

PRACTICES EXCHANGE

NEWSLETTER

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YWMC MEMBER SHOWCASE: Mount Saint Mary's University

Mount Saint Mary's University (CA), a founding member of the YWMC, is the only women's university in Los Angeles and one of the most diverse in the nation. The University is known nationally for its research on gender equality, its innovative health and science programs, and its commitment to community service. As a leading liberal arts institution, MSMU provides year-round, flexible, and online programs at the undergraduate and graduate levels. Weekend, evening, and graduate programs are offered to both women and men.



Founded in 1925 by the Sisters of St. Joseph of Carondelet, the University has two campuses in Los Angeles. The Chalon Campus is located in Brentwood and features easy access to Santa Monica and Hollywood. The Doheny Campus, which was opened in 1962, is located just minutes from downtown Los Angeles.



As a women's college of the 21st century, MSMU serves a diverse group of students — 86% of the students are women of color, and nearly 70% are first generation — and has one of the highest percentages of Pell eligible students in the nation. Recently *The New York Times* recognized MSMU as number 1 out of 578 selective private colleges in its overall mobility index. The index reflects both access and outcomes, and *The Times* judged MSMU as the most successful at helping students move up to greater income levels compared to what they could have expected to

earn before attending the University. Rankings were based on data collected by The Equality of Opportunity Project.

Mount Saint Mary's University established its Women's Leadership Program in 1975 — one of the nation's first college leadership programs for women. Today MSMU's leadership programming is tied to all co-curricular offerings and events as well as many academic courses and

programs. For example, The Global Women in STEM Undergraduate Research Training Honors Program trains cohorts of undergraduate women to conduct basic, epidemiological, and applied cancer research. An interdisciplinary faculty research team mentors the students through this intensive STEM training program, supplementing participants' classroom and research experiences with women's leadership workshops.

In 2017, Mount Saint Mary's established the Center for the Advancement of Women, dedicated to advancing women and girls and to carrying forward its women's leadership program. The Center publishes the Report on the Status of Women and Girls in California™, which was first issued by MSMU in 2012. The Report is one of the most authoritative and comprehensive compilations of current research focusing on the issues and trends affecting the more than 19.7 million women and girls who call California home. Its analyses include demographics, educational attainment, employment and earnings, poverty, media, business leadership, political representation, physical and mental health, violence, and veterans. To learn more about the Center and its work, visit <https://msmu.edu/caw>.

Institutional Resources/Practices

DC F1RST: Adapting the *Habits of the Mind* Curriculum to Support First Gen Students

At **Defiance College** (OH), first generation college students — those from families in which neither parent has earned a four-year undergraduate degree — have always been and continue to be an integral part of our college community. To provide assistance to this population, VPAA Agnes Caldwell and Assistant Dean of Student Success Lisa Crumit-Hancock adapted a mentoring program utilizing Costa and Kallick's Habits of Mind curriculum (Costa, A. & Kallick, B. (2020). *Habits of Mind Series. The Institute for Habits of Mind. Lake Wylie, SC.*). The Habits of Mind are an identified set of 16 habits that people employ regularly for personal and professional success. Examples of Habits of Mind include striving for accuracy, listening with empathy, and communicating with clarity, to name a few. Defiance College's program adds a 17th habit (self-management) to the offerings, as this habit is one that college-level students need to develop and master. A workbook describing each habit and its application to classroom expectations in studying, test taking, and writing is used in workshop settings and in mentor meetings. The understanding and application of these 17 Habits of Mind serve to provide the student with skills to work through real-life situations that equip that person to respond using awareness (cues), thought, and intentional strategy in order to gain a positive outcome in courses.

The pilot program, called DC F1RST, started in the fall of 2019 with five sophomore peer mentors and ten first-year first-gen participants. Each peer mentor applied to the program and will receive a small stipend at the end of the academic year. The peer mentors were each assigned two mentees with whom they are expected to meet regularly. The mentees also applied to the program, and those chosen to participate will receive a \$100 book voucher at the end of each semester for completing the program. There were four meetings with the entire group in the fall and four are scheduled for spring 2020 with a final celebration at the end of the academic year. At each monthly meeting students complete two short chapters with discussion questions. Each chapter focuses on one of the 17 Habits of Mind.

The fall-to-spring retention for DC F1RST's inaugural semester (fall 2019) was successful, with 9 out of the 10 participants retained, as well as all 5 of the peer mentors. Based on the success of the pilot program, the plan is to recruit this year's participants to be mentors for the coming year (a total of 10 mentors) and expand the program to 20 first-year,

first-gen student participants. This year's participants have also decided to create a podcast for next year's first-gen students. For further information contact: Agnes Caldwell, VPAA, acaldwell@defiance.edu, or Lisa Crumit-Hancock, Assistant Dean of Student Success, lcrumithancock@defiance.edu.

YWMC Webinar Series

There's still time to register in advance for the next YWMC Webinar, "**Comprehensive Planning for a Career-Readiness Campus**," taking place on Friday, **February 28, 2020, at 1:00 pm ET**. To register, go to the following link:

<https://zoom.us/webinar/register/WN4WbfHQTR6aqDMmw8vD0tQ>

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.