

# *Interfaith Cooperation and American Higher Education:*

*Recommendations, Best Practices and Case Studies*

This report is based on a series of gatherings initiated by the White House Office for Faith-based and Neighborhood Partnerships to focus on interfaith cooperation and higher education. The gatherings included faculty, staff, administrators and students from colleges and universities nationwide who are leading interfaith work on their campuses.

*The report was compiled by Interfaith Youth Core  
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## *Background of this Report*

On June 7, 2010, the White House Office of Faith-based and Neighborhood Partnerships demonstrated its commitment to interfaith cooperation in higher education by hosting a convening of leaders from colleges and universities nationwide at the White House. This four-hour meeting allowed for a preliminary exploration of the existing programs in the field along with conversation about the potential for higher education to serve a role in making interfaith cooperation a social norm throughout American society. For the Office of Faith-based and Neighborhood Partnerships, the gathering was an opportunity to connect with higher education stakeholders to further three key goals for interfaith cooperation: strengthen social cohesion, build social capital and address social problems.

Many of the 150 participants felt that the White House convening had provided an important springboard for further conversation. Building on this sentiment, a smaller group met in July 2010 at the Harvard Kennedy School to discuss follow-up to the White House meeting. This group, co-convened by Loren Gary of the Center for Public Leadership at the Harvard Kennedy School and Eboo Patel of Interfaith Youth Core, identified the importance of interfaith cooperation as a civic good and set the broader goal of scaling the interfaith movement across higher education.

On August 9-10, 2010, 75 national leaders of interfaith cooperation met at DePaul University to begin formulating a scaling strategy. Representatives from individual campuses, including student leaders, as well as campus-wide networks and national non-profits convened at the gathering, coordinated by Interfaith Youth Core. Through small group sessions and large group discussions, the gathering considered campuses as “ecologies” that can foster widespread engagement of interfaith cooperation. Additionally, small groups focused in on four key layers of the campus ecology: (1) student involvement and leadership (2) staff capacity (3) faculty and curriculum (4) high level administration and institutional commitment. Within these conversations, participants identified excellent existing initiatives, potential new initiatives and ways to integrate or synthesize programs, then recommended ways to scale each of these initiatives nationally.

Based on the findings of this gathering, Interfaith Youth Core has compiled this report to provide a comprehensive look at existing interfaith work and best practices from across the country, to give other leaders in higher education a resource to join the interfaith movement.

## Introduction: Taking Religious Diversity Seriously in Higher Education

America is the most religiously diverse country in the world and the most religiously devout nation in the West. In a time of global religious conflict when issues of religious identity are headlining the nightly news, our religious diversity can either be a source of conflict or an opportunity for cooperation. From Baghdad to Jerusalem to Manhattan, religion matters in the world today. America's institutions of higher education are uniquely positioned to equip a new generation of leaders with the skills to constructively engage religious diversity and in doing so to advance a movement of interfaith cooperation. Such a movement has the potential to strengthen democracy at home while equipping students with very practical skills and knowledge to live and lead in an increasingly interconnected world.

Institutions of higher education have already played a leadership role in many of the social change movements of the past. Campuses have proactively engaged multiculturalism, GLBTQ issues, gender equality, and environmentalism, leading to significant culture shifts around each of these issues. This is not by chance. Broadly speaking, higher education is about educating students for global citizenship, contributing to the common good and strengthening social cohesion. This provides fertile ground for a role in issues of religious diversity, as well. If colleges and universities engage religious diversity with the same ambition and resources that they dedicate to other identity and diversity issues, there is an opportunity for lasting impact beyond the sphere of higher education in the broader culture.

This positive engagement of religious diversity can build what is known as religious pluralism both on campus and in the world beyond campus. Professor Diana Eck, director of Harvard University's Pluralism Project, defines religious pluralism as the "active engagement of diversity" toward a positive end. Interfaith Youth Core expands on this by defining religious pluralism as a

world where there is respect for religious and non-religious identity, mutually inspiring relationships across religious boundaries, and where people from diverse religious and non-religious traditions come together to act for the common good. From this perspective, campuses should not just acknowledge religious diversity exists but equip students from different religious and non-religious backgrounds to work together in cooperation. In doing so, there is potential to not only instill in students a mindset of religious pluralism and interfaith engagement, but also to model how these issues are engaged for the broader society. This challenge is all the more urgent when viewed against the backdrop of the ongoing struggle to make sense of religious diversity within American public discourse and public life. This premise of interfaith cooperation has shaped Interfaith Youth Core's work with campuses across the country and the gatherings sparked by the White House Office of Faith-based and Neighborhood Partnerships.

