

PRACTICES EXCHANGE

NEWSLETTER

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Issue 31

Covid-19 Response Update

We know that all of you are making extraordinary efforts to support your students, faculty and staff and keep them safe during this unprecedented health crisis. In order to provide a forum for YWMC members to share strategies and raise questions for which others may have answers, we have continued to hold an Open Forum via our Zoom platform for members every Thursday at noon. Participants from nearly all of the YWMC schools have attended at least one of these community gatherings. We have also recently implemented an Open Forum for YWMC Faculty on Fridays at 11:30am ET to share their adaptations and innovations. In addition, we have compiled a document based on suggestions from recent literature and best practices of experienced online practitioners at YWMC member schools for creating online courses that are effective for and supportive of low-income students. You can read and download this document (in pdf format), *Online Learning: What Works for Low-Income Students*, on the Yes We Must Coalition website (<https://yeswemustcoalition.org/publications-webinars/#reports>).

YWMC MEMBER SHOWCASE: **Universidad del Sagrado Corazón**



Located in the heart of San Juan, Puerto Rico, **Universidad del Sagrado Corazón (Sagrado)** is a Catholic liberal arts university founded in 1880. It has an urban campus with a parklike

setting, expansive green spaces and beautiful beaches nearby. Nearly 100% of the approximately 4,000 undergraduate students at this Hispanic Serving Institution are Hispanic and speak Spanish as their first language, and 63% of students are Pell-eligible.

Originally an elementary school dedicated to educating girls, Sagrado became a university in 1939. Since 1972 the 34-acre campus has welcomed both male and female students to earn undergraduate degrees within the fields of natural sciences, communications, business administration, humanities, and social sciences. Graduate programs include creative writing (MA), integrated communications (MA), digital narratives (MA), family business (MBA), and digital marketing (MS/MA). Sagrado's recent full curricular revision is focused on integrating active learning and entrepreneurship across all academic disciplines. The new curriculum, which looks to the future and promotes new ways of thinking, creating, and living, will be implemented beginning in August 2020 and will include new majors such as sustainable development and audiovisual communications, and will offer more flexibility for students to explore their diverse interests.



As the only higher education institution in Puerto Rico with the Carnegie Certification for Community Engagement, Sagrado educates individuals to be ethical members of their communities who are committed to creating a more just and peaceful society. All undergraduate students participate in a three-course service-learning curriculum, tying their academic studies to real-world engagement. Sagrado promotes intellectual curiosity and creativity through a teaching-centered curriculum as well as its Social Innovation Center. Sagrado was recently recognized as a Peace Corps Prep institution by the U.S. Peace Corps program.

For students who are first-generation, low-income, or in need of academic accommodation, Sagrado offers the Programa de Apoyo Estudiantil (Student Support Program), or PAE in Spanish. This program provides additional scholarship funding to students with the greatest

need, as well as tutoring, mentoring, and counseling services. These service offices are strategically located near other essential services, such as the Library, Financial Aid and Career Services, to encourage students to seek them out on a regular basis without feeling stigmatized. PAE is complementary to the services provided to all Sagrado students by the Title V Tutoring and Mentoring Office and the counseling services offered at the Wellness Center.

Sagrado welcomes exchange students seeking Spanish language immersion in a tropical location rich with culture and diversity. Sagrado's exchange students come from across the United States as well as from Europe, Latin America, and Asia. Classes at Sagrado are primarily conducted in Spanish, but English is also spoken conversationally across campus. For students with a beginner level of Spanish, Sagrado's summer schedule offers English-language courses. Sagrado also welcomes faculty-led and alternative break programs in English or Spanish throughout the year.

Visiting exchange students are welcomed into residence halls and student organizations, to help them feel part of the university community. The Office of Internationalization and Inter-University Relations provides a two-day orientation program for all visiting students at the start of each term, as well as a five-week program to help students adapt to their new home and meet local students. The campus location allows visitors to have easy, independent access to Santurce, Old San Juan and other important historical, cultural, and tourism sites.

For more information, visit our website, which can be found in English at <https://www.sagrado.edu/en>.

Institutional Resources/Practices

Four-Year Plan for Excellence

American International College (AIC), (Springfield, MA), has developed a four-year Plan for Excellence Program (APEX) designed to support the student's journey to success over the course of their entire college experience. The APEX Program is composed of three interlocking parts: four 1-credit APEX courses, taken one per each of the student's four years at the college; a required minimum number of co-curricular experiences; and a general education core curriculum. It is intentionally structured around four primary learning goals expected of all students during their time at AIC: intellectual development and lifelong learning; personal growth; social and cultural competency; and career and professional development.

The series of APEX courses is designed around the core goal of helping students achieve success in higher education through the development and implementation of educational, professional and personal goals. For example, in APEX 1, taken in the first year, students begin creating an e-portfolio in Blackboard that is revised and strengthened in future APEX courses. Campus partners, such as the Library, Career Development, Advising, and Financial Aid, are invited to present to the class, allowing students to develop connections both among peers and to key campus resources. Through the remaining APEX courses, students explore a variety of topics related to student success such as civility and civic responsibility, budgeting and financial literacy, developing and implementing career goals, multiculturalism in the workplace, networking, and finding employment. As part of the APEX program, all students are also expected to take part in a variety of co-curricular experiences (CCEs), which are documented via a co-curricular transcript, and which help connect the students to the campus as well as to the local Springfield community.

During this first year of the program, AIC enrolled over 650 students in the APEX courses, with a 92.7% completion rate. Overall, faculty and students reported positive experiences with the program. The College is currently exploring options for offering the courses online next year, should that become necessary.

American International College was fortunate to be selected as a recipient of a United States Department of Education Title III, Part A: Strengthening Institutions Grant to assist in the development of the AIC Plan for Excellence (APEX). Awarded in October, 2019, the grant totals \$2,199,766, which will be paid out over five years and covers approximately 76.5% of the total estimated project cost. This grant is a critical step in helping AIC realize its institutional vision for being a premier private college for access, opportunity, and diversity. For further information about the program and/or the grant, please contact Michael Dodge (Program Director) at michael.dodge@aic.edu.

YWMC Webinar Series

There's still time to register for the next YWMC Webinar, Developing Campus to Career Pipeline Programs, taking place on **Friday, May 22**, at 1pm ET. To register, go to the following link: https://us02web.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_9VkNleQOS5mA6YENjj8RuQ.

Webinars are free of charge. Recordings and accompanying slides of past webinars are available on the YWMC Website (<https://yeswemustcoalition.org/publications-webinars/#webinars>).

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. Send brief descriptions to Nia Lane Chester, YWMC Program Manager. niachester@gmail.com.