Public Higher Education and the Pursuit of Civic Religious Pluralism: A Report on Promising Practices

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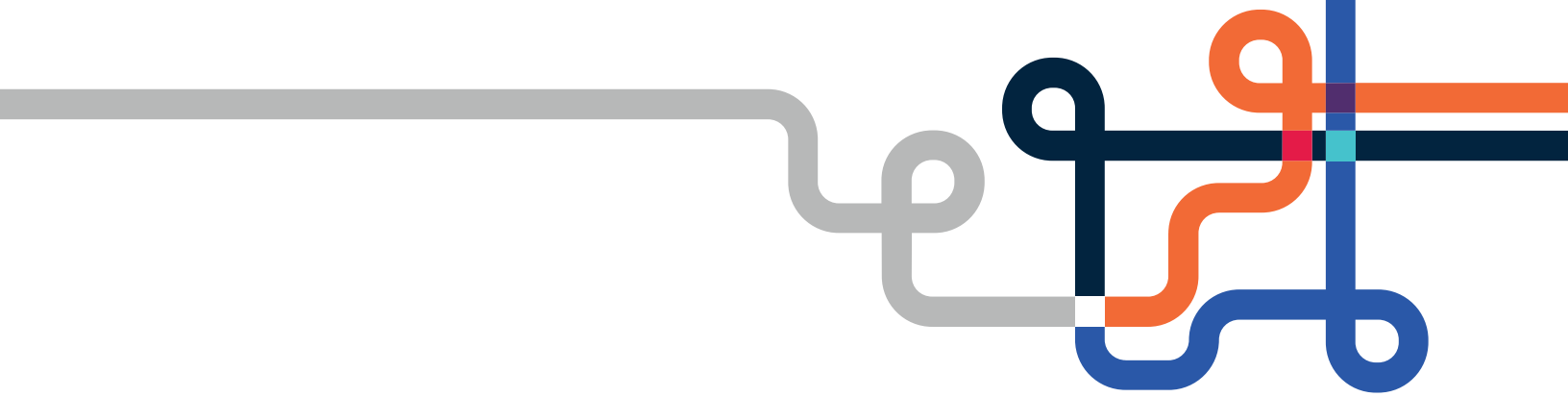

Executive Summary

The U.S. is the most religiously diverse nation in human history and the most religiously devout nation in the west. In this moment of profound cultural polarization, the health of our religiously diverse democracy requires educated people, engaged citizens, and competent professionals to achieve our potential of *e pluribus unum*, out of many, one.

U.S. higher education is a laboratory and launching pad for today's students to become tomorrow's neighbors, leaders, and professionals. Public universities exist to educate the nations' citizenry for the public good, yet have long siloed religious, spiritual and secular identity and diversity to the private sphere. In a globalized economy, ignoring religion leaves the U.S. workforce ill equipped. In a nation whose Constitution holds religion in special regard, whose civic fabric is woven, in part, by communities of faith, and whose public institutions (e.g. hospitals, universities, social service agencies) have historic and ongoing ties to religious communities, civic religious pluralism must be part of public university education.

This report addresses the particular challenges that public universities navigate in addressing this important priority. In addition to surfacing promising practices and guidance in addressing these issues, the report also offers case studies and snapshots of public institutions successfully prioritizing this work. In particular, the report focuses on four topic areas with attention to the unique way these dynamics play out on public campuses:

- A public university that prioritizes civic religious pluralism must anchor that priority in its **mission**, weaving it into its strategic plan and articulating it publicly in a way that supports the values of the institution.
- Successful institutions also cultivate **senior leadership** buy-in across the university to make the case for civic religious pluralism, referencing campus and national data that reinforces the link between interfaith cooperation and recruitment, retention, health and wellness, professional competencies, and civic leadership.
- Public universities also face unique pressures around the **First Amendment**, and so must educate the community to understand the Establishment and Free Exercise Clauses, to initiate conversations with legal counsel, and build relationships across communities to address the range of implications that don't reach the bar of legal action.
- Finally, public universities that prioritize interfaith cooperation take a range of **structural approaches**, ideally pursuing opportunities to reach both education for a breadth of the student body and depth of engagement for those that desire more leadership.

Public universities have a unique opportunity, and indeed an obligation, to serve the public good, which includes a strong civic case for proactively engaging religious diversity. In a religiously diverse democracy experiencing profound polarization, leading public institutions are prioritizing civic religious pluralism. This report offers concrete guidance and promising practices to extend this invitation to all.

Introduction

Interfaith Youth Core (IFYC) is a Chicago-based national nonprofit working toward a society where interfaith cooperation is the norm. Founded in 2001, IFYC has intentionally focused on advancing interfaith engagement in American higher education since 2010. While a disproportionate number of IFYC's campus partners have historically come from religiously affiliated and other private nonsectarian institutions, public universities have been a consistent part of IFYC's network, playing exemplary roles in issues around religious diversity from contributing valuable research on religious and worldview identity to innovating support for students around religious, spiritual, and secular identities in the midst of institutional constraints. Public universities also play an outsized role in higher education more broadly, comprising 38% of all colleges[1] and universities and educating 73% of college students.[2] For these reasons and more, IFYC has launched several intentional collaborations and projects to learn from and partner with public universities over the last decade.

In 2017, IFYC's efforts to partner with public universities were enhanced by a grant from Lilly Endowment, Inc., whose commitment to educating Christian leaders for a religiously diverse world heavily implicates public universities given the preponderance of students concentrated in these institutions. With the Lilly Endowment grant, IFYC developed a series of intentional opportunities designed to support and engage interfaith leaders on public campuses. Efforts included: 1) Providing grants to 37 public universities to support new and enhance existing interfaith initiatives; 2) providing scholarships to public university representatives to attend IFYC training events; 3) conducting several online peer learning cohorts; 4) intentionally networking public university staff and administrators; and 5) producing targeted resources to support public campuses in particular as they advance interfaith efforts. When IFYC has asked campus partners across the years how we can be a resource to help individuals prioritize interfaith cooperation on campus, these opportunities regularly rise to the top.

With that in mind, and with the broader aspiration to cull learnings and promising practices from IFYC's experiences and lead partners in the field, IFYC hosted the Public Campus Convening in Chicago, September 26-27, 2019. The Convening was an opportunity to invite partners who were doing excellent interfaith work on campus into conversation with one another, with the explicit goal of curating insights to share more broadly with the field. IFYC and an advisory committee of campus partners crafted the schedule and topical foci and invited each participant to contribute in planning and/or facilitation of one topical discussion while together.

This report is a summary of insights generated at that convening, which in many ways echo the themes of IFYC's years of targeted work with public institutions engaging interfaith efforts. Over the course of two days, senior administrators, faculty and student-facing staff shared their rich experience and expertise in relation to four topics chosen by an advisory committee:

- **Mission connection to public universities:** In order to make the case for prioritizing civic religious pluralism on campus, it is important to draw an explicit connection between the value of interfaith cooperation and an institution's values and mission. This will likely begin with education around what civic religious pluralism is (and is not).
- **Building senior leadership buy-in:** Having institutional support helps to carve out the time, space, personnel and resources to embed civic religious pluralism across the campus. Connecting an institution's plan for interfaith cooperation to campus climate data is a great place to start; the Interfaith Diversity Experiences and Attitudes Longitudinal Survey (IDEALS) is

[1] Moody, Josh. "A Guide to the Changing Number of U.S. Universities." U.S. News & World Report, U.S. News & World Report, 15 Feb. 2019, www.usnews.com/education/best-colleges/articles/2019-02-15/how-many-universities-are-in-the-us-and-why-that-number-is-changing.