As mentioned above, these gatherings took an "ecological approach" to understanding how a campus might foster interfaith cooperation. A campus ecology of interfaith cooperation is the unique system of relationships and initiatives that support a campus-wide interfaith movement and requires active cultivation, cross-institutional collaboration and dedicated resources. Utilizing this framework can help campuses discern the best way to leverage the existing resources available across campus and promote collaboration across layers of the ecology, as well as identify potential areas for growth.

The following report examines the ecological layers of a campus — students' involvement and leadership, staff capacity, faculty and curriculum, administration and institutional commitment — and each layer's role in building religious pluralism on campus. It overviews the contribution of each layer to building a campus-wide culture of interfaith cooperation and provides best practices

for engaging each layer in interfaith work. Finally, it outlines concrete case studies of successful interfaith programming on campuses across the country.

It is important to note that each campus environment is unique. These general guidelines and examples are intended to be adaptable to a variety of contexts. Across the board, one of the best practices that emerged from these conversations was an emphasis on building on existing structures, programs and initiatives. Whether incorporated into a college's ongoing commitment to diversity and multiculturalism

or growing out of the work of a chaplain's office, many colleges and universities have infrastructure that can be broadened to support religious diversity and interfaith cooperation or amplified to impact a greater swath of the campus. As the movement of interfaith cooperation builds on campuses across the country, the list of best practices will continue to grow and the network of campus leaders committed to advancing religious pluralism will continue to expand.



## Interfaith Cooperation on Campus: Student Involvement & Leadership

### OVERVIEW

Engaging religious diversity constructively is one of the key challenges to leadership in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. As colleges and universities graduate students who will become leaders in the United States and around the world, those students will need to know how to approach a religiously diverse office, courtroom, classroom, or hospital. Beyond the basic skills of religious literacy and navigating religious diversity necessary for professional success, students need to know how to proactively build interfaith cooperation both on campus and in the world.

Interfaith work is central to the student layer of the campus ecology for several reasons. First, when students arrive on campus, it is often the first time they have a meaningful encounter with religious diversity. They may have been surrounded by different religious communities in their hometown



or city, but often, students come to campus having lived in a “bubble” of their own religious group. Learning to live with a roommate or work with a lab partner from a different religious tradition often gives students their first opportunity to engage the “religious other.” Second, it is often in college that students begin to grapple with their own religious identity. Students may question the religious tradition they were raised with, make decisions about the depth or frequency of their own religious practice, and are introduced to new and different opportunities for religious or philosophical observance. Finally, students are driven by the desire to have an impact on the world around them, often inspired by their own religious or philosophical commitments. The campus environment offers students many opportunities to get involved in causes and clubs that give them the chance to act on their personal values to serve. Because it is on campus that students are encountering religious diversity for the first time, grappling with their own religious identity, and seeking ways to make a difference in the world, colleges and universities have a prime opportunity to encourage students to build interfaith cooperation.

Colleges and universities are already proactive in addressing issues relevant to other types of diversity and identity: race, ethnicity, gender and sexual orientation. For many campuses, the conversation about religious identity and pluralism may begin by incorporating this work into preexisting structures intended to engage students around other diversity issues. Colleges and universities can offer opportunities for all students to enhance religious literacy, build meaningful relationships and work together with people from different religious or philosophical backgrounds. There are two levels of best practices for how to build this type of campus culture. The first is geared toward engaging the entire student body and the second is focused specifically on student leaders.

## Best Practices for Building Interfaith Cooperation at the Student Level

### STUDENT INVOLVEMENT

- 1 Incorporate an **explicit focus on religious diversity and interfaith cooperation** into existing First Year Orientation or First Year Programming. These programs often already engage other types of diversity such as race, gender and sexual orientation, and set a standard for how students should approach these issues from the outset of their education.
- 2 Establish **campus-wide interfaith service and reflection opportunities**, or incorporate interfaith reflection into existing campus service days. These programs will give students a non-divisive way to engage religious identity and an opportunity to put their religious or philosophical beliefs into action as well as talk about their personal inspiration to serve.

