

# PRACTICES EXCHANGE

## NEWSLETTER

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<https://yeswemustcoalition.org>

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*This year the Practices Exchange Newsletter is dedicated with appreciation and admiration to the memory of Dr. Nia Lane Chester, the newsletter's founding editor and program manager of the Yes We Must Coalition.*

### Higher Education in These Times

In order to provide a forum for YWMC members to share strategies and raise questions with one another during these uncertain times, the Yes We Must Coalition will continue the Open Forums begun last year. We will begin in September with both a general session, open to anyone at a member school, and a faculty session for all faculty at member schools. Information regarding links to these sessions is sent out via the email lists for YWMC Google Groups. We welcome all members who wish to join the conversation.

### 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](mailto:glorianemerowicz@yeswemustcoalition.org).

### YWMC MEMBER SHOWCASE: Augsburg University



Set in a vibrant neighborhood near downtown Minneapolis, **Augsburg University** is one of the most diverse private colleges in the Midwest and offers more than 50 undergraduate majors and 11 graduate degrees to a community of more than 3300 undergraduate and graduate learners. Augsburg joined the Yes We Must Coalition in March 2017.

Intentional diversity is a key focus of Augsburg's work and community. For the past three years, the incoming first-year classes have been the largest in Augsburg history and the most diverse, with the majority of incoming first-year students being students of color. In 2021, the university was named a Top 30 LGBTQ Friendly University by Campus Pride as well as a Military Friendly School. Augsburg also was named among the inaugural recipients of Campus Compact's award for institutional transformation.



The first seminary founded by Norwegian Lutherans in America, Augsburg opened in September 1869, in Marshall, Wisconsin, and moved to Minneapolis in 1872. During the early 20th century, Augsburg added departments with an appeal to a broader range of students than just those intending to be ministers. Still guided by the faith and values of the Lutheran church, Augsburg demonstrates excellence in the liberal arts and professional studies and educates students to be informed citizens, thoughtful stewards, critical thinkers, and responsible leaders. Today, Augsburg is recognized as one of the country's leading institutions for community engagement and ranks among the top producers of national and international student fellowship awardees, including Fulbright and Goldwater scholars.

The University offers a variety of student support services and opportunities. The Gage Center for Student Success provides advising, tutoring, and other academic support services to all undergraduate and graduate students. It includes the Center for Learning and Accessible Student Services, academic specialists who provide individualized accommodations for students with cognitive, learning, and physical disabilities. StepUP© — Augsburg's innovative, nationally recognized residential college recovery program — supports 70–100 students each year with counseling, substance-free housing, and leadership development, and the Center for

Global Education and Experience offers more than 200 study abroad and study away (in the United States) programs. Finally, through the integrated services of the Enrollment Center, students and families can receive counseling and support with tuition payment plans, scholarships, financial aid, and registration.

Augsburg's athletics teams are affiliated with the Minnesota Intercollegiate Athletic Conference (MIAC), and the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA), Division III. Augsburg Athletics launched Minnesota's only collegiate women's wrestling team in the 2019–20 academic year, a quarter century after the University founded the NCAA's first women's hockey team in the Midwest. In 2014 Augsburg debuted Minnesota's first varsity women's lacrosse team in 2014.

The Residence Life Program at Augsburg seeks to develop residents who are both students and neighbors in an urban collegiate setting. Augsburg's dining services not only provide meals that meet nutritional and cultural requirements but also educate students about nutrition and sustainable food practices. A campus bookstore offers a variety of goods for students, faculty, staff, and the general public. For more information, please contact Stephen Jendraszak, Associate Vice President, Marketing and Communication, [jendra@augsborg.edu](mailto:jendra@augsborg.edu).

## Institutional Resources/Practices

### Bridge Program for At-Promise Students

To enhance the success of our most at-promise students, Averett University (VA) has recently piloted a Bridge Program that has had a noticeable positive impact.

The Program was piloted in the summer of 2020 and offered again in summer 2021. Provided at no cost for students, it is designed for conditionally enrolled and/or readmitted students. To be eligible, a student must fall at or below a 2.0 GPA and have below-average test scores from high school. Readmits are accepted automatically. Faculty, staff and community members receive a small stipend to facilitate sessions in their areas of expertise. Originally the Bridge Program was developed for a maximum of 20 students, mostly athletic recruits with academic needs who were checking in early to begin their respective sports practices. The pilot year filled beyond capacity, so for summer 2021, we accepted 31 students. Both summers the program was in-person because the students were on campus for athletics, but all students and facilitators followed social distancing and mask protocols.

The program began with three days of intense workshops to foster mental health awareness, spiritual identity, and residential student culture. The students engaged in team-building activities, met with Student Life staff, and had sessions with campus support services like Counseling, Financial Aid, and Student Tutoring. Math remediation and reading and writing placement testing were incorporated, as were a variety of career development activities to help students choose the major most closely aligned with their career goals. The program also included success coach mentoring and a financial literacy workshop to help the students understand loans, grants, scholarships, and checkbook management. The capstone was a service opportunity to introduce the students to our community partners and to engage them with the needs of our local community. Their work at the local food bank and urban garden opened their eyes to why community engagement as a student is vital not only to their own success but also to the community's well-being.

Summer 2021 brought a new addition to the Bridge Program. We realized we needed to do more positive reinforcement work with these at-promise students. Consequently, we designed a supplemental three-day leadership academy to mentor the students who self-reported being

denied leadership experiences because of their grades and work schedules. The leadership curriculum included developing leadership styles, problem-solving and critical thinking skills, diversity and inclusion, personal branding, and a panel with current student leaders who had a frank discussion about what they wished they had known prior to starting classes. Student response to these workshops was phenomenal – they inventoried their core values, leadership characteristics, and explored how to address real-life issues using the standard agenda for problem solving. They developed personal communication plans and developed strategies on how to market themselves to various audiences on and off campus.

Anecdotally the Bridge Program was a success, and our quantitative success metric also showed success. The cohort's retention rate from first to second year showed a sharp positive correlation compared to that of other freshman classes. Of the 20 students in the pilot Bridge Program, we lost only two to attrition – a 94% retention rate. Thus far, all 31 students in the 2021 Bridge Program are enrolled and performing at or above average in their classes. We hope to offer the Bridge Program for the foreseeable future. For more information, contact Billy Wooten, Dean of Engaged Learning and Executive Director of the Center for Community Engagement & Career Competitiveness, at [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. Send ideas for the newsletter to Barbara Kirby, Operations Manager, [barbara@yeswemustcoalition.org](mailto:barbara@yeswemustcoalition.org).