

PRACTICES EXCHANGE

NEWSLETTER

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<https://yeswemustcoalition.org>

Issue 37

Responding to the Crises

In order to provide a forum for YWMC members to share strategies and raise questions regarding the COVID-19 crisis as well as the crisis to address racial and social inequities, we have continued to hold Open Forums via our Zoom platform for members in general and for faculty. Information regarding links to these sessions is sent out via the email lists for YWMC Google Groups. We welcome any members who wish to join the conversation. In addition, we are in the process of creating a list of publications, project descriptions and other related materials that YWMC members have found useful in addressing issues of equity and justice on their campuses, with an emphasis on materials authored by YWMC faculty and staff. If you have references you'd like us to include, please send to Ann Landis, annlandis@gmail.com. Readers may also find previous YWMC publications useful for thinking about these current issues (see: <https://yeswemustcoalition.org/publications-webinars>).

YWMC MEMBER SHOWCASE: Muskingum University



Muskingum University (MU), a comprehensive university with a strong liberal arts tradition, is located 70 miles east of Columbus, OH in the village of New Concord, and joined the Yes

We Must Coalition in 2017. Founded in 1837 in the Appalachian region of Ohio, the University's total undergraduate, graduate, and adult-learner student population is approximately 2,400, with traditional undergraduates at 1265. The University welcomed students back to campus for face-to-face instruction in the fall of 2020 and continues to do so for the spring 2021 semester.

Muskingum University offers high quality academic programs in the context of a caring community where individual fulfillment is encouraged and human dignity is respected. As at other Yes We Must Coalition schools, the Muskingum student population includes a significant percentage of Pell-eligible and first-generation students. In acknowledgement of the interconnectedness of academics, social-emotional well-being, and financial well-being in student success, particularly for Pell-eligible and first-generation students, Muskingum University has made a conscious effort to increase collaboration across units to support all facets of the student experience.



An interdisciplinary group of faculty, Academic Affairs staff, and Student Affairs staff have been engaged in the redesign of the First-Year Experience (FYE). Fall semester First-Year Seminar (FYS) revisions included learning community pilots, holistic advising, meaning and purpose reflection, and an introduction to e-portfolios. In the learning communities, all the students in select FYS sections were enrolled together in the same intro-level content course, providing an opportunity for students to apply strategies introduced in FYS. A holistic advising model was developed by an Advising Work Group formed to implement a NetVUE Program Development grant. This group developed scripts for advising sessions, as well as methods for recording and sharing key elements of these discussions with others in a student's network. The FYE and Advising Work Group also collaborated to incorporate three common activities into all FYS courses: the Clifton Strengths Test, the Think 2 Perform Values assessment, and identification of a support network. E-portfolios were introduced to FYS students in the fall of 2020 by members of the Advising Work Group, with assignments focused on capturing the initial steps in each student's personal and professional journey.

Next steps include an expansion of the fall FYC class into a second semester that will focus on career exploration and preparation for high-impact experiences.

An additional collaboration of note is the cooperative efforts between Academic Affairs and Athletics. Notable recent changes include adding athletic coaches to student networks in the Starfish early alert system, Academic Affairs staff attending Athletics Department meetings and holding office hours in our Athletics facilities, inclusion of coaches in holistic advising training, and the establishment of a Faculty Liaison to the Athletics Department. Since the start of these collaborations, student-athlete GPAs have been over 3.0, and several teams have seen their highest team GPAs in recent history.

Recent collaborations among Academic Affairs, Financial Aid, and Student Accounts have reduced barriers to retention through improved communication and revised policies and processes. Integral to this partnership is the use of the Starfish early alert system to make student referrals to the Student Accounts Office, inform students and advisors of registration holds, and to engage in targeted outreach to students in danger of losing scholarships because of academic performance. Improved collaborations have also resulted in revision of registration holds, leave of absence / withdrawal, and academic standards processes and policies.

Muskingum University is excited about their participation in the Barnes & Noble First Day Complete program, which will provide access to textbooks for all students on the first day of classes, with the cost bundled into tuition.

For additional information, contact Shelley Amstutz-Szalay, Dean of Student Educational Services, sszalay@muskingum.edu.

Institutional Resources/Practices

The Jacket Journey: a Career-Readiness Initiative

In August 2020, **Defiance College** (OH) launched the Jacket Journey, a readiness program designed to prepare students for careers or graduate school by ensuring they can articulate their knowledge, skills, and dispositions for success in their careers. Originally conceptualized by Defiance College President, Dr. Richanne C. Mankey, the Jacket Journey is designed to address three key problems facing higher education and the 21st century workforce. First, there is a false belief that a liberal arts-based education does not prepare students for work and life. In other words, there is a disconnect between what employers think liberal-arts colleges do and what they do. Second, students often do not know how to properly articulate what they have learned. Too often, students fail to recognize and espouse all of the soft skills (such as teamwork, effective oral and written communication, problem solving, etc.) that they have learned both inside and outside of the classroom. Finally, every college has a career development office and provides robust programming. Yet students do not take advantage of these resources because the programming is optional rather than required.

With these problems in mind, the entire Defiance College community collaborated to develop a solution. In less than twelve months a program was developed with components that include required one-credit, career-readiness courses; a “Jacket Points” program to incentivize student participation; “Jacket Days” (a 3-day required, conference-styled event, focused on career readiness); and an annual employer summit.

The first annual Jacket Days was held virtually this January. This was a multi-day event focusing on career readiness in a format mirroring a professional conference and featuring

Richard Ekman, president of the Council of Independent Colleges, as the opening keynote speaker. Participating students were encouraged to wear business attire and actively contribute in discussions. Each session ran from 9:00 to 4:00pm, with numerous breaks, contests, and giveaways built in to help keep students engaged.

Defiance's Jacket Journey program is unique for a number of reasons. First, it is required. Defiance College students will think about career readiness from matriculation through graduation. Second, it is built into the curriculum — faculty have voted to embed career readiness into every student's academic experience. Third, there is intentional faculty-employer interaction built into the program. Through the employer summit and faculty immersion programs, the Defiance College faculty will remain on the cutting edge of the ever-evolving job market.

For further information contact: Jeremy Taylor, Dean, Institute for Career Readiness and Lifelong Learning. jtaylor@defiance.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 on their campuses this year. Send brief descriptions to Nia Lane Chester, YWMC Program Manager. niachester@gmail.com.