### STUDENT LEADERSHIP

- 3 **Train select student leaders to actively engage religious diversity** in their leadership capacities and give them resources for interfaith programming. Student leaders in Residence Life, Student Government, Greek Life, Community Service and Religious Life regularly encounter religious diversity, but often lack the skills to productively engage it.
- 4 **Launch an interfaith student council or fellowship** that can create and sustain ongoing interfaith programming on campus. These programs can be supported by existing campus structures such as a chaplaincy or multiculturalism center. Students participating in these programs will be able to build deep relationships with one another, grow their individual leadership and mobilize their peers. There are several best practice components of such interfaith leadership programs:
  - a **Programs are Representative of Religious Diversity on Campus.** The cohort of leaders, whether chosen through a selection process or open to all, should be representative of the religious and non-religious diversity that exists on campus. This will maximize learning and interfaith relationships within the cohort as well as link the leadership to the diverse communities on campus.
  - b **Programs are Rooted in Meaningful Interfaith Dialogue.** Whether through weekly interfaith reflections on a given topic, sharing of “spiritual journeys,” visits to diverse religious communities on- and off-campus, this group of interfaith leaders should have the opportunity to explore their own religious or philosophical traditions and inspirations while building relationships with fellow students.
  - c **Students are Equipped to Lead Interfaith Service Projects.** The cohort of leaders should be trained and equipped to lead sustainable interfaith programming on campus in partnership with institutional allies. This includes events designed to rally a large percentage of the student body as well as opportunities for smaller groups of students to come together for deeper or more regular service, social action and reflection.
  - d **Students are Empowered and Resourced.** Student leaders need support and partnership from their institution in order to be successful. Many top interfaith leadership programs offer student leaders a personal stipend to support them as they dedicate time to this work and support programming costs, as well as offer a departmental “home-base.”

## Successful Models for Building Interfaith Cooperation at the Student Level

### FIRST YEAR BOOK READ — LUTHER COLLEGE

In order to elevate interfaith cooperation on campus, Luther College, a small Lutheran-affiliated college in Decorah, Iowa, selected Eboo Patel's *Acts of Faith: the Story of an American Muslim, the Struggle for the Soul of a Generation* as their 2009 first year book read. All first year students were required to read the book before arriving on campus as a part of *Paideia*, Luther's common two-semester sequence for incoming freshmen.

In addition to discussing the book in a classroom setting, freshmen participated in interfaith dialogues during Orientation and throughout the course of their first semester. As a result of this project, many students became active in various interfaith peer groups on campus and participated in campus-wide interfaith service events.

### INTERFAITH FAST-A-THON — WESLEYAN UNIVERSITY

Entering its fourth year as an annual campus-wide event, the Interfaith Fast-a-thon began as a student initiative to raise donations for hunger relief during the month of Ramadan. This event was started by a Muslim student with significant support from campus allies at Wesleyan. Hosted in partnership with many diverse religious groups on campus and sponsored by the Interfaith Justice League, a student run interfaith club, the Fast-a-thon highlights the common practice of fasting in many great religious traditions while also holding up the common call to serve others.

The Fast-a-thon continues even though the original student leaders have since graduated. Leadership has transitioned to students of other faith traditions who are trained in interfaith leadership and inspired by the commitment in Islam to fast. The event has grown into a successful and sustainable program, from raising \$4,000 for hunger relief organizations in its inaugural year to raising \$17,000 for local causes in its most recent year, and mobilizing 1,400 students to participate.

### RELIGIOUS PLURALISM TRAINING FOR RESIDENT ASSISTANTS AND ORIENTATION LEADERS — DOMINICAN UNIVERSITY

Colleges and universities regularly give diversity training to student leaders who will be involved with incoming students to help them navigate sensitive issues should they arise. Recognizing the gap in these trainings around religious identity and diversity, Dominican University, a private Catholic university outside of Chicago, now includes a session entitled "Religious Pluralism 101" as part of the required student leadership training for Resident Assistants and Orientation Leaders.

