of Wells students rely on various scholarships, grants, and other forms of aid, with about 86% receiving need-based aid and 97% receiving merit-based aid.



Mercy's student body is both ethnically and economically diverse: 75% of Mercy freshmen are eligible for need-based federal Pell grants; 60% are the first in their families to attend college; 44% are Hispanic; 24% are Black. For 25 years Mercy has been a federally designated Hispanic-Serving Institution (HSI) and is the largest, private, non-profit HSI in the State of New York. Mercy recently received the *Seal of Excelencia* from Excelencia in Education in recognition of its success in meaningfully promoting the prospects of Hispanic students—the first private college in the nation to receive this award.

Mercy offers more than 100 degree and certificate programs in five schools: Health and Natural Sciences, Business, Social and Behavioral Sciences, Education, and Liberal Arts. Forty degrees are fully attainable online. The College has one of the oldest online learning programs in the tri-state, having offered distance learning classes since 1991.

Mercy's tuition is one of the lowest at a private institution in New York State. In addition, the College maintains small class sizes (the student-to-faculty ratio is 15:1) and provides intensive personal touchpoints for students throughout their academic careers. The PACT (Personalized Achievement Contract) program provides mentors to help with the entire college experience and has been nationally recognized for contributing to student success as measured by increasing retention and graduation rates of the College's Black and Hispanic students.

Mercy provides several evidence-based support structures that have been proven to promote student success. These include career-embedded learning—with a focus on internships as early as a student’s first year – and proactive advising, which uses dozens of data points to help determine which students may need help before their academic journeys are derailed and to provide help in a timely way.

Mercy is a Yellow Ribbon School, as designated by the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, and is listed in the *U.S. News* “Top Performers for Social Mobility” rankings for 2022. Students graduate from Mercy having enjoyed a rich array of culturally diverse activities on campus and the possibility of participating in eleven NCAA Division II athletics teams. For more information, please contact Zodat Negrón, Executive Director, Public Relations and Community Engagement, at znegron@mercy.edu.

Institutional Resources/Practices

Woodbury University: Woodbury Integrated Student Experience (WISE)

Woodbury University’s WISE Scholarship program provides an opportunity for students to engage in high-impact educational practices both inside and outside of the classroom and earn up to two \$1,000 tuition scholarships. When the WISE program was founded in 2016, only two recipients were awarded WISE Scholarships. Since then, over 100 recipients have been awarded more than \$100,000 in scholarship money.

To be eligible for the WISE Tuition Scholarship, students must be enrolled as full-time students, have completed a minimum of 30 units at Woodbury, maintained a minimum cumulative collegiate GPA of 2.75, begun studying at Woodbury in fall 2015 or later, and have at least one more semester left before graduation after participating in one or two WISE-approved activities.

Students are required to create an e-portfolio as part of the WISE Scholarship, which gives them the opportunity to present reflections on their activity in a professional manner. If the WISE activity is related to a specific course, credit may be awarded for completion of the e-portfolio.

The WISE Scholarship program has four components with distinctive benefits: Civic Engagement, Study Away, Internship or Work Experience, and Leadership.

Civic Engagement involves working to make a difference in the civic life of our communities and developing the combination of knowledge, skills, values and motivation to make that difference.

Study Away offers students a chance to learn in places different from their own over an extended period of time. This experience helps students gain a better understanding of themselves and their culture so they can become more open and inclusive global citizens.

Internship or Work Experience is an opportunity for students to work in their field of study under the supervision of an experienced professional. The purpose is to take theoretical ideas of a discipline and apply them to a professional environment to increase the students’ marketability and to inform their continuing academic studies.

Through **Leadership Experiences** students learn how to organize and implement ideas among a diverse group of people, direct conflict resolution, and build interpersonal skills among the group. This component requires participation as part of a team charged with accomplishing a common goal through the modeling of inclusivity and a strong ethical belief system.

One student completed a Civic Engagement project within Woodbury University. The student was hired as a Financial Coach through the Financial Sustainability Program, which provides students with resources related to financial literacy through workshops and one-on-one meetings on credit scores, budgeting and taxes. He reported, “The process of completing the WISE e-portfolio requires lots of self-reflection. I chose to have mentors during the process, which I believe helped me piece out the e-portfolio. Overall, it was a great opportunity to partake in a Civic Engagement project that will ultimately benefit my peers.”

Another student completed the Leadership Experience within Woodbury University. This student was hired as an Academic Peer Mentor through the Office of Academic Affairs, which provides academic support through peer mentoring and the development of such skills as self-awareness and time management. “Completing the WISE Scholarship was a painless and highly rewarding experience. While perfecting the e-portfolio did require some time and effort, I found the process enjoyable, as it involved self-reflection of my work and how it aligns with my career goals. Through this process, I realized the positive impact my work has on others, which felt gratifying. I’d encourage students to consider applying for the WISE Scholarship because it was unlike any other application process. Rather than writing a lengthy paper, it is a creative journey of self-reflection that can potentially grant you financial support for your school.”

The WISE Scholarship program is an opportunity for students to gain valuable experience and knowledge and build their resumes while also helping to cover the cost of tuition. For more information, please contact Samantha Lopez, Senior Director of Marketing and Communications, at Samantha.lopez@woodbury.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, barbarakirby@yeswemustcoalition.org.