[2] "The NCES Fast Facts Tool Provides Quick Answers to Many Education Questions (National Center for Education Statistics)." National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) Home Page, a Part of the U.S. Department of Education, nces.ed.gov/fastfacts/display.asp?id=372.

a set of national findings on campus climate factors that foster civic religious pluralism and can inform this buy-in conversation.

- **First Amendment:** As institutions receiving government funding, public universities are accountable to the First Amendment of the Constitution. Public universities often experience heightened public scrutiny around the First Amendment's Free Speech and Establishment Clauses. Proactively preparing to navigate First Amendment questions is a skill that is as important in professional and off-campus civic spaces as it is at a university.
- **Structural approaches to interfaith work:** Civic religious pluralism must be a campus-wide priority in order to have the breadth of reach and depth of impact needed. Campuses anchor interfaith cooperation in a range of offices and departments, with various staffing and funding models. It is helpful to have leaders and advocates within Academic Affairs as well as Student Affairs. Given the large size of many public universities and crowded list of priorities for orientation, first-year experience, common reads, and other campus-wide reach mechanisms, the specifics of where interfaith cooperation is anchored often depends on personal interest, professional competence, and institutional articulation of the value of interfaith cooperation work.

These topics were selected because they are essential to establishing a priority for engaging worldview diversity on campus and necessary for addressing challenges that may arise in working toward that goal. The report is organized along these four topics; each section aims to elevate promising practices and elevate practical considerations through campus examples. Each topic relates to higher education as a whole and, for the purpose of this convening and report, seeks to highlight opportunities and challenges based on expertise and experience in advancing interfaith engagement particularly at public universities.

Goals of the Report

This report aims to support professionals at public universities to start or deepen your interfaith work. After reading this report you will:

- Have a deeper understanding of the need for interfaith cooperation in higher education and at public universities in particular;
- Gain insight into promising practices and some of the hurdles to engaging interfaith cooperation at public institutions;
- Know the strengths and challenges of a set of models for leading interfaith cooperation at public universities; and
- Have references to proactively engage interfaith cooperation on your campus, including scholarly resources, and a list of professionals leading this work from a diverse array of campuses and positions.

Special thanks to all convening participants for sharing your stories and wisdom during the convening, and for contributing to this report. The convening participants and report contributors are listed below and are great resources for anyone looking to connect with peers to further enhance interfaith work on campus. Unattributed "In the Field" campus profiles were written by IFYC staff member, Silma Suba. This report was written and compiled by IFYC staff members, Mary Ellen Giess and Becca Hartman-Pickerill.

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Making the Case

Current National Moment

We are living in the most religiously diverse nation in human history, in the most religiously devout society in the West, in a period of profound polarization. Cultivating the next generation of educated citizens is central to the larger project of American higher education, and the question of engaging religious diversity is intrinsically connected to this priority. Public institutions, due to their founding values and taxpayer support, uniquely carry the mantle of ensuring the strength of our democracy. How are U.S. universities successfully and proactively engaging religious diversity to strengthen our civic fabric in a time of profound division?

The health of our religiously diverse democracy requires engagement across deep difference. This "defining characteristic of our country" will not be upheld without proactive and deliberate work that addresses the unique context of our current era,[3] and research shows that diversity left unengaged leads to division and discord.[4] The United States has already shifted away from being majority white and Christian and by 2045 the Census projects that the US will be a "majority minority" nation.[5] Non-Christian religious groups are growing and many of these minority religious communities are among the youngest in the nation. Simultaneously, one of the fastest growing religious demographics in the country is the unaffiliated, a complicated and often misunderstood group.[6] The demographic shifts of this decade both present practical needs and fuel strains of fear amidst broader cultural narratives that exacerbate current polarization.

The need for models of how to bridge our divides is great. While some national leaders strive to establish understanding and trust across religious divides, media coverage predominantly regales the plentiful examples of division and discord.[7] An adaptable workforce depends upon cooperation across deep difference, yet capacity building for religious pluralism tends to be reactive.[8] The strength of our communities depends upon collaboration but religious prejudice and discrimination sow seeds of ignorance, fear and violence when what we need is to foster the contributions of each to support the flourishing of the whole.[9]

History and Purpose of Higher Education

Higher education is uniquely situated to bridge these challenges. Democracy requires an educated and engaged citizenry. This aspiration of equipping a recovering nation to engage in the hard work of citizenry was taken up by the President's Commission on Higher Education in the mid-19th century. As is referenced in the AAC&U's *A Crucible Moment* report, the Commission's call is this: "The first and most essential charge upon higher education is that at all levels and in all its fields of specialization, it shall be the carrier of democratic values, ideals, and process."[10]

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[3] The National Task Force on Civic Learning and Democratic Engagement. *A Crucible Moment: College Learning and Democracy's Future*. Washington, DC: Association of American Colleges and Universities, 2012.

[4] Putnam, Robert. "E Pluribus Unum: Diversity and Community in the Twenty-first Century." *Scandinavian Political Studies* 30, no. 2 (2007): 137-174. Wiley Online Library.

[5] United States Census Bureau. "Older People Projected to Outnumber Children for First Time in U.S. History." *Census Bureau Newsroom*, March 13, 2018, https://www.census.gov/newsroom/press-releases/2018/cb18-41-population-projections.html.

[6] Cox, Daniel, Robert P. Jones, "America's Changing religious Identity." *Public Religion Research Institute*, September 16, 2017, https://www.prri.org/research/american-religious-landscape-christian-religiously-unaffiliated/. Also see: Jones, Robert P. "Trump Can't Reverse the Decline of White Christian America." *The Atlantic*, July 4, 2017, https://www.theatlantic.com/politics/archive/2017/07/robert-jones-white-christian-america/532587/.

[7] Bade, Rachel, Mike DeBonis, "The meeting was supposed to ease tensions between Muslim and Jewish Democrats. It ended with tears." *The Washington Post*, March 18, 2019.

[8] Hart Research Associates. *Falling Short? College Learning and Career Success Selected Findings from Online Surveys of Employers and College Students Conducted on Behalf of the Association of American Colleges & Universities*. Washington, DC: Association of American Colleges and Universities, 2015.

[9] Hatewatch Staff. "Update: 1,094 Bias-Related Incidents in the Month Following the Election." *Southern Poverty Law Center*, December 26, 2016.

[10] President's Commission on Higher Education. *Higher Education for American Democracy, Vol. I, Establishing the Goals*. Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1947.

This charge upon higher education is anchored in democratic principles and extends to, among other goods, economic strength. When asked what today's workforce needs to succeed, 71% of employers surveyed wanted colleges to place more emphasis on "intercultural competence", 75% wanted more emphasis on "ethical decision making" and 57% wanted more emphasis on "cultural diversity in the US and abroad".[11] The health of the nation's civic life and the health of the nation's economy are tied up together and universities are in a position to strengthen both.