In this training session, student leaders learn the importance of acknowledging and embracing diverse religious identities and how to engage religious identity to create a welcoming community for all incoming students. Additionally, student leaders have an opportunity to role-play and respond constructively to challenges around religious diversity they might face in each of their roles and to plan interfaith cooperation programming for fellow students. The trainings are delivered by Interfaith Youth Core as a part of a partnership between Dominican and Interfaith Youth Core.

### FELLOWSHIP FOR RELIGIOUS ENCOUNTER — STANFORD UNIVERSITY

The Fellowship for Religious Encounter at Stanford University is intended for students who demonstrate a genuine desire to explore religion in their lives and a willingness to listen to and learn from those with different backgrounds. The Office for Religious Life offers sixteen fellowships to engage students in sustained, meaningful religious encounter with one another. The Fellowship, which is nurtured by Religious Life staff, launches with an intensive retreat and then meets six times each quarter. Fellows make two external presentations to the campus to share their experiences with those beyond the Fellowship and are given a modest stipend to support the intensity of the work they are expected to invest in the Fellowship.

## Interfaith Cooperation on Campus: Staff Capacity

### OVERVIEW

Campus staff members — in diverse roles such as residence life, public relations and admissions — play an important role in the lives of students on campus. Staff often have a significant impact on the daily personal lives of students, whether through interactions with dining hall staff, the mentorship of a residence director or guidance from a career counselor. In this way, campus staff cultivate the ethic of an institution and transmit its values to students. Furthermore, campus staff are the public face of the institution, through marketing and admissions as well as ongoing student programming. Therefore, engaging staff is key to developing an effective plan to build interfaith cooperation on campus.

Whereas staff already receive robust training around other forms of diversity such as race, gender and GLBTQ issues, many staff feel uncertain when it comes to addressing religion in student life and therefore shy away from it. Staff should feel equipped to address religious identity, sensitivity and practice and to engage actively the ethic of interfaith cooperation. While not every staff member needs to be able to lead an interfaith dialogue or run a public program addressing interfaith cooperation, arguably all staff should have a basic level of religious literacy or religious sensitivity training, and understand the importance of interfaith cooperation to the institution. Beyond this basic level of training, select staff should receive more intensive professional development that gives them the ability to engage religious diversity in a more substantive way. For example, Student Affairs staff should be able to run successful public



programming to raise awareness of the importance and urgency of interfaith cooperation and cultivate interfaith student leadership; Public Relations staff should be able to articulate the importance of interfaith cooperation as a campus value.

For many campuses, one of the most important existing resources for leading this work will be the campus chaplain or Office of Religious Life. Many chaplains have been aware of and leading the charge on religious diversity and interfaith engagement on campus for decades. As such, the chaplaincy or Office of Religious Life can be a resource not only to student programming and student life but also for building staff capacity and training staff less comfortable with engaging religious diversity.

The following best practice recommendations can help build staff capacity to promote interfaith cooperation as a campus value and build and sustain a network of staff committed to interfaith cooperation on campus.

## Best Practices for Building Interfaith Cooperation at the Staff Level

### CAPACITY BUILDING FOR STAFF

- 1 Include sessions on interfaith cooperation and religious diversity in **staff orientation and existing diversity training**. Sessions should highlight religious diversity demographics on campus, offer basic skills for engaging students' religious identity, spotlight institutional values related to interfaith cooperation, share the history of religious and non-religious engagement on campus and identify campus and community resources available to students, faculty, and staff. In many cases there may already be staff on campus, such as the chaplain or multiculturalism staff, who can lead the charge on such training.
- 2 Offer **additional professional development** opportunities for staff designed to deepen skills and commitment to interfaith cooperation on campus. Designed for staff who want to take leadership around this work, these sessions can build religious literacy, offer skills for facilitating intergroup dialogues and explore best practices for cultivating interfaith student leadership.

