

PRACTICES EXCHANGE

NEWSLETTER

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<https://yeswemustcoalition.org>

Issue 61

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.

YWMC MEMBER SHOWCASE: Spartanburg Methodist College



Established in 1911 by The Reverend David English Camak, **Spartanburg Methodist College** (SMC) is a private, liberal arts college in Spartanburg, South Carolina. Throughout its history, SMC has maintained its connection to the United Methodist Church and been inspired by the Methodist dedication to education and community service. SMC has grown from humble beginnings as the nation's first work-study college into a thriving, innovative institution invested in ensuring the economic and social mobility of the students it serves. Through transformative liberal arts education, practical career skills, and holistic support, SMC empowers students to confidently pursue the future they've imagined for themselves. SMC joined the Yes We Must Coalition this year.

Spartanburg Methodist College is the only liberal arts college in the nation that requires all bachelor's degree students to complete a professional development concentration. In 2019, the College created six core courses—named the “Camak Core” after the school’s founder—to respond to the gap in workplace skills identified by employers of new college graduates. Every BA graduate now leaves SMC prepared with skills in collaboration, teamwork, professional communication, leadership, project management, and applied technology, making them excellent job candidates and skilled workers ready for leadership roles in most organizations.

In addition, SMC has taken significant steps to ensure higher education remains accessible and affordable to all students. Recognizing the financial challenges many students face, SMC was the first college in South Carolina to allow South Carolina students with a 3.0 or higher high school GPA to attend SMC tuition-free. This scholarship reflects the College’s dedication to fostering an environment in which students can pursue their educational goals without the worry of excessive debt.



Spartanburg Methodist College also provides a flexible approach to higher education by offering stackable programs on campus and online. Six associate degree programs and five bachelor's degree programs allow students to receive a marketable degree after their first two years at SMC and then opt to finish their bachelor's degrees and take advantage of the Camak Core. As completing college becomes increasingly difficult for students, many of whom struggle with the demands of work and family, SMC intentionally designed their academic structure to help students complete a degree in stages, on their terms.

Athletics form a vibrant part of the College's student experience. A member of the National Association of Intercollegiate Athletics (NAIA), SMC fields 12 men's and women's teams. Additionally, various on-campus clubs and organizations ensure that every student can engage in activities that resonate with their interests and aspirations.

As Spartanburg Methodist College moves boldly forward, the College continues to build on its rich legacy of preparing students for their futures by delivering an education that fuses the empowerment of the liberal arts with crucial career skills. Our innovative approach paves the way for students to meet the challenges of opportunities they choose to pursue and to be able to manage obstacles that may come their way, both now and in the future. For more information, please contact Lisa Ware, Vice President for Marketing at warel@smcsc.edu.

Institutional Resources/Practices

Title IX – First-Year Seminar: Empowered and Unstoppable Programming Mount Saint Mary’s University, Los Angeles

Best practices regarding Title IX dictate that students need to feel safe and be informed to be successful in college. At **Mount Saint Mary’s University**, Los Angeles (MSMU), Title IX Training takes place in our First-Year Seminar (FYS), where students learn how to become advocates for themselves and others. MSMU’s Title IX Training is branded “Empowered and Unstoppable” and is part of comprehensive resources, education, and prevention training offered through Vector Solutions LMSA. The cost of the Vector Solutions Modules is \$25k per year during the 3-year contract. A snapshot of the 426 first-year students who took FYS and participated in Title IX Training in fall 2023 includes:

- 93% women
- 67% first-generation college students
- 66% Federal Pell Grant recipients
- 49% Hispanic of any race
- 100% received some form of financial aid

The challenge in previous years was determining when to provide this training so that it happened at the best possible time for students. Too frequently, valuable training and information was getting lost in the rest of the FYS programming. Students were not completing the following training modules in sufficient and meaningful numbers.

- Sexual Assault Prevention
- AlcoholEDU
- Mental Well-Being
- CannabisEDU

For the 2023–2024 academic year, we tried something new. Students were asked to complete the four training modules before they started their first academic class. A series of emails were sent to incoming freshmen. These emails emphasized how important the information contained in the modules was in light of MSMU’s commitment to student safety and overall well-being and to the culture of care embodied by our founders, the Sisters of Saint Joseph of Carondelet. We wanted incoming freshmen to have access to the information and resources they needed to make the safest and healthiest decisions in college. Students were reminded how to complete the online modules and informed that they would receive credit for them in their FYS classes—10 points for the completion of each of the four modules, for a total of 40 points, just under 20% of the course grade for the First Year Seminar. Having implemented these changes, we recorded an impressive 94% completion rate of all four modules for fall 2023 freshmen.