Yet, higher education, a pillar of America's strength, is not immune to the cultural winds of the day. Trust in higher education is eroding amongst political conservatives.[12] The cost of education is outpacing the perceived opportunities it provides, leading colleges and universities to cut budgets, adapt hiring, or merge to ward off closure. The broader 'culture wars' are echoed across college campuses and non-campus actors can exacerbate tensions on these 'battlegrounds;' such forces are especially strong in publicly-funded institutions. In this context, religious identity and diversity have an important role to play in civic strengthening work, though it has not always been central to higher education's broader civic agenda.

Religion in Higher Education

There are reasons religious identity has proved so elusive in campus engagement. Not long ago, many scholars argued that religion was no longer relevant. Academics such as Harvey Cox, Peter Berger, and many others published tomes on the inevitable decline of religion in the modern world. Tracing trend lines that seemed to indicate declining religious participation, they boldly hypothesized that as secular, so-called rationalist thinking rose, global religiosity would decline.

The "secularization thesis," first popularized in the 1960s, has been retracted by the very scholars who promoted it based on evidence that religiosity continues to flourish throughout the world, and global conflict continues to be fraught with religious implications. "We made a category mistake," Peter Berger told *The Economist* in 2007. "We thought the relationship was between modernization and secularization. In fact, it was between modernization and pluralism."[13]

Despite the sociological realities of religious belief and participation, American higher education pursued a model of religious privatization. As Douglas and Rhonda Jacobsen have demonstrated, while American college campuses were often founded with religious roots, throughout the twentieth century institutions of higher education increasingly construed religion as a private phenomenon.[14] This stemmed from a variety of reasons, including the pervasiveness of the secularization thesis as well as an increasingly secular conception of academic research. Thus, conversations about religion and religious identity were excluded from the classroom. Historian George Marsden notes that, "nonbelief" became the established norm of higher education.

This norm of "nonbelief" in higher education poses a persistent challenge to engaging religion and religious identity on campuses. Within public campuses, institutional and legal challenges present further barriers to engaging religion. A pervasive (if not always accurate) interpretation of the First Amendment necessitating a 'wall of separation' between church and state has caused many higher education professions to steer clear of such engagement, whether out of fear of controversy or commitment to a 'secular' academy.

Nevertheless, leaders have made strides in promoting the importance of engaging religion in higher education. In the 1990s and early 2000s, college professors and campus chaplains began organizing together—and

[11] Hart Research Associates. *Raising the Bar: Employers' Views on College Learning in the Wake of the Economic Downturn*. Washington, DC: Association of American Colleges and Universities, 2010.

[12] Hartle, Terry W., "Why Most Republicans Don't Like Higher Education." *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, July 17, 2017, https://www.chronicle.com/article/Why-Most-Republicans-Don-t/240691.

[13] Berger, Peter. "O Come All Ye Faithful." *The Economist*, 3 Nov. 2007.

[14] Jacobsen, Douglas G., and Rhonda Hustedt. Jacobsen. *No Longer Invisible: Religion in University Education*. Oxford University Press, 2012.

publishing—on this issue. Researchers Sandy and Helen Astin at the University of California, Los Angeles undertook the *Spirituality in Higher Education* research project, which demonstrated the importance of spiritual seeking and exploration among college students. Scholars Sharon Daloz Parks, Jon Dalton, and Arthur Chickering provided critical research and frameworks for practitioners seeking to incorporate spirituality and meaning-making into the student learning experience. Matt Mayhew and Alyssa Rockenbach's Interfaith Diversity Experiences and Attitudes Longitudinal Study (IDEALS) is beginning to reveal how college students engage with religious diversity and what institutional and educational practices create inclusive campus environments. On public campuses, student affairs professionals began creating relationships with affiliated religious leaders (campus-specific parachurch organizations or local faith communities). Remarkably, several public institutions have developed centers for engaging religious diversity on campus, such as Penn State's Pasquerilla Center for Spiritual and Ethical Development or the Kaufman Interfaith Institute at Grand Valley State University.

Efforts like these are critical to nurturing not only the personal development and spiritual dimensions of engaging worldview identity and diversity, but also what Eboo Patel names as the five civic goods of interfaith cooperation: increasing understanding and reducing prejudice; strengthening social cohesion and reducing the chances for identity-based conflict; bridging social capital and addressing social problems; fostering the continuity of identity communities and reducing isolation; and creating binding narratives for diverse societies.[15] These are precisely the goods needed to bridge the chasms that threaten American civic strength today.

Taken together, all these efforts made critical contributions to breaking down barriers and providing models for engaging religion in higher education. And yet, difficulties with religion remain in both quotidian and newsworthy ways, and these challenges arise in unique ways within the public university context. In fact, as we observe the current dynamics around religion on the local and national scene, we believe that it is time for an enhanced, integrated approach to engaging worldview, one that is deliberately high priority and cross-campus. This report aims to identify promising practices in engaging religious diversity within the specific challenges and opportunities of public campuses.

[15] Patel, Eboo. *Interfaith Leadership: A Primer*. Beacon Press, 2016. See Chapter 4.

Mission Connection

Frank Shushok, Interim Vice President for Student Affairs, Virginia Tech

Do public universities care about religious, spiritual and secular identity and engagement? Why should we care? How do our students, campus and broader community know that we care?

Public universities are increasingly investing in interfaith dialogue and cooperation. In a national context of growing polarization, learning to interact across lines of difference and developing skills to engage with diversity toward a pluralistic society is more important than ever. Mapping interfaith values in relation to the university mission can contribute to bringing interfaith principles and practices into mainstream conversations. Interfaith work has the potential to offer a framework to help us as university leaders live up to the university's mission. To achieve this, interfaith cooperation must be an overarching learning outcome for the whole campus.

As institutions serving public purposes and committed to democratic ideals and practices, public universities need to be actively engaged with their communities. Interfaith engagement serves as an important aspect in universities' mission to prepare students for global citizenship, developing cultural competencies, ethical leadership, orientation to act for the common good and getting back to the community.

Participating in interfaith projects also generates important positive outcomes for students' holistic identity development. It is also beneficial for their mental health, to which spiritual wellness is an essential aspect. Those experiences also offer opportunities to develop knowledge and skills to truly understand, communicate, and interact with people coming from diverse religious and non-religious backgrounds - key competencies for career readiness.

Mission Connection Moves it From a Niche to a Norm

Incorporating interfaith work across the student experience requires reframing the university as a collection of experiences of relationships in several levels – and consequently shifting the focus from programming to changing the campus culture.

Crucially, by reframing interfaith engagement and identity on campuses, we are in a better position to offer resources for students to develop and acquire social capital to be civic leaders capable of doing meaningful and rigorous work.

We recognize a need to create spaces for deep identity and meaning (expanding the purely objective perspective), and provide opportunities for more meaning-making conversations in curricular and co-curricular contexts, in order to engage students from diverse perspectives, including the ones identifying as 'nones'. Framing activities around human compassion and kindness could be a good way to include all students interested in being engaged.

One key strategy to explicitly connect interfaith work to the mission is to integrate it into the university's strategic plan, ensuring that this orientation is clearly stated, understood, and defined communally throughout the broad campus community. A fine balance between the school's mission, the historic values of the community, and the need for interfaith within the general education framework must be observed.

