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In the summer issue of Recovery Campus, we inadvertently referred to Newport Academy as purely a drug rehab facility. More accurately, Newport Academy is a series of comprehensive, holistic healing centers for teens and their families struggling with trauma, mental health, and/or substance use issues. We apologize for any confusion this may have caused.
Kennesaw State continues to innovate, educate and cultivate

By AMITY MOORE

When Kennesaw State University, located in Kennesaw, Georgia, established its Center for Young Adult Addiction and Recovery (CYAAR) in 2007, it quickly became a model for other universities interested in supporting students in recovery and those needing recovery.

The center’s leader, Teresa Johnston, along with other national leaders, including those from Texas Tech University, helped launch the national Association for Recovery in Higher Education (ARHE), and, in 2012, Kennesaw State hosted more than 250 scholars, practitioners, administrators, staff and students, officials from the Office of National Drug Control Policy, and other stakeholders at the third annual National Collegiate Recovery Conference. With a legacy of strong advocacy for addiction recovery, it is not surprising that the university has continued to build its program.

Johnston remains CYAAR’s leader, expanding Kennesaw State’s reach and the services offered to students on campus. She explains that the CYAAR, which serves as the university’s Collegiate Recovery Program (CRP), is centrally located on campus with a dedicated space that includes a computer lab, study room, coffee, and more. Participants in the CRP, meaning those with six months or more of sustained sobriety who have applied to the service-oriented, peer-supported group, receive access to academic advising, priority registration, out-of-state tuition waivers, community service opportunities, weekly
academic and recovery support meetings, sober housing, opportunities for student leadership, and personality inventory. Recovery support services are also available for students in early recovery. The general Collegiate Recovery Community (CRC) may access 12-Step meetings, individual counseling, personality inventory, and an active peer community.

“At the [CYAAR], we provide prevention and education outreach to the greater campus population through peer education, individual counseling for those struggling with substance use and co-occurring disorders, referral to treatment, and research,” explains Johnston. “At the center, we believe a social model of support is important as part of the recovery [from addiction], but we also serve to clinically intervene on students in the population who are trying to make healthy, positive changes from addictive patterns and high-risk substance use. It is important that we who are trained clinically and understand addiction recovery management provide input in the greater collegiate environment as the culture continues to be hostile to recovery, and recovery as a science continues to be misunderstood.”

To that end, the center focuses on education and research in the field. “The CYAAR is the office of record for the Drug Free Schools Community Act Biennial Review,” notes Johnston. Students may be assessed if they have been referred by Kennesaw State’s Student Conduct and Academic Integrity department, Student Athletics, or other campus partners. Students in recovery also act as educators to the larger campus population, notably to incoming first-year students. This fall, the trained peer educators from the CYAAR will present to more than 4,000 incoming freshmen as part of an educational research project. Additional education comes in the form of programs, such as Prime for Life, which Johnston describes as “an evidence-based motivational prevention program” that targets at-risk students. The center’s staff teaches a three-hour course, Wise Choices, which spotlights value-driven decision making, alcohol and other drug education, and risk perception and judgement.

The center’s research includes studies of personality development in recovery communities; an analysis of more than 200 student stress and recovery stories; and a review of student demographics and trends over nine years. “As an education and research center,” Johnston says, “we are positioned to assess, evaluate, and research
addiction and recovery while providing education influenced by recovery science."

With the CRP’s growth—now averaging 80 students per year, compared to three when it started—more changes have developed. Sober housing is now an option. Previously, the university offered roommate matching, but now students in recovery have the option of sober living on campus. "On our campus and nationally, we see students who are seeking a healthy lifestyle, one that does not include substance use of any kind—tobacco, alcohol, etc.,” notes Johnston. Students in recovery also have access to leadership positions, including being student president of the CRC. This position is now a voting member on the CYAAR's advisory board, which is a significant change. The board realized that as it developed its strategic plan and focused on its most important goal—enhancing the lives of students in recovery and those seeking recovery—student input was crucial. That liaison works to bring information from the student body to the advisory board and vice versa.

In addition to attending 12-Step meetings and other mutual aid supports, members of the CRP participate in "seminar." These weekly group meetings are based on specific topics, such as spirituality or art, and can be gender specific. Each semester, CRP students sign up for one seminar to attend each week. When they gather, they discuss their recoveries and academics, but the conversations also spin toward spirituality, learning styles, personalities, and stress management. In fact, the curricula developed by the CYAAR staff encourages the growth of the

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Within the CRC, the students get together socially for dinners, to play games during an organized “game night,” to attend movies, to enjoy sober tailgates, to watch basketball games, and to be active together. They bowled during the past academic year and rock climbed together at a rock climbing gym located near Kennesaw State. Twice a month, on the first and third Mondays of each month, they celebrate their recoveries with a meeting that is open to Kennesaw State students and the community.

To fundraise and engage the greater university community, they organize an annual Run for Recovery 5K fundraiser, which draws out the campus and local community. The proceeds go toward the scholarship and programming available to students who are in recovery and working on their college degree from Kennesaw State. The race appropriately takes place during September, recognized as National Recovery Month. As one former volunteer said, “The Run for Recovery allowed us to be part of an exciting event while learning more about the resources our campus provides students.”

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Students raise additional money by hosting bake sales and other events, which help fund the dinners they prepare at The Extension. Once a month, the students in recovery gather at this local shelter to feed homeless men and women who are also in recovery. The students also give back to the community by staying involved with Kennesaw State’s Campus Awareness, Resource & Empowerment (CARE) Center, a program in place specifically for students dealing with food insecurity, homelessness, or bouts of foster care. Its offerings include case management, access to the campus food pantry, access to personal care items, and assistance with housing. Thus, CRC students provide service by filling the pantry with donated goods and cleaning and organizing it a few weeks per year.

Finally, they attend and volunteer at conferences related to recovery, most recently the ARHE National Collegiate Recovery Conference in downtown Atlanta. The students—and the faculty and administrators who work with them—recognize the importance of advancing research and education within the field of addiction and recovery. Thus, they willingly volunteer and attend conferences to further their own knowledge and to actively engage in the science of recovery.

Johnston knows Kennesaw State’s attention to recovery has earned the respect of other campus recovery programs, but she shies away from the label of “model.” “Our goal is to be less of a model than to provide technical assistance, support, resources, experience, and service to other universities and organizations seeking help in the continuum of care in a collegiate environment,” said Johnston. Still, she acknowledges the program’s continued success (and keeps it in the running as a CRP to watch): “We remain on the cutting edge by evaluating our strategic plan; collaborating with local, state, and national organizations; and, as a staff, thinking out of the box.”