

PRACTICES EXCHANGE

NEWSLETTER

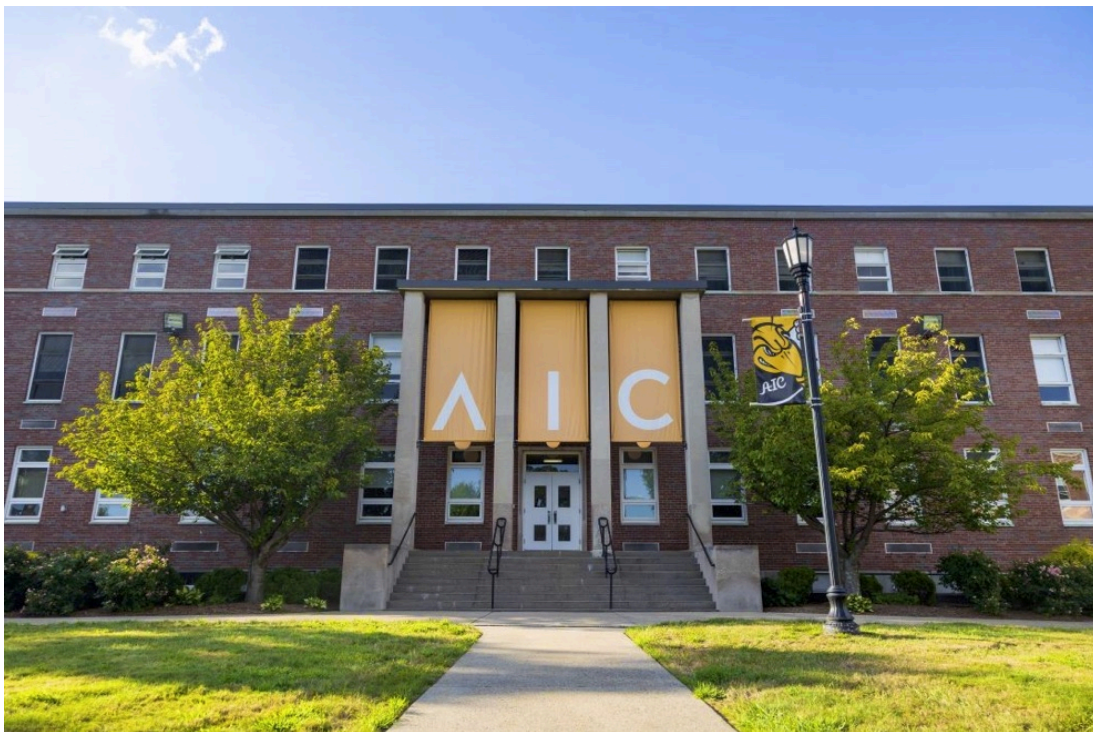
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<https://yeswemustcoalition.org>

Issue 57

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: American International College



American International College, (AIC) — a private, co-educational, four-year institution with an undergraduate enrollment of approximately 1170 and a graduate enrollment of about 840 — is located in Springfield, the third largest city in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. The College is situated on a 72-acre campus. AIC was a member of the Yes We Must Coalition from 2013–2015 and then rejoined the Coalition in 2019.

The College was founded in 1885 by the Reverend Mr. Calvin E. Amaron, who persuaded other enlightened clergy to establish a college that would provide the youth of his ethnic group, French Canadians, with access to higher education. In 1892 the College admitted

women, becoming the first co-educational college in the region. In the early 20th century, AIC extended its reach to the education of immigrants and their children, and today AIC provides education for a diverse student body representing 40 nations.

AIC has continued to grow and strengthen its academic profile, adding programs that prepare students for successful careers and professions needed in the local, regional, and national economy. Since the 1990s these have included strong programs in the sciences and nursing as well as occupational and physical therapy. Now the College has three schools — Business, Arts & Sciences; Health Sciences; and Education — each headed by its own dean.



AIC is driven by its core values of access, opportunity, diversity, belonging, and community. The faculty and staff have an unwavering commitment to student success. The undergraduate student/faculty ratio is 17 to 1. Many AIC students are first-generation college attendees, non-traditional learners, and Pell Grant recipients. In addition, AIC has a significant and expanding proportion of Hispanic and Latina/o/x students and is actively working towards obtaining Hispanic-Serving Institution (HSI) designation.