The main challenges in connecting interfaith work to universities' missions might be described as:

1. The message being received differently in relation to
2. a member's read of the campus culture, particularly around 'conservative' and 'liberal' markers
3. Faculty and staff might be afraid or unwilling to participate due to lack of expertise and feeling intimidated by the topic of religious differences
4. The campus community could show hesitation or apathy due to lack of communication or understanding of the university's commitment to interfaith work
5. Need for clear definition and orientation around goals and recommendations for interfaith work on campus
6. Lack of role models and good examples of interfaith engagement in action
7. Lack of support and/or resources (material and human)
8. Lack of knowledge and/or skills to lead
9. A perceived incompatibility between interfaith cooperation and social justice and equity work
10. When a campus culture isn't explicit about its commitment to the First Amendment, courage in dialogue can be abated

Some of the best practices to tackle those challenges are:

1. Introducing language around interfaith work and creating a new common discussion
2. Organizing several events on campus allowing the opportunity to create and provide communal definitions for new encounters
3. Dissemination of climate surveys and demographic data brings interfaith closer to people's reality and shows its importance in students' lives
4. Avoiding bold approaches in contexts of unwillingness, which tend to involve high risk encounters and tokenization, risking to dry out resources
5. Encouraging students to speak up on campus to draw attention to work that needs to be done
6. Preparing for multiple narratives and reframing the goal for each part of the campus community

Public universities do care about religious, spiritual and secular identity and engagement. We must show our students, campus and broader community that this is a priority, with an eye to both the challenges and opportunities that are raised here.

In the Field: University of Northern Colorado

Based on conversations with Talia Carroll, Director of the Marcus Garvey Cultural Center, and Liane Ortis, Associate Director of Student Life at the University of Northern Colorado

Nestled between the Rocky Mountains and Colorado's stunning high plains, the University of Northern Colorado is home to over 12,000 students and is nationally ranked for overall diversity. Interfaith engagement is becoming an integral part of campus life at UNC, and the campus regularly engages in initiatives and activities to promote inclusivity for all.

One of the key interfaith initiatives on campus is the Interfaith Engagement educational training, which is a part of the Understanding and Navigating Inclusion through Education (UNITE) program. The program, initiated by the department of equity and inclusion on campus, gives graduate and undergraduate students the opportunity to engage in discourse across a broad range of identities. Students who complete all the trainings over an academic year are invited to an end-of-year celebration and a "call to action" event.

Interfaith cooperation has become an active part of the campus structure. Andy Feinstein, now in his second year as the president of UNC, has spearheaded Vision 2030, a new mission and vision document for the institution, emphasizing the importance of engaging diversity in all its forms. Years before the Vision statement began, staff, faculty and students had already surfaced interest, built momentum, and developed outcomes for engaging religious, spiritual, and secular identity, from across the campus community. This work supports the vision statement, and now the statement itself can help reinforce the centrality of interfaith and other bridge building work.

This robust interfaith movement on campus began almost five years ago, when two colleagues, Liane Ortis and Talia Carroll, recognized the role interfaith plays in shaping students' leadership development in today's world. They surveyed faculty and staff to collect data on their needs and resources, and designed professional workshops and research projects for the community.

"We used IFYC's BRIDGE resources to tailor our workshops and it was a great way to get students to start thinking about the importance of interfaith engagement," says Liane Ortis. "It's important to us to continue having deeper dialogues and it's great to have such a structured formal way of introducing the subject to the students through the UNITE workshop."

According to Talia and Liane, people didn't need to be convinced that interfaith cooperation connects to the mission of the university, though explicitly anchoring it in existing campus-wide learning outcomes and mission documents will help advocate for this priority as new administrators, staff, and students join the community. What people needed were ways to prioritize this work and parameters or guides within which to engage religious, spiritual, and secular identities.

Last year, Talia and a graduate intern, Myria Davis, hosted a book club series where they discussed Eboo Patel's book *Interfaith Leadership*. The Interfaith Engagement Committee also launched the inaugural Interfaith/Multifaith Awareness Week with guest speaker, Kinza Khan to speak about the role of interfaith leadership in addressing societal issues on campus and beyond.

Liane and Talia began their interfaith work on campus through focus group discussions where they discussed in-depth with faculty and staff on how they could work on capacity building for students and other community members. During these sessions, they also identified some of their major challenges.

"We were working with a restricted budget and there was not access to resources that would aid in intentionally building interfaith work on campus," says Talia. "The two Campus Innovation Grants we received from IFYC were fundamental in building consistent engagement and we would not have made the progress we did without the support from IFYC."

Talia says during the discussions, faculty and staff expressed their fear and concerns around engaging in conversation about faith, religious, and spiritual identities, though they were

interested in it. Having a focus-group, which created an intentional space for them to engage in such conversations, was deeply appreciated.

"Nothing was happening on campus around interfaith engagement in this way, that we were aware of, and we were excited to see that there were people who wanted to be involved in interfaith work on campus. There was a lot of institutional support," says Talia. When reflecting on their success in the first two years, Talia shared, "A lot of these people who are connected to us through interfaith work are connected to us as humans. So, it's important for us to make them feel connected on campus as well, and build these relationships and intentional spaces, so they can draw in people who may not have participated before."

There has been an overwhelming outpour of support from the campus community over the years to invest in interfaith work on campus. Graduate students and staff members have volunteered their time and support to connect to people's personal passions and missions to engage worldview diversity more explicitly. People also feel more motivated to support the cause as it is now an active part of the institutional mission.

To continue supporting interfaith work on campus, Liane and Talia feel it is important to connect to other organizations, universities, and funding sources, as they still have to tackle day-to-day challenges like resource management.

Talia and Liane both shared that limited budgets and resources have been consistent barriers to the work, but they are thinking creatively to keep building community on campus.

In the Field: The Ohio State University

Based on conversations with Tracey Stuck, Assistant Vice President for Student Life at The Ohio State University

Inscribed at the bottom of the scarlet and gray seal of The Ohio State University is the school motto: *Disciplina in Civitatem*. In English, it translates to 'Education for Citizenship' and it's a sentiment that drives the robust interfaith engagement on campus.

"We want to create good educated citizens who have a basic understanding of the world when they go out in it," says Tracy Stuck, Assistant Vice President, Office of Student Life. "Interfaith education is a part of that. It's important for them to be aware of the different religions and understand their basics. You may not believe in religion, but it doesn't mean you can't understand the meaning behind certain religious holidays, for example. I see it as educating them from a career standpoint."

Ohio State is the third-largest university campus in the U.S and home to nearly 60,000 students from across the world in its home campus in Columbus, Ohio. To support the increasing diversity on campus, and foster a welcoming environment for all, the Office of Student Life worked with students and campus administrators to create the Interfaith Prayer and Reflection Room.

The space is located inside the landmark school facility, Ohio Union, which is meant to be a central hub for student life and support on campus. The current union opened in 2010 and was designed to be inclusive, modern and mindful with its space and what it offers to students and the wider campus community.

Before the Interfaith Prayer and Reflection Room was created, Tracy recalls how every Friday on campus they'd get calls about water on the bathroom floors and rows of shoes lined in hallways. As happens on many campuses, the Muslim students on campus were trying to find spaces for ablution and prayer for their Friday congregational prayer (Jumu'ah).