### SUPPORTING INTERFAITH COOPERATION ON CAMPUS

- 3 Develop **collaborative partnerships across campus** to create innovative interfaith programming for students, faculty and staff. A formal working group around interfaith cooperation gives staff from diverse departments the opportunity to meet regularly to brainstorm new program ideas and pool resources for campus-wide initiatives.
- 4 Work in **collaboration with professional associations** for staff in higher education to create venues for training development and resource sharing on best practices in interfaith cooperation that reach multiple college and university campuses. Staff will have the opportunity to spread interfaith work to their peers on other campuses.
  - a Provide **formal recognition structures** for staff members' achievement in advancing interfaith cooperation on campus. Demonstrate to staff that their positive engagement of religious diversity will be an asset to their career growth.
  - b Create opportunities for staff to become **"reflective practitioners"** by including reflection on core values and identity as a central part of staff trainings and professional development opportunities. Include learning opportunities that allow staff to explore the role of religion, spirituality and philosophical commitments in shaping identity of individuals and society.

## Successful Models for Building Interfaith Cooperation at the Staff Level

### FIVE COLLEGE INTERGROUP DIALOGUE TRAINING INSTITUTE

The Five College Intergroup Dialogue Training Institute provides 60 staff and faculty members from Amherst College, Hampshire College, Mount Holyoke College, Smith College and the University of Massachusetts at Amherst with skills-based training in intergroup dialogue facilitation. The program is the result of a partnership between the Five College Training and Development Collaborative, the Five College Diversity Directors and the Social Justice Education Program of the School of Education at the University of Massachusetts Amherst.

Each academic institution selects 12 participants to learn how to co-facilitate two-hour dialogues across a range of diversity related topics including race and ethnicity, class, gender, and religion. The goal is to create a critical mass of facilitators with the capacity to lead difficult dialogues on various topics of interest and concern. During the fall, each campus hosts Days of Dialogue during which participants from the summer institute facilitate introductory dialogues for staff and faculty members with the objective of promoting change and increasing understanding of how differences impact daily experiences in the workplace.

### BEYOND TOLERANCE STAFF TRAINING — WELLESLEY COLLEGE

From the roll out of its interfaith program, "Beyond Tolerance" in 1993, Wellesley College sought to engage staff actively in the vision and mission of student programming, as well as equip them to foster multifaith community on campus. The programming is led by the Religious Life Team, including Dean of Religious and Spiritual Life and a team of diverse staff and representatives: a Buddhist Chaplain, Catholic Chaplain, Hillel Director and Jewish Chaplain, Hindu Chaplain, Liaison to the Evangelical Communities, Muslim Chaplain, Protestant Christian Chaplain and Unitarian Universalist Chaplain.



In addition to nurturing the spiritual lives and learning of students, promoting student leadership and fostering institutional commitment, Beyond Tolerance sponsors trainings for student life professionals across the university, including residence life staff, counseling and health services and cultural advisors on religious diversity and interfaith dialogue. Each training is specifically tailored towards particular issues staff may encounter in their respective departments when engaging with students from a variety of religious backgrounds and philosophical perspectives.

### JOURNEYS OF RECONCILIATION PROGRAM — EMORY UNIVERSITY

Journeys of Reconciliation is an interreligious program sponsored by the Office of the Dean of the Chapel and Religious Life at Emory University. Each May, the program gives staff, faculty, and students the opportunity to cultivate relationships and support communities around the world in their work of reconciliation through two-week immersion experiences. In some host communities participants contribute to service projects, while in other settings the focus is exclusively on conversation and collaborative analysis. Previous Journey sites include Cuba, India, New Orleans, South Africa and the Texas-Mexico border.

## Interfaith Cooperation on Campus: Faculty & Curriculum

### OVERVIEW

College and university faculty have a unique opportunity to reach students who might not otherwise be interested in interfaith cooperation and thus play a leadership role in broadening the impact of religious diversity in higher education. While much of the work around interfaith cooperation in the classroom to date has been focused on those with specific academic expertise — such as religious studies, comparative religions, or conflict and peace-building — there is a growing realization that addressing the challenges of religious diversity in the classroom is immediately relevant to the college or university's role in educating global citizens. In other words, whereas interfaith cooperation, dialogue and religious pluralism were once seen as niche academic interests, they are now seen as a civic good and thus a necessary part of a more general college education.