Over the past two years, AIC has witnessed transformative developments with the appointment of a new president and a new chief academic officer and the creation of “AIC Reimagined,” the College's 2022–2027 Strategic Plan. Since the implementation of AIC Reimagined, the College has added more than 15 new academic programs at the undergraduate, graduate, and certificate levels. Newly added bachelor's programs include cybersecurity, public relations, eSports gaming administration, digital media production, arts and entertainment management, and graphic arts and design. New master's programs include criminal justice, ESL and an online MBA.

Two of AIC's athletic teams, men's hockey and women's rugby, qualify for NCAA Division I, and a variety of others are in NCAA Division II. Conferences include the Eastern College Athletic Conference, Northeast-10 Conference, and Atlantic Hockey Association.

AIC's journey is a testament to its commitment to higher education access, diversity, and transformative experiences. The College continues to evolve, guided by its rich history and a vision for the future that embraces change and innovation.

For more information, please contact Michael Dodge, Executive Vice President for Academic Affairs and Chief Academic Officer, at Michael.dodge@aic.edu.

Institutional Resources/Practices

Union College offers “Bridge to Success” Program for Incoming Freshman

For the past three years, **Union College (KY)** has offered the Bridge to Success summer program to help incoming freshmen transition to college life. Students in the program live on campus for two weeks during the summer, get to know peers and professors, and learn skills that help them succeed in the fall semester and beyond.

“This first transition into college life is critical,” says Union president, Dr. Marcia Hawkins. “Bridge to Success gives students what they need to make it through that hurdle and really feel like they belong here. The early investment of time and resources into our students has long-lasting dividends for them and for our community.”

First-generation college students, those from low-income households, and those with low ACT or SAT scores are the priority population for Bridge to Success. Historically, these students tend to struggle the most in their first semester of college, and they are more likely to drop out at this time than at any other time in their college career. We are encouraged that the retention rate for students of the Bridge to Success class of 2022 was 79%, whereas the retention rate of our overall freshman population from fall 2022 to fall 2023 was 58%. The Bridge to Success Program made a significant difference.

In addition to academic and practical support like time management and study skills, the summer program helps freshmen build a strong social and emotional foundation. Students have time to nourish new friendships, learn about campus mental health resources, and connect with faculty and staff before they have a full schedule of classes and coursework to keep up with.

All incoming freshmen are welcome to apply, a process easily accomplished online on the College’s website. A special effort is made to reach out to and invite our priority population (students who are first-generation, from low-income households or have low ACT/SAT scores). So far, the number of participants each year has ranged from 17–29, approximately 9%–15% of all incoming freshmen. Applications are accepted on a first-come, first-served basis, as space for the program is limited by availability of funds.

Participating students receive a \$100 book scholarship, a 3-hour course credit, all meals, housing, and off-campus activities as part of the program, all free of charge.

The summer bridge initiative is funded by American Rescue Plan funds provided to the Kentucky Council on Postsecondary Education (CPE) by the Kentucky Department of Education. Summer bridge programs are part of the CPE’s strategy to raise the percentage of Kentuckians with a high-quality postsecondary degree or certificate to 60% by the Year 2030. CPE states that the aim of this “60 × 30 Goal” is to “accelerate job creation, grow the economy, and expand the state’s tax base through the contributions of a more skilled, productive workforce.”

“The greatest value of summer bridge is the ability to get adjusted to campus while there are a limited number of students here,” says program director, Tori Doyle. “It really helps the underprepared and underrepresented community adjust and be comfortable with their new surroundings.” Doyle has been with the Bridge to Success program since it was launched in 2020 and has already seen the benefits of this early intervention. “I have had the pleasure of watching our first summer bridge class flourish in their classes over the last few years,” she says, “and I’m super excited to continue to watch the growth of all of our participants.”

Located in Barbourville, Kentucky, Union College is a private, liberal arts-based institution serving the academic needs of a diverse community of undergraduate, graduate, and continuing education students in a dynamic, personal environment. The Bridge to Success summer program is one way Union promotes the intellectual, spiritual, and physical enrichment of the Union community and the economic growth of the Appalachian region. For more information, please contact Rachel Dorroh, Union College Publications Coordinator, at rdorroh@unionky.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.