"It made us think about the different religious groups that exist on campus and if we were providing a space for them to reflect and practice their faith," says Tracy. "That's why we built the Interfaith Prayer and Reflection Room. It has two entrances, blue and purple stained-glass windows, two ablution rooms, small meditation rooms that open to a larger space. It's not just a space for prayer, but also serves multipurpose needs so student organizations can meet, do a service project or other various activities. We wanted it to be open to everyone to use it for how they needed for their spiritual wellbeing." The room is also open for other non-faith based events as well.

Tracy says one celebratory moment for her was learning that other buildings and schools on campus had adapted intentional reflection and interfaith spaces too.

"One day I had students from the student government call me at my home to share that the campus library now had an interfaith room. They were overjoyed and couldn't wait to share the news with me. I've also heard from colleagues from the engineering school and other buildings on campus who have opened up reflection and interfaith spaces for their students."

"We have been very intentional with our interfaith work," says Tracy. "This year finals fall during Ramadan, so we wrote a proposal to the Provost to enable students to take the tests later in the evening. Our Interfaith Council is very active, and we've been planning all these events, panels, and programs to keep expanding our knowledge of interfaith work on campus."

The Interfaith Council is a group of religious professionals, not employed through the university, whose services and presence are available to the whole student body. The Council, which is convened through Tracy in the Vice Presidents' office, is developing a Values document, explicitly linking the professionals' work with the values and mission of the school.

Ohio State also demonstrates its commitment to interfaith efforts by supporting the IDEALS research team housed at the university, led by higher education faculty Dr. Matt Mayhew.

Building Buy-in With Senior Leadership

Tarah Trueblood, Director of Center for American and World Cultures, Miami University of Ohio

Building buy-in across large public institutions with an additional layer of public scrutiny and accountability is central to many efforts. Senior administrators at public universities may face some unique challenges to interfaith work including risk aversion, relevance, and money; this section addresses each in order to provide ideas on how to build senior administrator support. Based on convening participant stories, campuses with senior administrator buy-in were in a better position to make strategic decisions about framing, timing, and resourcing that helped advance the priority of interfaith cooperation across the institution. Campuses that did not have strong senior leadership buy-in expressed doing impactful work in departments or offices, though without the mandate for campus-wide commitment as was argued for in Mission Connection above.

With respect to risk, legal counsel may advise senior administrators to keep religion at arm's length for fear of running afoul of the Establishment Clause. Couching an interfaith agenda in terms of the institution's commitment to diversity and inclusion can provide a more familiar framework. Certain phrases often associated with religion can raise red flags: *free speech* and *social justice*. At a relatively large, rural, Midwestern university, social justice was perceived as a threatening liberal agenda while free speech was cherished. An interfaith dialogue program was marketed for its ability to promote free speech without mention of its social justice goals.

Other perceived risks involve a lack of familiarity with religious and secular concepts and aversion to religious debate or sectarian proselytizing. These challenges may be reframed as opportunities to increase cognitive empathy—thereby forging more inclusive learning environments that foster dialogue over debate.

The second challenge is relevance. Success in garnering buy-in may depend on an interfaith advocate's familiarity with institutional priorities and the reports that drive them (i.e., campus climate surveys, diversity committee recommendations, student surveys, etc.). At one highly secular university an interfaith agenda was framed as integral to achieving student wellbeing—identified as an institutional priority and perceived as supporting all students—religious or not. This framing facilitated institutional support for interfaith work in a way that it may not have been prioritized otherwise.

At another institution, interfaith training was integrated into a cultural competency curriculum for student affairs professionals, an already-stated institutional priority. The curriculum was later scaled for faculty and students and tied to the institution's priority of recruiting and retaining diverse faculty and students. Proponents of an interfaith initiative at another institution brought awareness to the fact that, according to one PEW study, religion is very important to 75% of African Americans.[16] Denying black students a meaningful connection to religion was contributing to the current campus mental health and retention crisis. Getting students in front of administrators to speak to their religious, spiritual, and meaning-making needs promoted buy-in.

At another school, learning outcomes of an interfaith agenda were tied to the institutional priority of preparing graduates for global citizenship and careers in today's diverse democracy. Another interfaith agenda was integrated into an initiative that embeds intergroup dialogue pedagogy campus-wide and was tied to a prestigious presidential working group recommendation for moving the campus climate needle through campus-wide dialogue across difference.

The third challenge to address is money. Influential donors grab the ear of decision-makers. It is likely that someone within your sphere of influence is a recognized donor—or knows one. The community surrounding

[16] "By Many Measures, African Americans Are More Religious than Whites and Latinos." *Pew Research Center*, 6 Feb. 2018, www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2018/02/07/5-facts-about-the-religious-lives-of-african-americans/ft_18-02-06_africanamericanchurch_420px/.

one university had a large Muslim population that included several distinguished faculty members. Muslims made significant contributions to the university and an interfaith agenda was designed and promoted in partnership with several of them. As a result, the university president, a former city mayor and visible member of the Christian community, took on the champion role. The vice president of student affairs at a large Predominantly Black Institution leveraged their connection with a group of powerful alums to garner the support of the president—who also became the interfaith champion.

These promising practices involve coalition-building and the alignment of interfaith work with pressing institutional concerns. They also require timing, agility, and the strategic selection of collaborative offices, departments, champions, donors, and off-campus partners.

In the Field: Utah Valley University

Based on conversations with Brian Birch, Professor of Philosophy, Director of the Center for the Study of Ethics, and Director of the Religious Studies Program at Utah Valley University

"To provide meaningful activities that contribute to students' physical, academic, social, and spiritual well-being whether you believe in God, gods, or no god,"—that is the commitment upon which Utah Valley University (UVU) opened its Reflection Center in 2014.

Housed inside the prominent bluish-green glass walls of the Student Life and Wellness Center, the Reflection Center is a place for meditation, prayer, reflection, or other forms of individual religious expression. The space offers opportunities for interreligious dialogue, interfaith education, and spiritual practice through a prayer room, a meditation room, and a convening room. It is part of UVU's broader Interreligious Engagement Initiative.

"We were intent on having a space in the center for academic dialogues," says Brian Birch, director of UVU's Religious Studies Program, who designed and oversaw construction of the Center. "It isn't just a prayer space and immersive space, but is intended to communicate how academics and spiritual practice connect."

The Reflection Center is now an integral part of the UVU campus, and the groundwork to make that possible was years in the making, starting with annual academic conferences, and building around questions of how to better support student needs.

"I had been working for several years with various committees and task forces to find a space on campus for students, especially our Muslim students, to pray," says Brian. "The issue had been percolating for a while, and local pastors were interested in helping, but it wasn't working out."

The project picked-up new momentum when Brian found common cause with UVU president Matthew Holland and Kyle Reyes, the university's Chief Inclusion Officer. UVU had been conceptualizing a campus-wide inclusion initiative, given the increasingly diverse demographics of the university. Brian felt it was the perfect opportunity to introduce an interfaith perspective on campus that aligned with the university's mission to build an inclusive space for everyone.

"President Holland had a vision to make UVU an inviting campus, and he and Kyle had figured out how to get it done effectively given our context," says Brian. "They saw the ways in which interreligious work could be productive and positive, and how it aligned with the university's academic mission to expose students to different ways of thinking."