We also recognized the need to get student feedback on the in-person presentations offered by the Counseling and Psychological Services and Wellness divisions. For this, we scheduled two 1-minute surveys. We learned that students showed a 20% increase in knowledge on average (5=strongly agree, 1=strongly disagree).

Questions	Avg Pre	Avg Post	% change
I can recognize some of the physical, verbal and emotional signs of abuse in relationships.	4.35	4.76	10%
I have an understanding of the impact of the "Bystander Effect."	3.96	4.77	20%
I have an understanding of strategies I can use to intervene in potential instances of violence.	3.91	4.74	21%
I can recognize the phases of the cycle of abuse.	3.93	4.74	20%
I know what offices on campus can provide help for a sexual assault or domestic abuse situation	3.76	4.74	26%
Average	3.98	4.75	20%

Timing is everything. We are optimistic that by having incoming freshmen complete modules before they begin their first academic class, long-term retention and benefits will result. We look forward to following these students to see how Title IX training is making a positive difference in their lives.

MSMU is an Hispanic-Serving Institution (HSI) and an Asian American and Native American Pacific Islander-Serving Institution (AANAPISI). For more information, please contact Elizabeth M. Sturgeon, Interim Assistant Provost, at esturgeon@msmu.edu.

Woodbury University and The University of Redlands May Soon Become One

Woodbury University (Burbank, CA) is excited to announce a possible merger with the **University of Redlands** (Redlands, CA, and Salzburg, Austria). The two institutions share similar missions, values, and a commitment to small classes, hands-on learning experiences, and personalized practice-based education. Located just 75 miles apart in Southern California, both schools are private, nonprofit universities known for delivering innovative and individualized educational experiences to students.

In addition to the expanded opportunities and synergies outlined in the potential merger between Woodbury University and the University of Redlands, it's important to highlight how this union would benefit the low-income students both institutions currently serve. By combining resources, expertise, and networks, the merged entity will strengthen the commitment to providing accessible, quality education to underserved communities.

The merger presents a unique opportunity to enhance financial sustainability, which is crucial for ensuring that tuition remains affordable and that financial aid programs can be expanded to support students in need. In addition, the combined institutional efforts could lead to the

development of new scholarship programs specifically targeted at supporting low-income students. Moreover, the broader range of academic programs and student services resulting from the merger could better cater to the diverse needs of low-income students, offering them a more comprehensive and enriching educational experience. By coming together, Woodbury University and the University of Redlands can leverage their shared values to create a more equitable and supportive environment for all students, regardless of their socioeconomic backgrounds.

“We have a tremendous opportunity to join with an ideal potential partner like the University of Redlands,” said Woodbury University President Dr. Barry Ryan. “We have been exploring a university integration to enhance our institution’s financial stability, and after conducting a thorough assessment of our options, the University of Redlands emerged as a strong partner in providing a long-term solution for Woodbury. Their strategic mission is an ideal fit for us, and this potential integration will enable our students to continue receiving a world-class education while providing additional opportunities to University of Redlands students.”

University of Redlands President Krista Newkirk echoed President Ryan’s sentiments. “The University of Redlands and Woodbury University are united by a common mission: a commitment to a transformative education for our students. Adding Woodbury’s strong and distinctive academic programs to the University of Redlands family provides opportunities for both institutions’ students, faculty, and staff and creates a dynamic environment where our combined impact is greater than what either institution can do alone.”

The recent signing of a letter of intent to explore merger marks the beginning of discussions for a potential integration. The next steps include creating and signing an agreement and seeking approvals from the Western Association of Schools and Colleges (WASC), the Senior College and University Commission (WSCUC) and the U.S. Department of Education. Stay tuned for updates as this process moves forward. A series of town halls and information sessions will allow both institutions to solicit the input of their stakeholders, including students, staff, alumni, and trustees. For more information, please contact Michele Starkey, Senior Vice President, Academic Affairs, at michele.starkey@woodbury.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.