

PRACTICES EXCHANGE

NEWSLETTER

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<https://www.yeswemustcoalition.org>

Issue 5

Institutional Resources/Practices

First Days of Class

During the first week of the semester at **Robert Morris University, IL**, Paul Gaszak and the students in his Communications courses post pictures and biographies of themselves to a common digital forum accessible to everyone for the remainder of the term. The pictures must be from within the last year, show faces clearly, and display the posters' personalities in some way. The bios are only a paragraph and, without excessive self-disclosure, must share something interesting about the lives, hobbies, or interests of those who write them. After this assignment is due, Paul begins the next class period by displaying the pictures and bios on the computer projector as students come into the room. The activity helps develop community and camaraderie among the students and faculty, while also creating a way to learn names more quickly. Paul uses either a Google+ community or a single Google Slides file, but nearly any social media site or LMS can be used for this project. For additional details on this activity, contact Paul Gaszak, Dean of Academic Engagement at Robert Morris University Illinois at pgaszak@robertmorris.edu.

Addressing Food Disparities

Growing awareness of the needs of some of its students has led **Coker College** this month to open the Cobra Cupboard, an on-campus food pantry operated by Residence Life and available to all enrolled students to provide supplemental food and basic necessities to those who may experience food and care product insecurities. The Cobra Cupboard relies on donations of non-perishable food items, as well as gift cards for places like Wal-Mart so that the pantry can be stocked with personal necessities as well as food items. The Office of Residence Life has received a wonderful response from faculty, staff, students and partners and has already begun stocking shelves.

At the beginning of each semester, Residence Life plans to send out information about the Cobra Cupboard and how to access its services. Students will be able to apply through a confidential electronic application that will come directly to the Residence Life professional staff. If approved, students may visit the Cupboard twice a month. Residence Life will also be collaborating with various partners on campus such as the Student Success Center, faculty, staff and even other students, all of whom can anonymously submit an report through the early alert reporting system to recommend a student who may be in need. Staff will be able to follow up with the student confidentially. This initiative will enable the entire community to come together to address the challenge of food disparities on the campus. For further information, contact: Tracy Parkinson, Vice-President for Strategic Partnerships, and Special Assistant to the President, tparkinson@coker.edu.

YWM Grant Awards

We are pleased to announce that the National Science Foundation has made a five-year award of \$4.386 million to six of our members (**Coker College, SC**, **College of Saint Elizabeth, NJ**, **Ferrum College, VA**, **Keuka College, NY**, **Mercy College, NY**, and **Thomas College, GA**) for their proposal “Collaborative Research: Institutional Collaboration to Recruit, Retain and Graduate Low-Income Students in Biology.” The grant will support a series of interventions supported by research and geared toward low-income students in Biology, but generalizable to students in all majors. The project builds on activities and best practices developed by each of the six collaborating institutions while implementing and assessing new activities including: (1) CATALYST (a “Jumpstart”-inspired program with a particular focus for helping students develop a sense of community and belonging); (2) an integrated first-year experience including a STEM-based first-year seminar, advising, and peer-assisted study sessions for gateway science classes; (3) intrusive advising and faculty/peer mentors program where each student will be matched with a dedicated faculty and peer STEM mentor; (4) continuing hands-on research/project based learning under faculty mentorship; (5) seminar series by scientists where students will meet working professionals in STEM fields; (6) graduate school/career preparation through an intensive series of workshops and cohort activities to educate students about STEM career and graduate school opportunities; and (7) an annual institute organized by the Yes We Must Coalition that will bring the cohort of students and teams from the six collaborating institutions together. This symposium will feature research conducted by the STEM Scholars in addition to workshops designed to increase student success. For further information contact: Joe Flaherty, Professor of Biology and Principal Investigator, jflaherty@coker.edu.

Submissions for Future Issues

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