Brian thinks that without strong administrative support, the initiative wouldn't have received the institutional attention it did.

"If you have key people championing something for the long haul, it's bound to get some movement," says Brian. "The project was not without its skeptics. Some worried about a diversity initiative on a campus with a large population of Latter-day Saint (LDS) students, while others had issues with dedicating the space on campus to build this facility."

Despite the hurdles, the initiative garnered institutional and community support, and Brian believes a lot of it was due to President Holland's innovative vision and willingness to advocate for the project among key stakeholders.

"I think we had the right approach. The university was interested in building bridges and helping students, whatever their belief, to be fully involved on campus," says Brian. "As a longtime advocate for interfaith work, I believed the timing was right to leverage the moment. Having a Reflection Center on campus creates a safe and supportive space for students to have conversations around difficult topics."

Even with presidential support and a physical center, maintaining a priority of interfaith cooperation on campus needs continuous cultivation to ensure that there is sufficient capacity, presence on relevant committees, and a range of voices to champion its connection to the heart of UVU's mission.

The Reflection Center, one important outgrowth and expression of UVU's commitment to interfaith cooperation, has had a robust presence on campus since its opening. It offers an interreligious workshop series, 'Foundations of Inclusion,' supports an Interfaith Student Council, religious accommodations, campus partnerships, and hosts interfaith events throughout the calendar year. For more information, you can visit: uvu.edu/ethics/reflectioncenter.

First Amendment

Becca Hartman-Pickerill, Director of Program Resourcing, Interfaith Youth Core

Much has been written on public universities and the First Amendment, yet every semester brings new challenges to the interpretation of the range of freedoms named within it. This section of the report, as with the whole report, aims to help campuses get started with or deepen interfaith work. As such it will be pragmatically focused. While this section will share some helpful references, it will not include a full bibliography or be a thorough review of ongoing legal cases on the topic. Indeed, despite extensive writing and legal cases addressing the First Amendment as it relates particularly to religious practice at public schools, campus leaders—and in particular, legal counsel—interpret policies inconsistently.

The First Amendment of the U.S. Constitution guarantees freedoms concerning religion, expression, assembly, and the right to petition. Promoting the priority of civic religious pluralism has implications for expression and assembly as well, but the most common questions arise around its prohibition against "promoting one religion over others" (the Establishment Clause) and "restricting an individual's religious practices" (Free Exercise Clause).[17]

Establishment Clause

One landmark case around religion in public schools is "School District of Abington Township vs. Shemp" (1963) in which the Supreme Court ruled that required Bible reading and recitations of the Lord's Prayer violated the First Amendment.[18] Teaching the tenets of any religion is unacceptable, but teaching *about* religion is acceptable; the issue at hand is neutrality.[19] Neutrality in instruction is no small challenge to address but it shifts the focus to the different and more productive question of *how* to teach about religion within Constitutional bounds.

Campuses cannot promote any one religion over another but can educate about and support the practice of the array of religions and religious and secular identities on campus and beyond. If space is offered to any, it should be offered to all or be broadly defined enough to encompass and accommodate all. With regard to space in particular, institutions commonly establish 'reflection rooms' that are accessible to an array of religious and non-religious groups. The original impetus for such spaces may have been a request for prayer space from religious students or clubs, but many such rooms gain support because of campuses' attention to student mental health and the need for reflection and quiet. Does this meet the need of students? It does, at least in part. Student organizations that require larger rooms, for instance, a chapter of Intervarsity Christian Fellowship meeting for worship or Bible Study or the Muslim Student Association meeting for Jummah prayers or breaking the fast throughout Ramadan, will commonly reserve larger spaces on campus through standard campus rental practices.

Public universities, unlike private institutions, don't typically hire religiously diverse leaders to support students' religious and spiritual needs, but instead develop policies to allow off-campus affiliates to have a special relationship with the institution to serve religious leadership and mentoring needs for students.

Training and education around religious literacy, a fundamental need for educated citizens in a religiously diverse democracy, can be framed appropriately as a neutral endeavor and thus be Constitutionally permissible. Teaching about religion can be as hotly contested in public universities as it often is within the discipline of Religious Studies. Campus leaders engaging in these trainings and teaching should be prepared for spirited conversation amongst people who disagree about the curriculum.

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[17] "First Amendment." *Legal Information Institute*, Cornell Legal Information Institute, www.law.cornell.edu/wex/first_amendment.

[18] "School District of Abington Township, Pennsylvania v. Shempp." *Oyez*, www.oyez.org/cases/1962/142.

[19] Lupa, Ira C., et al. "Religion in the Public Schools." *Pew Research Center's Religion & Public Life Project*, 31 Dec. 2019, www.pewforum.org/2019/10/03/religion-in-the-public-schools-2019-update/.

Free Exercise Clause

Depending on the proclivities of the state legislature, the broader political context, and each university counsel's risk aversion, the range of questions implicated in religious and non-religious identity can inspire a variety of responses. While some university counsels may shut down the conversation entirely, others may take more thoughtful responses such as at the University of North Carolina Charlotte. As a public university, the UNC-Charlotte grounds its religious holiday accommodation absence request policy in state law.[20] This policy offers a thorough overview of definitions for critical terms (like 'reasonable accommodation') and proper procedures for requesting a religiously-based absence. A Request for Religious Accommodation Form is included on the webpage.

Debates and legal cases around student leadership of religious organizations continue to make their way through the courts. If a religious student organization's qualifications for leadership conflict with the institution's nondiscrimination policy, how does the tension of those two values and rights get resolved? As these cases, often referred to as 'all comers policies', continue to play out in the court, universities will continue to be faced with the opportunity to educate the broader student body and campus community about the tensions at play. Leveraging the principles of religious pluralism, including a focus on relationship-building alongside a respect for individual identity, can be useful in maintaining community values even in contentious conversations around interpretations of the law.

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In the Field: University of Illinois, Urbana Champaign

Based on conversations with Ross Wantland, Director of Diversity and Social Justice Education at the University of Illinois, Urbana Champaign

In September 2019, a Housing student paraprofessional at University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign gave a presentation to other Housing paraprofessionals on campus. The presentation, titled 'Palestine & Great Return March: Palestinian Resistance to 70 Years of Israeli Terror', was meant to highlight the conflict between Israel and Palestine, and had a focus on Palestinian perspectives. Following the presentation, one participant filed a complaint about the content of the presentation with the university. In the same week, a swastika was discovered on a campus building.

The events and subsequent discussion across campus escalated quickly, building narratives that reflected existing divides on campus. While pro-Israel groups and many Jewish students felt that

[20] "Religious Accommodation for Students." Religious Accommodation for Students | Office of Legal Affairs | UNC Charlotte, *legal.uncc.edu/policies/up-409*.

the presentation's content was anti-Semitic rhetoric, other students and community members expressed the need to distinguish anti-Semitism from anti-Zionism. While the Housing program's original priority was to foster skills of respectful dialogue among Housing paraprofessionals, the presentation and campus-wide conversation that ensued sparked national and international interest around a range of free speech concerns.