There are four layers of influence, spanning from broadest to the most specialized, for engaging interfaith cooperation in the classroom. The first level, *the civic level*, refers to the student population as broadly as possible, and seeks to understand interfaith cooperation as a civic virtue. As such, engaging religious diversity in the classroom becomes relevant across multiple fields, including political science, literature, international affairs and first year academic experiences that will introduce the broadest number of students to the concepts of interfaith cooperation. The



second level, *the professional level*, acknowledges that constructively engaging religious diversity is a necessary competency for an increasing number of fields, including health, social sciences, law, business and education. The third level, *the leadership level*, recognizes that a smaller number of students will discover interfaith cooperation as their vocation and will want specialized training, education and leadership development for their work after college, much of which can happen in the classroom. The final level is *the expert level*, where academics will work to do original research, advanced seminars and coursework and will actively create a literature that ultimately defines a field or sub-field of interfaith cooperation.

The following best practice recommendations are meant to span this breadth from “civic” to “expert,” and thus introduce a holistic approach to engaging interfaith cooperation and religious diversity in the college or university classroom.

## Best Practices for Building Interfaith Cooperation at the Faculty & Curricular Level

### BROAD CIVIC REACH

- 1 Integrate interfaith cooperation into **campus-wide learning initiatives**, such as first year seminars or senior year capstone projects. These activities will impact a broad number of students with the framework and values of interfaith cooperation.
- 2 Develop **“modules” or short lesson plans** on interfaith cooperation for introductory and required courses across disciplines, where they can reach a large number of students. For example, add or encourage a colleague to add a lecture and discussion on interfaith cooperation in Political Science or International Relations foundational classes.

### PROFESSIONAL APPLICATION

- 3 Promote coursework that focuses on the **applicability of interfaith cooperation** in academic and professional areas beyond religious studies, such as health, journalism, business, ministry or social sciences. This may involve collaboration between faculty with expertise in interfaith cooperation and those who are interested in incorporating interfaith work into new disciplines.
- 4 Create course sequences, such as **undergraduate minors or graduate-level concentrations**, which focus on interfaith cooperation but may be interdisciplinary. These can be an opportunity for students to reflect on interfaith cooperation through different lenses and can be focused on practical issue areas, such as health or conflict resolution.
- 5 Offer internships, **fieldwork and other experiential learning opportunities**, where students can work in an interfaith setting or reflect on the role of interfaith cooperation in society. These opportunities will help students take a theoretical interest and apply it to situations similar to those they may be in after college.

### NURTURING FACULTY LEADERSHIP

- 6 Provide **religious diversity training** to faculty that equips them to engage religious identity when it comes up in the classroom in a constructive way. Additionally, create a space for faculty to share learning, curricula and resources on how to integrate ideas of interfaith cooperation across disciplines and departments.
- 7 Develop scholarship that contributes to a **growing literature on interfaith cooperation** as a means to strengthen social cohesion, build social capital and address social problems. Include approaches from different disciplines.
- 8 Create a campus **curricular or co-curricular center of study** that encourages interfaith cooperation, such as research institutes or learning centers. These can serve as a “hub” for numerous departments to bring together their research, coursework, and programs on interfaith cooperation, as well as provide unique opportunities for students interested in interfaith work.



## Successful Models for Building Interfaith Cooperation at the Faculty & Curricular Level

### THE CENTER FOR ENGAGED RELIGIOUS PLURALISM — ST. MARY'S COLLEGE OF CALIFORNIA

Throughout the 2009-2010 year, St. Mary's College of California worked to make interfaith cooperation a key part of students' education. The initiative was spearheaded by the college's Center for Engaged Religious Pluralism (CERP), a faculty-led research institution that addresses issues in the public square by engaging religiously diverse perspectives. With the leadership of CERP, faculty in numerous disciplines, student life and mission/ministry staff and CERP student interns played a critical role in shaping the numerous academic and student life learning opportunities. The understanding that interfaith cooperation and engagement is vital to civic and public life was central to all activities.

CERP and several departments sponsored numerous public events throughout the year, including a speech by Dr. Eboo Patel attended by over 600 students. CERP promoted trainings for emerging interfaith student leaders as well as facilitated interfaith discussions for faculty and staff. CERP continues to offer students a range of opportunities to actively put interfaith cooperation into practice, with innovative projects that allows students to work on joint research and service efforts. Working with faculty, students have addressed issues of political life and policy, such as religion in prisons and interfaith cooperation in public schools.

