

# PRACTICES EXCHANGE

## NEWSLETTER

FEBRUARY 2019

<https://yeswemustcoalition.org>

Issue 19

### **YWMC MEMBER SHOWCASE: Chowan University, Murfreesboro, NC**

**Chowan University** (NC), a Christian educational institution founded in 1848 by Baptist families, has been transforming the lives of students of promise for over 170 years. The name “Chowan” means “people of the south” and was chosen to honor the Native American Algonquin Chowanook tribe. Chowan is located in the historic Inner Banks community of Murfreesboro in northeastern North Carolina and enrolls 1,400 undergraduate students each year. The University is in close proximity to the Outer Banks as well as Hampton Roads, VA. Chowan’s park-like, 400 acre campus features Lake Vann and the original McDowell Columns Hall, erected in 1851 and listed on the National Register of Historic Places. Chowan has been a member of the Yes We Must Coalition for three years.



Accredited with the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools, Chowan offers over 70 undergraduate academic programs among the School of Arts and Sciences, the School of Education, the School of Fine & Applied Arts, and the School of Business as well as offering a Master’s Degree in Elementary Education. Several departments are also individually accredited, such as the Teacher Education Program’s accreditation by NCDPI and NCATE as well as the Music Program’s institutional accreditation by NASM.

Chowan draws athletes from across the country, many of whom receive scholarship support. As members of both Conference Carolinas and the historic Central Intercollegiate Athletic

Association, Chowan competes for conference championships that give student-athletes a national showcase and a chance to earn a coveted championship ring. Since 2009, Chowan athletics has garnered 14 conference championships in 5 different sports, made 17 NCAA Regional appearances, and one NCAA Sweet Sixteen appearance. The University also offers co-ed cheerleading.

Chowan University is committed to serving “average students” — those with a GPA from 2.25–3.25 and “average” SAT



scores. Many of our students are first-generation college students. The University recently implemented Finish, a guided plan to help ensure that students graduate in a timely manner and at a lower cost. Through this initiative, students are encouraged to set and follow a four-year degree plan, complete at least 30 credits a year, meet priority course registration deadlines and meet regularly with academic advisors. As they progress along their journeys, students earn Student Success Points that are awarded for specific academic achievements such as completion of gateway courses, credit hour accumulation, completion of general education requirements and progress in major courses. Advisors, success coaches, and administrators use the Success Points as a guide to help students find and stay on their path to graduation.

Chowan University also partners with the Gardner Institute to participate in Gateways to Completion, an evidence-based process to create an institutional plan for improving student learning and success in high-enrollment courses that have historically resulted in high rates of Ds, Fs, Withdrawals, and Incompletes, especially among low-income and first-generation students.

## **Institutional Resources/Practices**

### **Summer Bridge Program for Student Athletes**

In 2017 **Muskingum University** (OH) developed The Athlete and Scholar's Program (TASP) to support the success of first-year student-athletes and to help them experience a smooth transition into academic life on campus. The bridge program was originally piloted with first-year football players and in 2018 expanded to include all eighty first-year fall athletes.

The program begins in August during pre-season, allowing students to become well-acquainted with their peers from other athletic teams, faculty, staff and campus facilities and resources before classes begin. At the same time, TASP brings together faculty, Student Affairs staff members and athletic coaches into a cohesive team in support of student success.

TASP students attend a series of five, two-hour sessions taught by volunteer instructors from across campus, covering a variety of strategies for successfully navigating university life. The sixth session features an alumni panel of scholar-athletes and a pizza party with the University President and the Provost to celebrate the students' completion of the program.

According to qualitative data gathered to assess the program, students reported that their new familiarity with the campus culture and resources empowered them as individuals and made them feel valued as student leaders in their first college semester. Quantitative data indicate that TASP is contributing to increasing retention (noting multiple variables must be considered). For example, second-year retention of first-year football athletes prior to the development of TASP was 71.8% among the 2016 cohort. Retention of the inaugural 2017 cohort increased to 89.2% in the fall of their sophomore year. Longitudinal tracking will continue to provide data on the retention of student-athletes to degree completion. For further information, contact: Sandra Schroer, Director of TASP and Chair, Dept. of Sociology and Anthropology. [sschroer@muskingum.edu](mailto:sschroer@muskingum.edu).

### **Using Data To Inform our Practice**

We know that data should drive decision-making regarding the success of our low-income students, but we also know that not all of the individual schools in our Coalition have the resources to efficiently collect, analyze and apply the information available in ways most likely to promote student success. To address that issue, 19 members of the YWM Coalition

have collaborated to design, execute and analyze data using a longitudinal design focusing on key variables known to be associated with student persistence and retention. The resulting data, collected from classes entering in 2015 and 2016, are allowing comparisons across and within institutions.

Based on these data, the YWM Coalition has launched a series of webinars this spring featuring presentations by those schools who outperformed their YWMC peers with regard to persistence and retention among various sub-populations of students, with a focus on the practices they felt were connected to their success. The first, “Strategies that Promote Success among First-Year African-American Males,” was held on February 15 with over 90 registrants and featured talks by representatives from **Coker College** (Susan Henderson, Provost, and Tracy Parkinson, VP for Strategic Initiatives) and **Mercy College** (Kevin Joyce, VP for Student Affairs, and Victor Petenkemani, Associate Dean for the School of Business). A recording of this webinar and accompanying Power Point slides can be found on the YWMC website under “**Resources**.” The second webinar in the series, “Strategies that Promote Success among First-Year Hispanic Males,” will be held on Monday, March 11 at 12pm ET. Registration for this event can also be done via the YWMC website, or this link: <https://zoom.us/webinar/register/469eb352e2f8a3008c34be5db4a05ad8>.

Webinars on promoting success among first-year athletes and among transfers will be scheduled for April and May.

## 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](mailto:niachester@gmail.com).