University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign is home to over 47,000 students from more than 100 countries. When First Amendment concerns arise on campus, there are a host of broader implications that the campus community needs to address. In a diverse college campus where there are many varying perspectives on an issue, when and to what extent should one activate a dialogue around that issue? How does a campus ensure that the values that they wish to promote guide conduct and conversation? Those are among the core questions on campus that Ross Wantland, Director of Diversity and Social Justice Education at the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign, is hoping to address through his interfaith work.

"As a public campus we have fairly stringent standards for what we won't tolerate. Usually if it's something that is crossing legality lines or is a direct attack or act of harassment, we will intervene," says Ross. "Students and other stakeholders may disagree with certain ideas or speech, but we as a campus need to think about where to draw the line between what we disagree with and what we won't tolerate."

To address these challenges in the fall of 2019, different actors across the campus approached the concern from their spheres of influence. The Vice Chancellor for Student Affairs initiated a review of "hiring, training and professional oversight and management processes" of Resident Advisors and Multicultural Advocates, according to a campus-wide e-mail from Chancellor Robert Jones. Additional steps, noted in the same correspondence, include an external review of Housing's multicultural education programs and initiating anti-Semitism training for Housing staff and paraprofessionals. Mr. Wantland, as a campus professional leading interfaith work, is developing a range of programs to build stronger relationships between different groups on campus, including creating an intentional space for these groups to come together and discuss their perspectives, without the fear of being shut down.

"I think often a lot of groups on campus don't feel heard or respected," says Ross, "I can't promise to fix things, but I want to listen to their experiences. There's a lack of exposure and information, for both students and staff, on how to approach difficult conversations, especially around the Israeli-Palestine conflict, and related issues. Building direct relationships to tether people together on campus is one of the big solutions that I can think of."

One of the biggest challenges, Ross says, is that most public campuses do not have an office to directly support and address issues of religious and spiritual identities and practice. On many campuses, staff members' personal interests help spark proactive prioritization of interfaith cooperation. This can be both an opportunity and a challenge.

Ross has been working on relationship-building through campus-wide events. Some of the most successful events included a dialogue series on the meaning of forgiveness during Yom Kippur and Eid al Adha, and another dialogue series on anti-Semitism and Islamophobia, which invited people to share how these issues impact them and what it means to them to have a space

to share their experiences. Ross says he wants people to come together to talk about these experiences on campus and to walk away with an understanding of where these issues intersect.

Ross believes that having a senior administrator check in regularly with impacted and involved groups will help in fostering a culture of listening and respect, even as difference and disagreement remains. The robust and respectful engagement of ideas we deeply disagree with is part of the purpose of an education, including when the issue at hand is religious, ethnic, cultural, historical, or political.

In Ross's opinion, the question is not whether a first amendment issue will arise, but when. The legal questions of the First Amendment are no small matter, though U of I has firmly committed itself to giving a wide berth to permissible speech. In his nearly 20 years at U of I, Ross has seen not only students but also administrators, staff and even faculty turn over regularly, which requires ongoing efforts at education and skill-building. A commitment to interfaith cooperation also means the ongoing work of cultivating relationships with students, student-facing staff and administrators; sharing resources for learning, mental health services, and addressing accommodation needs or experiences of bias; and fostering channels for communication.

Structural Approaches to Interfaith Work

Becca Hartman-Pickerill, Director of Program Resourcing, Interfaith Youth Core

In *No Longer Invisible: Religion in University Education*, Douglas and Rhonda Jacobsen detail the historical context that saw religion shift from foundational, public and central in higher education institutions' missions and way of operating to siloed, private and, for some, ancillary. As the title would suggest, universities have emerged from that trajectory with a wide range of ways that religious, spiritual and secular identity and education are engaged on campus but one reality is clear: religion cannot be ignored.

In working with 500+ campuses each year IFYC knows that interfaith cooperation—the engagement between people who orient around religion differently—is housed in a range of positions and offices on campus. At public universities, we commonly work with both Student Affairs and Academic Affairs. Interfaith work is centered in: academic departments or certificates (as detailed below); student leadership programs (as detailed below); Diversity, Equity and Inclusion; Multicultural Offices; First-Year Experience; Residence Life; Off Campus Partnerships; and Civic Engagement and Service Learning Centers, to name a few.

According to IFYC's Campus Interfaith Inventory, a self-reporting online survey of campus-wide assets leveraged to further interfaith cooperation, public universities were the most likely institution to have a cross-campus committee for this expressed purpose.[21] One quarter of the 360+ campuses that completed the Inventory between 2016-19 were public universities; of those, 41% had a cross-campus committee. Recognizing that it is a self-selecting group of campuses that complete the survey, it is also not that surprising that public campuses are more likely than any other to operate by committee. At religiously affiliated and private nonsectarian campuses there is often one office or department that is mandated with attending to the religious and spiritual needs of the student body. At public institutions, this need both touches on the skills and scope of and requires support from a range of offices and departments across campus.

Below are a couple rich examples shared during the convening, highlighting strengths and drawbacks of the given approach.

In the Field: Utah State University's Undergraduate Interfaith Leadership Certificate

Bonnie Glass-Coffin, Professor of Anthropology and Affiliate Professor of Religious Studies, Utah State University

Utah State University is a faith-dominant public institution and Land Grant university with more than 25 campuses and centers located in the part of the country that is home to many members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints. At USU we have been collaborating with Interfaith Youth Core to make our campus more welcoming by building bridges across religious difference since the Fall of 2014. Our efforts have included big and small projects and events—from a keynote address by Eboo Patel that was attended by more than 1,400 staff, faculty, students, and community-members, to the designation of a modest campus-wide reflection room.

We have a vibrant Interfaith Student Association that hosts periodic "speed-faithing" and "talk-better-together" events as well as interfaith movie nights, religious site-visits, and classroom-based panel presentations.[22] We developed and periodically offer an Interfaith Ally stand-

[21] "Campus Interfaith Inventory." IFYC, www.ifyc.org/inventory.

[22] See "How to Hold a Speedfaithing Event." IFYC. https://www.ifyc.org/resources/how-hold-speedfaithing-event. Also see: "Interfaith Cooperation." *Better Together Days*, www.bettertogetherdays.com/.

alone training to build awareness of religious privilege and to build capacity for appreciative engagement across religious differences. In 2017, we hosted more than 150 students from twelve colleges and universities across the Intermountain West at a recent Intermountain Interfaith Leadership Lab.

Since the Fall of 2018, we have been offering an 18 credit Interfaith Leadership Certificate available to students in all majors at all of our state-wide campuses. With all that we are doing, one would think that our work would be both highly visible and measurably impactful. But, as the following quote from a student in one of my interfaith leadership classes suggests, we still have much work to do to transform our campus. As this student noted,

> *"The articles that stood out to me the most this week were the ones about our USU Interfaith Initiative. I had no idea that we had this much activity already because I have never seen advertising or anything for events that we have had..."*

A big part of this lack of awareness has to do with lack of band-width. As faculty members with all the usual responsibilities of teaching and research, we have little time to help promote the programs and events that we have organized. Delivery of these tends to count towards our service requirement but is not often rewarded in the tenure and promotion process. Because of scarce campus resources, we have not been successful at garnering top-down support for the work we are doing. We have no annual budget, no program coordinator or dedicated web-master, no designated institute or center and, other than the aforementioned prayer space, we have no visible space where people can congregate. We need to rely on students themselves to help get out the message.

