

PRACTICES EXCHANGE

NEWSLETTER

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Issue 66

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: Trocaire College (NY)



Trocaire College is a small, private, Catholic, non-profit, four-year institution of higher education located in Buffalo, NY. The school was founded by the Sisters of Mercy in 1958 and is sponsored through the Conference on Mercy Higher Education. The name “Trocaire” is Gaelic for “Mercy,” reflecting the origin of the Sisters of Mercy in Dublin, Ireland.

The College is non-residential and career-focused. Students attracted to Trocaire usually face significant challenges in their personal lives yet seek the opportunity to enrich themselves through education and progression into a meaningful career. Trocaire provides students with a supportive atmosphere that embraces the Mercy mission of demonstrating dignity and respect for all people while, at the same time, providing students with rigorous, cohesive and comprehensive learning opportunities in their selected field of study. Trocaire joined the Yes We Must Coalition in 2012–2013.



Trocaire's total enrollment historically runs in the 1,000 to 1,100 range; the annual FTE falls in the 760 range because a majority (57%) of students enroll part-time. The representative Trocaire student is non-traditional in age (average age of 30 years) and female (86.5%). About 40% of the students are non-white and/or under-represented minorities, closely reflecting the ethnic distribution of Western New York. In fall 2023, 55% of Trocaire's matriculated students had Pell grants.

Classified as a “*Special Focus Four-Year: Other Health Professions School*,” Trocaire offers academic programs in healthcare, business and technology. A four-year school, most degrees awarded (93.7%) are at the two-year associate degree or certificate level. Trocaire is regionally accredited by the Middle States Commission on Higher Education.

Trocaire's healthcare programs include Nursing and Practical Nursing, Radiologic Technology, Surgical Technology, Diagnostic Medical Sonography, Echocardiography, Medical Assisting, and Massage Therapy. Trocaire also offers programs in Cybersecurity, Data Analytics and Healthcare Informatics, as well as Bachelor's programs in Biology, Management, and Healthcare Management.

Trocaire's newest program—a two-year Associate Degree in Veterinary Technology (Vet Tech)—was approved by New York State in August 2024. The Vet Tech program is housed at the College's Extension Center in a newly renovated / constructed space that includes a surgery suite, a dental suite, a radiology lab, animal kennels, a vivarium, and several associated student lab spaces. Trocaire has partnered with the SPCA serving Erie County to provide veterinary services for dogs and cats (like spaying and neutering) while they await adoption. This arrangement allows students direct animal intervention under the supervision of a licensed veterinarian.

Students are provided with a consistent advisor for their entire college experience who helps guide them to services such as academic support, wellness and counseling, career counseling, and linkages to community-based support. Trocaire's *Palisano Learning Center* offers tutoring, academic coaching, mentoring, testing and study aids. Given the large percentage of students in healthcare-related fields, a dedicated *Health Sciences Tutoring Lab* was created.

To provide students with opportunities for co-curricular engagement, the Student Life Office provides programming, which is purposeful, meaningful, and memorable. To ensure all Trocaire graduates are imbued with the College's mission, prior to graduation all students must complete a community service activity and related reflection paper (*Mercy Action Project*) to intentionally match their service experience with the College's Mercy-focused mission.

For more information, please contact Richard Linn, Senior Vice President of Academic Affairs and Chief Academic Officer, at linnr@trocaire.edu.

Institutional Resources/Practices

Ferrum College: Curriculum Responses to Industry Partners

Ferrum College (VA) has been on a journey of transformation in the last two years. This journey began with industry partners who approached us to help meet the needs of our communities with more flexible, nimble and targeted educational programs. Our faculty, staff, and administration responded with enthusiasm and alacrity to move ideas to implementation. Those efforts have focused on four primary efforts:

- designing new certificates and degree programs in construction trades,
- designing new certificates and degree programs in firefighting and emergency services,
- provisional teacher licensing, and
- revising our general education curriculum to include professional development requirements.

In spring 2024 Ferrum launched a partnership with the Build Smart Institute in Roanoke, VA, to offer certificates and degrees in the construction trades. These courses meet the National Center for Construction Education & Research's (NCCER) standards and have been approved by our regional accrediting agency for college credit.

In August the College welcomed the first cohort of the Blue Ridge Fire Academy to campus. Students completing the program received state certification as EMTs and firefighters as well as college credit towards Ferrum College certificates and degrees.

At the same time, we began our first cohort in the Professional Studies in Education for Licensure program in the local school district. This program helps provisionally licensed middle and high school teachers complete the education courses they need to become fully-certified in Virginia.

All three of these programs were started at the request of leaders within our local communities. The shortage of employees with the proper training and skills, the slow pace of change within the large state-wide community college system, and the need to design curriculum that meets the needs of professional accrediting bodies drove these partnerships. Ferrum College was able to design curricula that addressed these challenges. The College was also able to credential the instructors at the Build Smart Institute and the Fire Fighting Academy as Ferrum College faculty, and the College has used our Education adjuncts to deliver the provisional licensing courses and hired a part-time director for that program.

We also undertook a revision of our General Education curriculum that streamlined, simplified, and integrated professional development into it. Our faculty worked at speed to be able to implement these changes beginning this fall 2024. All graduating students must now take 6 credits (three 2-credit courses) spread over two years in career exploration, career readiness, and internship preparation. Materials and funding for these courses come from several partnerships. The first, V-TOP (Virginia Talent + Opportunity Partnership) is a collaborative effort between the State Council on Higher Education in Virginia, the Virginia Chamber Foundation, and the Virginia Business Higher Education Council. This initiative is designed to facilitate the readiness of students, employers, and institutions of higher education to participate in internship and work-based learning. The ultimate goal aligns with Ferrum College's mission to help our students receive job offers post-graduation. The second partnership is with the National Endowment for Financial Education through a grant to the Appalachian College Association for financial literacy. These resources have helped us implement the professional development components of our curriculum.

Through a recent grant from Ascendium Education Solutions, Inc., to the Yes We Must Coalition, we attended the National Summit on Student Success Innovation in October. The tools, ideas, and knowledge gained there are helping us build upon the changes in curriculum to the next level of wrap-around integration with our student success programs. Two new Directors of Student Success and Financial Literacy are strengthening the college-to-career pathways that began with community members reaching out to us. We are now transforming from within by reaching out to regional and national partners for best practices. In doing so we are meeting local needs that will help sustain us all by equipping students with the skills, knowledge, and abilities to succeed.

For more information, please contact Delia Heck, Provost and Chief Academic Officer and Director of Institutional Effectiveness, at dheck@ferrum.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.