

PRACTICES EXCHANGE

NEWSLETTER

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<https://yeswemustcoalition.org>

Issue 36

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: Mars Hill University



Mars Hill University is located in Mars Hill, NC, part of the greater Asheville area, amid the beauty of the Blue Ridge Mountains. Founded in 1856, the liberal arts university is a traditional, undergraduate institution of 1050 students that has recently expanded to offer online and

graduate programs to include business, criminal justice, education, and social work. Mars Hill is a new member of the Yes We Must Coalition, joining in 2020.

Mars Hill University is committed to serving Western North Carolina and the surrounding region and, like other members of the Yes We Must Coalition, its student population includes substantial numbers of Pell-eligible and first-generation students. The MHU student body is also the most diverse among colleges and universities in the Western North Carolina region.

This year, MHU relocated key student support services, allowing students and faculty to centralized access to library resources, the Center for Student Success, the Center for Diversity, Equity & Inclusion, and Mindspace, and the Center for Engaged Teaching and Learning. The CSS provides coaching and mentoring services for students, the CDEI is focused on helping build a welcoming and inclusive community, and Mindspace is home to academic support services in key disciplines such as writing and mathematics. Mars Hill recently received a renewal of its federal TRIO Student Support Services grant and hopes to relocate those services as well.



MHU is home to one of the most vibrant and active **Bonner Scholar programs** in the country, engaging 60 high-need students with financial support, community building, and a commitment to service. The Bonner program has consistently maintained a retention rate of over 90%. Students are engaged in 140 hours of community service and leadership development each academic year and devote at least 280 hours over two summers to a local, regional, or national nonprofit or government agency.

The Judge-McRae School of Nursing at MHU is the recipient of a Health Resources and Services Administration grant. The overarching goal of the initiative is to provide a more diverse and inclusive nursing workforce to the populations of largely disadvantaged, health-care underserved, and economically challenged counties of rural Western North Carolina and throughout the state, while promoting student access and success. Resources provided through HRSA include dedicated student success staff and scholarships to reduce need gaps for nursing students.

The Mars Hill Mountain Lions compete in the NCAA Division II South Atlantic Conference. Its most unique and noteworthy team is the Bailey Mountain Cloggers Dance Company, winners of 28 consecutive national championships.

Mars Hill is currently offering an online January term including Gateway courses for students who struggled in those courses in the fall, allowing them to successfully complete their requirements so as to remain in sequence for the spring semester. For further information, see our website, www.mhu.edu.

Institutional Resources/Practices

Restructuring the Academic Calendar: A Bi-Term Model

In preparation for the opening of campus for the 2020–2021 academic year, **Ferrum College** transitioned from a traditional semester to a Bi-Term Model, separating the fall and spring semesters into two terms: Fall I and II and Spring I and II. By dividing each semester into two, 7-week terms and offering courses in three delivery models — fully online, hybrid (50% online and 50% face-to-face instruction) — and hyflex (giving students the option of attending sessions in the classroom, participating online, or in some cases, doing both), we are able to meet the needs of students and remain as flexible and as nimble as possible to fulfill our primary mission of in-person education for our undergraduate population. While the primary undergraduate coursework is offered in this bi-term model, some skill-based courses and internships are offered over the 14-week semester. By offering multiple pathways — online, hybrid, hyflex, as well as a choice between 7 or 14 week courses — we can accommodate students who wish to remain at home or return to campus during the fall and spring semesters. A full-time student must register for the entire fall or spring semester and take 12–19 credits, spread evenly between the two 7-week terms. On the average, students are registered for 2–3 courses each term. Final exams are offered primarily online over a two-day period.

This new model also provides Ferrum College with the opportunity to expand the Winter Term from 3 weeks to a 7-week online term, providing students with one additional term for academic recovery or to push ahead in their curriculum, an opportunity to fast-track their program. With the adjustment to the academic calendar, the fall 2020 semester ended before Thanksgiving and we saw increased enrollment for the online Winter Term.

As Ferrum College prepared for the changes in the 2020–2021 academic calendar, we also invested in the preparation of our faculty. Our full- and part-time teaching faculty completed an intensive online teaching certification (OTC) in summer 2020 so they would be ready to provide high-quality instruction both in the classroom and online. The OTC is modular-based instruction focused on the online teaching standards developed by *Quality Matters*. The College also invested in state-of-the-art classroom technology to support the various modes of online teaching.

By developing a wide spectrum of delivery models, Ferrum College is able to accommodate students' preferences and schedules. Faculty teaching schedules can vary between 7- or 14-week courses, students can select a more flexible class schedule with a greater focus on fewer classes each term, and the College is able to create unique, innovative, and highly flexible pathways to graduation.

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.