

# PRACTICES EXCHANGE

## NEWSLETTER

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<https://yeswemustcoalition.org>

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### 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](mailto: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: Saint Elizabeth University



**Saint Elizabeth University** (formerly the College of Saint Elizabeth) in Morristown, NJ, was established as a college for women in 1899 by the Sisters of Charity of Saint Elizabeth. Founded by Saint Elizabeth Ann Seton in the spirit of Saint Vincent de Paul and Saint Louise de Marillac, the Sisters of Charity of Saint Elizabeth came to the New Jersey community known as Convent Station in 1859. Forty years later, with a commitment to providing educational opportunities to the traditionally underserved, the College opened its doors to six students, becoming New Jersey's first four-year Catholic college for women. On July 1, 2020, the institution was granted university status by the New Jersey Secretary of the Office of Higher Education and became Saint Elizabeth University (SEU). The University joined the Yes We Must Coalition in 2011 as a Charter Member and is currently one of four YWMC members implementing a \$4.5M grant from the National Science Foundation to support undergraduate biology STEM students.

Since its inception, SEU has offered a quality education in the Catholic tradition with a firm foundation in the liberal arts and a clear focus on preparing students for rewarding careers and meaningful lives of service. In keeping with its heritage, SEU has been responsive to changing times and student needs. In 1978, co-educational continuing studies were added to meet the needs of a growing population of adults seeking postsecondary education. Graduate programs in educational leadership were introduced in 1993, and the first doctoral degrees were awarded in 2010.



The University entered a new era in 2013, when it welcomed its first lay leader, and in 2016, when it became fully co-educational. In recognition of the growing master's and doctoral programs it offers, SEU attained university status in 2020. SEU currently is both a Minority Serving Institution (MSI) and a Hispanic Serving Institution (HSI).

SEU offers over 20 majors and provides a variety of academic support programs from the beginning to the end of a student's journey, such as:



- “Summer Scholars Program” (formerly FASTRAK), a literacy-intensive summer bridge program that includes focused learning, peer mentorship and personal guidance from faculty and staff. The program was recognized with the Lee Noel-Randi Levitz Retention Excellence Award (REA) for its achievements in supporting student success and completion.
- “SEU Promise,” a program that promises if a student completes the four-year program and does not have a job or is not enrolled in graduate school within six months of graduation, the University will find the student a six-month, paid internship.

In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, SEU pivoted to online-only instruction in spring 2020; the University then moved to a Hy-Flex model and allowed a limited number of students back into residence halls in fall 2020. This model remains in place through the end of spring 2021.

Among the lessons learned early on in the pandemic was the need among students for technology resources. To meet that need, SEU instituted a loaner program including laptops and MiFi mobile hotspots and boosted the WiFi network within the residence halls. The University identified and responded to other sources of stress as well. For example, the on-campus food pantry remained open on a limited schedule for those facing food insecurity. SEU proactively supported the mental health needs of students through one-on-one counseling, virtual mental wellness events and a grassroots program that featured the director of counseling services, an avid runner, offering to run or walk with students one-on-one when needed. SEU also held a number of virtual campus ministry events to engage students and reflect upon SEU’s “leadership in service to others” mission. In addition, students in the M.S. in Public Health program participated in volunteer contact tracing; and students in the Nursing and Physician Assistant programs have been active in immunization and testing initiatives.

Saint Elizabeth University remains committed to the vision of its sponsors, the Sisters of Charity of Saint Elizabeth, to provide higher education to those who have not traditionally had access to it. Serving the needs of women, students of color, those who lack adequate financial resources, and those who would benefit from a nurturing, supportive environment remains essential to carrying out the fundamental mission of SEU.

## Institutional Resources/Practices

### Getting Vaccines into Arms: A College and Community Collaborative Effort

In January 2021, **Averett University’s** Center for Community Engagement and Career Competitiveness (CCECC) was approached by the local hospital and health department to enter a coalition whose ultimate goal was to organize, implement, and assess weekly mass-scale POD (point of destination) COVID clinics. As a result, the CCECC helped to map out a physical setup and registration process that could be used in any location and is in charge of recruiting clinical and non-clinical volunteer staff, as well as running setup logistics, for each clinic. Together, the coalition of partners has run seven mass-scale first-dose clinics and seven second-dose clinics in two months, vaccinating over 20,000 of neighbors.

Part of this process has been paying close attention to health equity. After the first clinic in January (1600+ doses), we quickly realized that the majority of patients (88%) who registered self-identified as white and that we needed to do some intentional targeting to ensure health equity. So, we met with some of our local community partners at our local housing

authority sites to form a small group of community organizers and train them on how to register their residents before the next clinic. We developed a system where these organizers would have the clinic registration links 24-36 hours in advance to register the most vulnerable populations (African-American, Hispanic, Latinx, economically disadvantaged, and even those who are technologically disadvantaged) before the links are advertised to the mass public.

The rate of increase of minoritized patients was dramatic. After the second clinic, we expanded the community organizers group to include African-American faith-based leaders, city and county NAACP chapters, and leaders in the Hispanic/Latinx communities. The group now includes members of our Asian-American population and will soon include members of our Native-American population. Registration numbers now exceed the demographic breakdown provided by the Census. Our efforts caught the eye of Governor Northam, who sent the Virginia Department of Emergency Management to our area to help us build our capacity to offer 3000 doses per day, six days per week, ten hours per day. For more information, contact Billy Wooten, Executive Director, CCECC, [bwooten@averett.edu](mailto:bwooten@averett.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](mailto:niachester@gmail.com).