

# PRACTICES EXCHANGE

## NEWSLETTER

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<https://yeswemustcoalition.org>

Issue 49

*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. Each month we will offer a general session, open to anyone at a member school. 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](mailto:glorianemerowicz@yeswemustcoalition.org).

### YWMC MEMBER SHOWCASE: Defiance College



Founded in 1850 as Defiance Female Seminary, **Defiance College**, as it became known in 1903, is an independent, liberal arts institution located in the northwest corner of Ohio. The College offers more than 40 undergraduate programs as well as graduate programs in education and business administration. It serves approximately 650 students, and the low student-to-faculty ratio of 11:1 and average class size of 15 students promote personalized teaching and learning. The four pillars of the College's mission are: To Know, To Understand, To Lead, and To Serve. Defiance College joined the Yes We Must Coalition in 2019.

Defiance strives to '*do diversity deeply*.' Thirty-six percent of undergraduate students are students of color and 51 percent are Pell-eligible. Approximately the same percentage are first-generation. Ninety-nine percent of full-time students receive some form of financial assistance. In February 2021, the Board of Trustees, as part of their strategic planning, set a goal "to become a national model for diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI)."

Actions in the last 18 months that support this goal include:

- Establishing a multi-constituent, college-wide committee B. REALL (Belongingness. Racism. Equity. Accessibility. Life-long Learning)
- Hiring a full-time, tenure-track DEI faculty member who began in fall 2022
- Appointing a chief Diversity Officer in 2021
- Providing ongoing learning and development workshops for multiple constituents
- Creating a Resource Center in the library
- Recognizing the need for endurance for continuous and incremental learning

The College's leadership supports these diversity initiatives and believes attention to issues of DEI improves the chances for students to experience social mobility through education.



Defiance College has a 98% career placement rate. The College's Jacket Journey program contributes to this success. Jacket Journey is a career-readiness program that helps students see connections between their experience in the classroom, participation in co-curricular and extracurricular activities, and the competencies needed for success in the 21st century workplace including those promoted by DEI programming. This required, for-credit program (one academic credit hour per year) began in fall 2020.

Defiance students also benefit from several other focused initiatives including the McMaster School for Advancing Humanity, a research program serving as a focal point for teaching, service, scholarship and action to improve the human condition; the Service Leadership Program, an intensive campus/community initiative designed to develop citizenship and leadership skills; and the Carolyn M. Small Honors Program that provides research opportunities and the opportunity for students to participate in an honors curriculum.

The Hench Autism Studies Program brings together expertise, services and innovative programming designed to support the development of inclusive communities. The ASD (Autism Spectrum Disorder) Affinity Program accepts academically-qualified college applicants who might require help in navigating the traditional college residential campus. The program fosters independence for young adults with autism by having numerous services in place to maximize opportunities for success and entry into the workforce. The ASD Affinity Program also provides high school students with autism high-school-level instruction on the College's campus in coordination with Defiance City Schools.

Defiance College is one of nine Ohio independent colleges to be named a Purple Star campus in 2022. The inaugural group of Collegiate Purple Star institutions recognizes the support and inclusivity of military-connected students. In addition, Defiance College is a Yellow Ribbon school, has been named a Military Friendly Gold Designation by G.I. Jobs, and is recognized by Colleges of Distinction for its support of military-connected students.

For more information, please contact Agnes Caldwell, Vice President for Academic Affairs, at [acaldwell@defiance.edu](mailto:acaldwell@defiance.edu).

## Institutional Resources/Practices

### Chowan University's LEAP Program

**Chowan University** recognizes the value of enhancing student education with experiential learning and reflection and will now be providing students the opportunity to learn by doing with its Learn – Experience – Apply – Prepare (LEAP) program. Originally planned to begin in summer 2020, the University has delayed the start date of LEAP until summer 2023.

Chowan developed the LEAP program after concern was expressed that too few students were taking advantage of experiential learning opportunities. A study of completed summer internships, practicums, and fieldwork/research courses between 2014 and 2019 found that a student with a higher socioeconomic status was more likely to complete an experiential learning opportunity than a student from a low-income background. A survey of students confirmed that many low-income students could not afford the summer credit-hour fee. One student commented on the survey: "To gain experience in my field, I have to pay Chowan to work in what will probably be an unpaid job. This is not a reasonable expectation."

Chowan's academic leadership worked with the faculty to develop the LEAP program. The goal was for students to make progress toward their degrees and future careers during the summers

and to increase the number of opportunities for students to apply the skills and knowledge acquired in the classroom to a real-world experience. An additional goal was to use this experiential experience to deepen students' abilities to reflect on the experience as part of the learning process, to include thinking about what increased their learning and what did not. To allow all students to learn through real-world experience and reflection, the program waives the cost of a one-credit hour internship, practicum, or fieldwork/research course during the summer. A student is permitted to apply for this waiver each summer for up to three summers.

Students who enroll in the program must complete forty hours of participation, beginning no later than June 1 and ending by August 15. Students must complete a minimum of eight weekly reports during the experience and work with the site supervisor to complete an evaluation. To complete the credit hour, the student must make an oral presentation on his or her summer experience on LEAP Presentation Day in September. The oral presentation is divided into four parts: 1) an overview of the experience (name of company or agency, location, major projects, other key details), 2) a discussion of the challenges (and how they were addressed) and successes experienced 3) how the experience has prepared the student for an undergraduate academic plan, graduate or professional school, and/or career, and 4) a literature review (key insights from literature compared to lessons learned from experience).

Academic officers or faculty members on a volunteer basis serve as faculty sponsors. The faculty sponsor assists the student in completing the LEAP application, which requires the identification of learning outcomes and the format of weekly assignments. The faculty sponsor agrees to have weekly contact with the student, assess the assignments, review the site supervisor evaluation, provide guidance for the student's presentation, and submit a P/F grade. If possible, the faculty sponsor will visit the site, which is covered by a LEAP travel fund.

The University is pleased the LEAP program will begin next year and will provide all Chowan students with real-life experiential learning. For more information about the LEAP program, please contact Danny Moore, Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs, at [moored@chowan.edu](mailto:moored@chowan.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, [barbarakirby@yeswemustcoalition.org](mailto:barbarakirby@yeswemustcoalition.org).