

PRACTICES EXCHANGE

NEWSLETTER

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<https://yeswemustcoalition.org>

Issue 56

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: Benedict College



Benedict College, located in Columbia, SC, is a Historically Black College & University and a United Negro College Fund member college. Benedict was a member of the Yes We Must Coalition in 2013–2014 and rejoined the Coalition in February 2018.

The College was founded in 1870 by Bathsheba A. Benedict, a pioneer abolitionist and native of Pawtucket, RI. Benedict provided \$13,000 towards the purchase of an 80-acre plantation in Columbia to establish Benedict Institute to prepare newly emancipated men and women to be a “power for good in society.” Today Benedict is a private, co-educational, liberal arts institution affiliated with the Baptist Church.

Guided by its mission: “to provide transformative learning experiences characterized by high quality academic, co-curricular and extra-curricular programming, intentionally designed to develop superior cultural and professional competencies for a diverse student body,” Benedict enrolls just over 1,800 students, 85% of whom are Pell-eligible, with a nearly equal number of men and women, representing all 46 counties of South Carolina, 30 states and 26 countries.



Students have the opportunity to select among 26 academic majors and five degree programs. Benedict awards the Bachelor of Arts, Bachelor of Science, Bachelor of Social Work, Masters of Business Administration and Masters of Science in Sport Management degrees. Currently, the five most popular majors are business administration, biology, psychology, sport management and criminal justice administration. The College is accredited by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges, and five college degree programs hold national accreditation: social work, environmental health science, visual arts, environmental engineering, and the Tyrone Adam Burroughs School of Business and Entrepreneurship. Students can participate in eight NCAA Division II sports: basketball, cheerleading, cross country, football, softball, tennis, track and field, and volleyball.

Throughout its history, Benedict College has been a community leader and is a significant contributor to the South Carolina region, with an annual economic impact of over \$130 million. Benedict is especially proud of its strong alliances with partners like United Negro College Fund, HBCU Pantries — Publix Cares Program, Educational Credit Management Corporation, and Blue Cross Blue Shield whose support contributes to the sustainability of student resources, including the Tiger Food Pantry, Career Closet, Emergency Aid Fund, and the Retention Grant Fund.

Under the leadership of Dr. Roslyn Clark Artis, the fourteenth and first-female president in the 153-year history of the College, Benedict is well positioned to grow its curricular and co-curricular offerings with the goal of producing compassionate, skilled students committed to positively impacting where they live, work and play. For more information, please contact Jamila Lyn, Director of Special Programming, at jamila.lynn@benedict.edu.

Institutional Resources/Practices

Metropolitan College of New York: Black Maternal Health Initiative

Woodbury University's Metropolitan College of New York's (MCNY) Black Maternal Health Initiative (BMHI) is a student and community engagement project that seeks to respond to the crisis of Black maternal health in the U.S., New York City, and most specifically, the Bronx, where the College has a campus.

The initiative grew out of a roundtable conversation the College's Library hosted in December 2021 on the social determinants that shape the drastic health inequity in maternal health in our communities. In April 2022, the Library was awarded a Libraries Transform Communities Engagement Grant from the American Library Association to support the call to action on Black maternal health that students, alumni, faculty, and staff forcefully articulated at the roundtable conversation in December. The project will be continued for another year with the help of a TD Ready Commitment grant from the TD Charitable Foundation. The TD Ready Commitment is a global initiative of TD Bank that helps level the playing field for those who need it most.

A Peer Leadership group is at the heart of the MCNY Black Maternal Initiative. Peer Leaders, recruited from among MCNY students and alumni through an application process, have the opportunity to meet and work with the project's community partners as well as with other leaders in public health, medicine, political advocacy, and activism. These partners do research and discuss issues among themselves, drawing from an array of different life and work experiences and leveraging the knowledge and practices of their own different academic disciplines. They are tasked with engaging the MCNY community in deep conversation and advocacy around this longstanding crisis.

Key to the initiative are the College's partnerships with Bronx-based community groups working in the field of Black maternal health. These collaborations foster a rich exchange that supports MCNY students and alumni in taking on leadership civic engagement roles in the broader MCNY community.

In 2022 the project held three virtual roundtables:

- *Black Midwives and Doulas Discussing the Black Maternal Health Crisis*
- *Black Maternal Health, Roe v Wade, and the Reproductive Justice Movement: A Teach In; and*
- *From Loss to Activism: The Ripple Effects of the Maternal Health Crisis in Black and Brown Communities.*

In February 2023, the BMHI, with its partnership agencies, held its first hybrid event, An Afternoon of Wellness Care & Birth Equity Advocacy for Expecting Parents & Friends, onsite at the Bronx MCNY campus and virtually via Zoom. Details and videos of all these projects can be found on the MCNY BMHI Webpage.

This spring, the BMHI Peer Leadership group chose to focus on the mental health impacts of the maternal health equity crisis. BMHI Peer Leaders came to understand how systemic racism drives the current disproportionately high rates of maternal mortality and traumatic births among Black and Brown women. This inequity brings with it a mental health toll that must be

addressed. In March, a discussion panel focused on *Addressing Racism as a Public Health Crisis: Mental Health and Birth Equity*. This topic will be followed by a series of roundtable talks by the Peer Leaders and will culminate in fall 2023 with a health fair hosted at the Bronx MCNY campus and a symposium that will bring together healthcare and community leaders and scholars as well as showcase MCNY student work around the topic.

MCNY serves a large population of Black and Brown adult students with undergraduate and graduate programs in human services, public policy, healthcare systems management, emergency management, education and community health education. The College's mission, to promote social justice and encourage positive change in workplaces and communities, along with the demographics of its student body and the fields of study it offers, perfectly aligns with bringing awareness and solutions to disparities, inequities and inequalities. For more information, please contact David Hahn, Associate Dean for Academic Affairs, at dhahn@mcny.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.