### CENTER FOR INTERFAITH STUDIES AND DIALOGUE — NAZARETH COLLEGE

This academic year, Nazareth College launched an interdisciplinary minor in Interfaith Studies. Through this minor, the faculty provide an experiential, dialogical, empathetic and critical learning environment around issues of interfaith cooperation in order to form skilled leaders and professionals who grasp the importance of a religiously diverse world. The minor is coordinated by the Center for Interfaith Studies and Dialogue (CISD), a faculty-operated research center that seeks to develop knowledge and strategies for living peacefully in a religiously diverse world.

The minor allows students to take core coursework in religious studies and in the theory and practice of interfaith dialogue. Students are then offered a choice of eight concentrations, which include health and human services, education, business management and social work/civic engagement. Participating students are required to take an internship course at CISD, where they utilize their knowledge of interfaith cooperation "hands-on." CISD also leads numerous other workshops and trainings on the applicability and value of an interfaith framework to Nazareth's most popular professional programs, such as Nursing and Business.

### PH.D. CONCENTRATION AND UNDERGRADUATE PROGRAMS IN RELIGION, CONFLICT AND PEACEBUILDING — EMORY UNIVERSITY

Emory University's Ph.D. Concentration in Religion, Conflict and Peacebuilding (RCP) is a uniquely interdisciplinary, interreligious educational program that seeks to equip emerging scholars to understand the connections between religious ideologies, violent conflict and peacebuilding. The RCP concentration is designed to cover the spectrum of research, from historical to theoretical to practice-oriented, on interfaith cooperation and conflict.

Central to the RCP concentration is a model of "engaged scholarship," equipping students to be educators, media experts and civic leaders in the areas of interfaith conflict and peacebuilding. Students are required to undertake an internship or field work experience that relates to their research, allowing them to bring theory to life and to gain tangible skills for making interfaith cooperation a social good. The program encourages students to work with organizations in the local Atlanta community to understand how the issues of religion, conflict and peace exist in the U.S. and to utilize university resources towards serving the larger society. This fieldwork is embedded into the curricula, with advisors helping students integrate into their final Ph.D. research both reflections and practical recommendations for future action from their field experiences.

## Interfaith Cooperation on Campus: Administration & Institutional Commitment

### OVERVIEW

Given the current discourse around religion, identity and inclusion in American public life, helping students engage and respond constructively to religious diversity is becoming a necessary part of their education as engaged citizens and emerging leaders. On campus, administrators — particularly high-level administrators such as the president, provost and board of trustees — have the opportunity to help their campus move beyond individual and disparate interfaith initiatives toward a commitment to interfaith cooperation as a campus-wide value. Commitment at the institutional level can help leaders in the other layers covered in this report have broader and more sustained impact and connect individual projects into a cohesive vision for the college or university. Additionally, such a commitment not only helps move interfaith work on campus from an ad hoc to a holistic approach, but also ensures that a greater number of students are educated for engagement with a religiously diverse world.

To understand what such an institutional commitment might look like, it is helpful to compare how colleges and universities have approached other issues that have warranted a cross-institutional commitment, such as sustainability or multiculturalism. For these issues, campuses demonstrate their commitment by allocating financial and human resources such as dedicated student life centers, academic centers, staff and budgets. Campuses also make structural changes that reflect this commitment, including incorporating the issue into campus communications and marketing and into strategic

planning and mission and vision statements. The best practices outlined below will help campuses think about how a similar commitment can be made to interfaith cooperation and the role of the administration in supporting that commitment.

With the support of key administrative stakeholders and a clear institutional commitment, campuses have the opportunity to spread the vision for interfaith cooperation beyond just the individual college or university. As early adopters, campuses that take interfaith cooperation seriously have a chance to be a model for peer institutions and shape not just how graduates but also how alumni and the local community think about religious diversity. As commitment to this work spreads, it is possible to imagine campuses being ranked and valued based on their ability to engage religious diversity effectively, with something like an *U.S. News & World Report* ranking for the "Top Interfaith-Friendly Campuses." That in turn could lead to new funding streams from foundations, alumni and other donors as the ability to engage religious diversity positively becomes a desired campus asset.

