

PRACTICES EXCHANGE

NEWSLETTER

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<https://www.yeswemustcoalition.org>

Issue 14

Institutional Resources/Practices

College Transition Programs

At the beginning of the 2017–2018 academic year, **Calumet College of St. Joseph** (IN) launched the CCSJ Passport, an initiative designed to help incoming students make a successful transition to college. Students receive a passport during a one-day program prior to the start of school, and then complete the passport over their first semester by participating in a variety of activities that fulfill credit-hour seat time requirements while supporting students in their adjustment to college or helping them stretch their comfort zones so they are better prepared to be active members of their communities. Some of these activities are mandatory, including midterm academic meetings with faculty members, and a trip to the Chicago Art Institute; library and research training will be added to the mandatory list next fall. Others allow students to choose options that they find attractive or useful, such as study skills workshops, student life activities, volunteer hours, cultural experiences, and life skills workshops. Both mandatory and choice passport activities are designed, sponsored and implemented by full time faculty members. Initial academic and retention data will be available this summer, and will be presented at the YWM National Conference being held in Austin, Texas this October. For further information contact: Jennifer Young, Learning Communities Coordinator and Writing Program Coordinator, at jyoung@ccsj.edu.

The FASTRAK Scholars Program at the **College of St. Elizabeth** (NJ) is a college-transition program for freshmen and sophomores from underserved populations. It is mandatory for students admitted to CSE on a conditional basis and optional for students who just barely meet admissions criteria. Launched in 2016, the program is designed to foster a sense of community and self-confidence through an intensive, reading-based and activities curriculum that focuses on literacy, critical thinking, campus engagement, and confidence building.

The Fastrak Program involves an innovative, holistic approach to developing the cognitive and non-cognitive skills all students need for college success. Numerous research-based high impact strategies are involved, including a credit-bearing two-week residential Summer Catalyst “boot camp” (at no additional cost to the student); intensive literacy instruction and interventions; and a co-curricular freshman teaching community that promotes engagement and belonging. The returning sophomores serve as a peer mentors, tutors, and group leaders for the freshmen, and some are involved in the Summer Catalyst. There is also some mandatory co-curricular programming for the returning group, including colloquia and field trips. FASTRAK activities are rooted in students’ prior knowledge and direct students to approach learning from the perspective of who they are, and what they already know, versus the conventional presumption of deficits. CSE’s objective is to enable at-risk students to fulfill their highest potential regardless of where they are or what they have when they first arrive on campus, and to be responsive to their unique and formidable needs, challenges and abilities.

Based on the 2016 pilot and the 2017 cohort that respectively served approximately 12% and 25% of incoming freshmen, it is evident that FASTRAK interventions can significantly impact the motivation and engagement of participating students. Students from the pilot became campus leaders and were excited by the prospect of working with next year's students. Most importantly, their levels of first-year retention, credit completion, and academic success largely rivaled those of their non-FASTRAK classmates. For further information, contact: Anthony Santamaria, Dean, Arts and Sciences, at asantamaria@cse.edu.

Yes We Must Coalition National Conference October 24–26, 2018, Austin, Texas

Early Bird Rates Still Available! For Yes We Must members, if you come with at least two colleagues from the same member institution and register before July 30, the registration fee per person is \$295. This includes a dinner, two breakfasts, two lunches and two receptions and, of course, the stimulation of a wonderful conference focused on the mission we share. To register and for more information, go to: <https://yeswemustcoalition.org/meetings>.

Submissions for Future Issues

YWM members are encouraged to submit examples of practices and/or resources that you have found to be effective in promoting student success and that you would like to share with your YWM colleagues. Send brief descriptions and any accompanying materials to Nia Lane Chester, YWM Program Manager. niachester@gmail.com.