

PRACTICES EXCHANGE

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YWMC MEMBER SHOWCASE: Ferrum College, Ferrum, VA

Founded in 1913, **Ferrum College** (VA) is a private liberal arts college related to the United Methodist Church, offering liberal arts and professional programs such as business, recreation leadership, musical theatre, agriculture, environmental science, teacher education, and criminal justice. Surrounded by the Blue Ridge Mountains and numerous lakes, rivers and state parks, Ferrum College provides an outstanding educational experience in a setting of rich natural beauty. Ferrum College is located in southwest Virginia, approximately 35 miles south of Roanoke, VA and 75 miles north of Greensboro, NC, and is a Founding Member of the Yes We Must Coalition.



Ferrum College embraces diversity. Approximately 46% of its student body are minorities, and more than 76% are from Virginia. The remaining 24% come from 24 states and 11 countries. Currently, the College awards over \$20 million in institutional aid each year with 99% of all students receiving some form of financial assistance. The average financial aid package for 2017–2018 was over \$34,800 and contained awards from scholarships and grants, loan programs and work-study opportunities. Over 57% of students are Pell Grant eligible and approximately 28% of are the first in their families to attend college



Ferrum College provides students with the opportunity to learn surrounded by natural beauty and to forge meaningful relationships with places and people while preparing them for a life enriched through the values they cultivate on our campus. Ferrum offers internships and research opportunities in all majors, has one of the oldest environmental science programs in the country and is the only private college in Virginia with an academic program in agricultural science. The College's Blue Ridge Institute & Museum is a state repository for Virginia Folklore and provides an

important link to the history and culture of the Blue Ridge region of Appalachia. The Boone Honors Program fosters the exploration of intellectual, social, and ethical issues. Ferrum students are known for their commitment to service and community action, as expressed in the College motto, “Not Self, But Others.”

Institutional Resources/Practices

Classroom Strategies: Engaging Students in the Sciences

Engaging first-generation, low-income general biology students through processes of inquiry, critical thinking, and affective learning is vital as they develop their scientific identity. To engage first-generation Hispanic and Native Indigenous undergraduate students in general biology at Heritage University (WA), Assistant Biology Professor Robert Kao has developed an innovative assignment that blends a quiz and a mini-portfolio, or quizfolio, with the intention of fostering opportunities for students to explore the interconnectedness of scientific inquiry, themes in biology, and cross-cultural and ethical dimensions of research. In this approach, students create a quizfolio in preparation for each course module, which includes completing a text-based quiz on required reading, writing about concepts or material the student is finding confusing, and responding to open-ended questions designed by the instructor to help guide students in reflection, self-awareness, and critical thinking. As an example of an assignment, part of the first quizfolio asks students to watch one of several short videos documenting the story of how particular individuals from diverse and often challenging backgrounds came to be scientists. Student then write reflections on the impact these stories had on how they think about their own journeys towards careers in the sciences.

The quizfolios are used each week as the basis for small group work in which students discuss terms and concepts they find confusing and share their reflections on the open-ended questions. In subsequent class discussions, the instructor addresses student questions, clarifies and expands concepts, and helps students connect them to the process of scientific inquiry and research as well as to related culturally relevant issues. The quizfolio thus aims to foster students’ self-awareness and self-confidence in pursuing the process of scientific inquiry, while providing each student a place for reflection and metacognition.

This approach was developed specifically for use in the general biology classroom but can be readily adapted to other scientific, mathematical, and social science coursework. In constructing quizfolio assignments, Dr. Kao stresses several key components necessary for success, including the importance of creating a classroom that is a true learning community in which instructor and students engage in the learning process together; and building a curriculum that integrates topics and activities relevant to the lived experience of the students, including culture, values, and socioeconomic dimensions.

Further details on the quizfolio and its conceptual framework can be found in a recently published article by Dr. Kao (Helping Students SOAR: Tips to Engage First-Generation Under-Represented Minority Undergraduates in Scientific Inquiry. *The American Biology Teacher*, (80), 3, March 2018). For additional information, contact: Robert Kao, Assistant Professor of Biology, Heritage University. Kao_r@heritage.edu.

The YWMC National Conference: Education for the New Student Majority

We enjoyed seeing so many of you at the Yes We Must Coalition national conference in Austin, TX, last month. In the post-conference feedback survey, 94% of the respondents said that they left the conference with concrete ideas for new collaborative projects with colleagues at their own or other YWMC institutions, and 100% indicated they had met new colleagues from other YWM institutions with whom they planned to connect after the conference. These data suggest that an important goal of the conference was achieved — the promotion of new ideas and collaborations among participants committed to improving education for the New Student Majority.

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.