

PRACTICES EXCHANGE

NEWSLETTER

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<https://yeswemustcoalition.org>

Issue 40

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. We will begin in September with both a general session, open to anyone at a member school, and a faculty session for all faculty at member schools. 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: Bloomfield College

Bloomfield College is the only four-year college in the state of New Jersey designated a Predominantly Black Institution (PBI), Hispanic Serving Institution (HSI) and Minority Serving Institution (MSI). The College joined the Yes We Must Coalition in November 2019.



Located in historic Bloomfield, NJ, just 15 miles from New York City, a cultural epicenter for entertainment, business, and internship and career opportunities, Bloomfield College is test-optional and offers a comprehensive campus experience with more than 40 clubs,

organizations and an active Greek Life. The College also participates in 12 Division II athletics programs.

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The student body is comprised of mainly Black and brown students (82%), and approximately 73% of students are Pell Grant eligible. These students must navigate not only how to afford a college education, but also struggle with meeting basic needs like food insecurity, family obligations, lack of access to technology and more. Many of these challenges have been exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic.

With its beginnings as the German Theological School founded in 1868 by the Presbytery of Newark, today Bloomfield College reflects the diversity of the local population and has established a solid liberal arts foundation. The College is ranked as one of the most diverse liberal arts colleges in the nation by *U.S. News & World Report*, and currently offers more than 60 majors and concentrations in six academic divisions. Two highly ranked academic programs include Nursing and Game Design. Each is continually recognized as a program of excellence in both regional and national top tier rankings.



In fulfilling its commitment to serving and empowering low-income and first-generation students who have been traditionally marginalized in their ability to pursue higher education, Bloomfield College maintains the lowest full-time tuition rate for any private four-year college or university in New Jersey. Students receive highly personalized attention both inside and outside the classroom for the same or below the direct cost of a public institution. And, there are no extra fees added to tuition, thus no surprises. Ninety-five percent of students receive grants and/or scholarship support. The result is economic mobility for students and families attributable to well-paying, life-changing jobs.

In 2021, Bloomfield College was ranked highest in New Jersey and #42 nationally among 200+ liberal arts institutions for social mobility by *U.S. News & World Report*. In fact, 40% of graduates moved up in two or more income quintiles, among the highest in New Jersey and select private colleges. For our student families with incomes of \$20,000 or less a year, 22% of students who came from this bottom fifth of income earners moved up to the top fifth as adults (making \$110,000 or more a year). The College has also held the highest success rate among all New Jersey liberal arts colleges and universities in moving students forward in economic standing, and is cited among the nation's top colleges for helping students from low-income families enter the middle and upper class.

One year ago, the College established a new consolidated Center for Student Success offering a cross-trained team of professionals to provide comprehensive assistance across the spectrum of academic and career planning needs. For more information about Bloomfield College, please visit <https://bloomfield.edu>.

Institutional Resources/Practices

Albizu University: Virtual New Student Onboarding Process

In response to Covid-19 and the 100% transition to remote learning and services, **Albizu University's** student affairs leadership brainstormed approaches to onboarding new students virtually in order to positively impact first-year retention. Albizu, located in Miami, FL, enrolls commuting, non-traditional students, many of whom are first-generation college going. The student affairs team mapped out the enrollment-to-first-semester transition process and developed a work team with representatives across student services, student government, and academic programs. The team harnessed existing resources to develop an orientation and onboarding experience that would not only support new student connections, experiences, and transition to Albizu University, but also pair new students with academic success coaches.

The new student onboarding team includes a team of academic success coaches led by the institution's academic counselor/retention specialist. Student success coaches are trained to collaborate with students using a virtual relational model that sensitizes them to pick up on specific at-risk cues of distress. They provide information about internal and external resources available for students including technology. Students are assigned to a member of the academic coaching team when they enroll, and this coach is their source of communication and support throughout their first semester. The academic success coaching team works individually and with small groups of students to connect students to tutoring services, develop success plans, support academic skill building, and act as an advocate for students.

Student Affairs hosts three, interactive, virtual New Student Orientation (NSO) sessions via Blackboard — offered at various times to accommodate student schedules — to familiarize new students with the LMS used by Albizu. During these sessions, staff provide new students with strategies for academic success, pertinent service department contact information, information about student life activities and career services, and a checklist so students become involved in their own onboarding experience. Student government representatives invite students to a club rush. Subsequent events virtually engage students in workshops and conversations with Albizu staff.

Most importantly, during the virtual orientation sessions the role the academic coaches play is explained, and students receive a walk-through of the New Student Onboarding Space, titled Virtual Success (SSL-100). This course facilitates the student onboarding experience

offering access to available counseling and career services, the virtual library, and the virtual offices of the academic coaches. It also includes links to the Student Success Portal, which serves as a one-stop shop for all Albizu students and includes academic calendars, access to pre-recorded academic and career services workshops, links to digital tutoring and coaching schedulers, job boards, scholarship and financial fitness resources, inter-departmental contacts, and links to websites and services.

Albizu will continue to offer virtual onboarding even when our students fully return to campus. Data has shown that 90% of the first cohort of students who participated in the onboarding process have been retained. While we cannot attribute that success solely to the onboarding process, we know that this program successfully connects students to the institution. For more information contact: Floralba Arbelo, Dean of Student Affairs, farbelo@albizu.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.