I believe an antidote to this conundrum lies with the structure of our Interfaith Leadership Certificate and the opportunity it provides for students to engage in a practicum experience that is beginning to take them from the classroom to our campus community as culture-creators and emissaries of this work. Beginning in Spring 2020, students who have completed my "Bridging Religious Difference in Theory and Practice" course (which is dual listed in Anthropology and Religious Studies and one of a suite of courses students take that prepare them with the vision, knowledge, and skills to become interfaith leaders) will have the opportunity to serve as Interfaith Leadership Fellows/Peer Mentors on campus as we build opportunities for campus-engagement together.

These students have already identified target-areas for their interfaith-interventions based on their networks, interests and skill-sets. Under my direct supervision, they anticipate working closely with student leaders in Residence Life, in the LDS Student Association, in our campus R.O.T.C. program, in our Inclusion Center, and also with senior administrators on the President's new Diversity and Inclusion Task Force. Their work will hopefully extend the reach of interfaith cooperation on our campus far beyond what we have been able to accomplish to date while serving to promote the Interfaith Leadership Certificate to even more students on campus. During this first, pilot-semester of this new program, these students will gain not only course credit (they will all enroll in the "Interfaith Leadership Practicum" course that is cross listed in Anthropology and Religious Studies) but they will also be paid a small stipend through small grants from the Office of the Vice President for Student Affairs, the Department of Sociology, Social Work and Anthropology, and Interfaith Youth Core. For more about the structure of our

new Interfaith Leadership Certificate Program and the ways in which it has been designed to facilitate this practicum experience, please visit our website at http://interfaith.usu.edu.

In the Field: The University of Alabama's Crossroads Community Engagement Center

Lane McLelland, Director, Crossroads Community Engagement Center, University of Alabama

The University of Alabama (UA) is a public university of more than 38,000 undergraduate, professional, and graduate students. As a secular state institution, UA does not have an office devoted to religious life, and our Department of Religious Studies maintains a solely academic focus. Yet, as with other flagship universities situated in the South's Bible Belt, creating a fully inclusive campus climate requires that it address the great theological differences within its dominant Christian community and the diversity of other faith traditions and philosophical beliefs which, though less visible, exist both on campus and in the local community. UA's administration and faculty, therefore, value and consistently support interfaith initiatives when they emerge organically. Even so, without a designated office from which to coordinate and strengthen the necessary infrastructure for developing sustainable relationships, broad campus impact is an ongoing challenge. In response, the most fruitful approach has been to identify collaborative partnerships beyond the usual suspects. In other words, UA has benefited most from initiatives that have joined religious and non-faith-based entities together over common goals. By leveraging the resources of its network of campus ministries and various institutional offices with local congregations, non-profits, and national organizations, interfaith cooperation is happening in multiple and dynamic forms.

For example, in this campus context with anchored programs but no single coordinating body, a Quiet Reflection Space for prayer and meditation was established in the student center in 2014. It was the product of colleagues from different divisions (Academic Affairs, Capstone International Center, Community Affairs, and Student Life) reaching out to one another for exploratory conversations rooted in a common concern for the spiritual well-being of all students, faculty, and staff. The Division of Community Affairs has additionally sought to foster interfaith understanding via the intercultural education programs provided by its Crossroads Community Engagement Center. Since January 2013, Crossroads has particularly benefited from its ongoing relationship with the Interfaith Youth Core (IFYC). Tapping into the national conversation and skill-based learning at IFYC's annual Interfaith Leadership Institutes provided Crossroads with ready-made *Better Together* materials and curriculum for hosting interfaith programs such as *Explore Better Together*, an annual speed-faithing dinner, and the biannual *Serve Better Together* days of service with lunch and dialogue. *Serve Better Together* is another good example of the importance of reaching out to campus partners whose mission is not directly related to a faith-based population. Drawing on the institutional resources for community-based service and the larger constituency of UA's Center for Service and Leadership enables such efforts to reach a wider student audience. As the initiating co-sponsor, Crossroads additionally brings to this student experience its expertise developed as the host of the UA chapter of the national Sustained Dialogue Campus Network. Using the institutional capacity of these two departments and funding from the College of Arts & Sciences Diversity Committee to implement *Better Together* programs makes it possible for smaller organizations such as the Crimson Secular Student

Alliance, the Muslim Student Association, the Hillel House Jewish Student Center and various Christian campus ministries to work and learn together without having to raise funds and take on responsibility for the more complicated logistics that can often be a deterrent.

Crossroads' relationship with IFYC's *Better Together* program, likewise, led to the award of an IFYC grant to support ongoing programming. This pilot series of dialogues to promote skills for political and interfaith dialogue is now in its third year and about to start its 5th cohort of key student leaders. The significance of this initiative cannot be overstated. These students, who represent influential positions on campus because of their leadership roles in organizations such as the Student Government Association, Greek-letter chapters, and identity-advocacy groups, are learning skills for engaging tough political issues with an awareness of how they are informed by religious and philosophical differences. Research data from this initiative confirms that the students are now taking these skills to further interfaith dialogue in places not normally identified for such.

Taking every opportunity to build relationships across campus and communicate your value of bringing differing campus religious and philosophical backgrounds together will ultimately lead to interfaith cooperation in ways beyond those typically imagined.

Conclusion

Fulfilling the purpose and promise of public higher education means graduating educated people, engaged citizens, and competent professionals. For institutions in the U.S., a religiously diverse democracy experiencing a period of cultural polarization, colleges and universities must pay attention to religious and non-religious diversity, civic religious pluralism, and interfaith leadership. The reality that engaging worldview diversity is complex means not that we should shy away from addressing it, but that we must invest additional human and financial resources to build up institutional capacity and prioritize it in curricular, co-curricular, and structural ways.

Public universities have a unique opportunity to influence higher education and the broader public by integrating worldview identity, diversity and engagement work into its policies, practices and programs. The four topical areas of this report can help guide you as a public university leader to get started with or deepen your interfaith work on campus.

The individuals who contributed to this report, and the convening that preceded it, have shared a wealth of wisdom from experience in prioritizing civic religious pluralism on campus. Look for ways to stay connected with colleagues blazing the path you too are leading. Connect at conferences and among associations and networks, and stay in touch with Interfaith Youth Core.

Additional Resources from IFYC

Academic Resources

- Interfaith Leadership Video Series ifyc.org/interfaithleadership
- Faculty Resource Library ifyc.org/faculty

Financial Support

- Campus Innovation Grants ifyc.org/campus-innovation-grants
- Curriculum Development Grants ifyc.org/curriculum-development-grants

Research Resources

- Interfaith Diversity Experiences & Attitudes Longitudinal Survey (IDEALS) ifyc.org/ideals/firstyear

Tools for Campus-wide Work

- Assessment resources for programmatic and campus climate learning: ifyc.org/resources/doing-effective-interfaith-assessment
- Campus Interfaith Inventory ifyc.org/inventory
- Leadership Practices for Interfaith Excellence in Higher Education (Liberal Education, 2015) aacu.org/liberaleducation/2015/winter-spring/patel

Training Curriculum and Opportunities

- Building Regular Interfaith Dialogue through Generous Engagement (BRIDGE) ifyc.org/bridge
- Interfaith Leadership Institute ifyc.org/ili