As with the other layers of the ecology, it is important to emphasize the strength of building on existing resources. For many campuses this means building on a mission or vision statement already committed to engaging student diversity and looking at past campus-wide efforts to address other social causes or identity issues. In such cases there are already dedicated resources, a campus model for comprehensively addressing a relevant topic or experienced staff who can help take interfaith to the next level.

## Best Practices for Building Interfaith Cooperation at the Administration & Institutional Level

### INSTITUTIONAL COMMITMENT

- 1 Create a **Presidential Task Force** that can take charge of interfaith cooperation, delegate tasks where needed and promote collaboration across departments. This should be a team with expertise in campus asset-mapping, access to funding opportunities and programmatic experience. It should include student leaders.
- 2 Initiate a **campus-wide data gathering and asset mapping** project that looks at current attitudes, knowledge and behaviors around religious diversity, assesses campus climate and identifies assets for strengthening interfaith work on campus.
- 3 Review the **institutional mission, history, values and strategic plan** to identify where they can help to convey the importance and relevance of interfaith cooperation. Make the case for interfaith engagement as central to developing students as globally engaged citizens and therefore connected to the institution's mission and vision.
- 4 Designate **resources to capacity building for faculty, staff and administrators** around interfaith cooperation such as training, assessment and ongoing professional development opportunities. Resources can include funding, space and designated professional development time and can build-up existing structures or departments already dedicated to this work.

### ELEVATING INTERFAITH COOPERATION ON CAMPUS

- 5 Support interfaith cooperation in the classroom and student life by designating resources for a **theme year on interfaith cooperation**. Provide funding for relevant speakers, a communications campaign, support of student leadership initiatives and campus-wide interfaith service projects.
- 6 Create a **campus-based interfaith center for academic study or for civic engagement** with the local community. Engage interested faculty and staff in the vision and leadership of the center and designate space and resources to make the center successful.

### SPREADING TO PEER INSTITUTIONS:

- 7 Spread the vision of interfaith cooperation by **convening a cohort of peer colleges and universities** to share best practices and make interfaith cooperation a regional or national priority. Consider doing a multi-institutional study of students' knowledge, attitudes and behaviors to develop a national baseline study of interfaith engagement.

## Successful Models for Building Interfaith Cooperation at the Administration & Institutional Level

### BERKLEY CENTER FOR RELIGION, PEACE, AND WORLD AFFAIRS — GEORGETOWN UNIVERSITY

The Berkley Center for Religion, Peace, and World Affairs at Georgetown University seeks to bring together Georgetown's academic strength, its location in Washington, DC, its international reach and its Catholic Jesuit commitment to being open to other faiths. The Center was created in the office of the President, Dr. John J. DeGioia in 2006, and has received generous funding from William R. Berkley, a member of the University's Board of Directors. The Center is at the heart of a university-wide effort to make Georgetown a global leader in the academic study of religion and the advancement of interfaith understanding.

The Center acts as the academic hub of interfaith activity for the campus and engages faculty from numerous disciplines in events, publications and interactive, online knowledge resources around topics such as Religion and US Foreign Policy, Religious Pluralism in World Affairs and the Church and Interreligious Dialogue. Additionally, the Center actively nurtures undergraduates as researchers and writers through the Doyle Undergraduate Initiative.

### “STILL SPEAKING: CONVERSATIONS ON FAITH” THEME YEAR — ELMHURST COLLEGE

To mark the centennial graduation of two of its most esteemed alumni, Reinhold and H. Richard Niebuhr (Class of 1910 and 1912, respectively), Elmhurst College chose to highlight its “defining tradition of interfaith engagement,” with a year of programming focused on interfaith cooperation. “Still Speaking: Conversations on Faith,” has largely been driven by a collaboration between President S. Alan Ray, several high-level administrators, the College Chaplaincy and the College's Niebuhr Center, which focuses on the intersection between service, calling and academic work.

“Still Speaking,” will include public and academic lectures, cultural events, service and outreach

projects and academic and classroom work. The year kicks off with a lecture from David Brooks on Reinhold Niebuhr's legacy, and a panel discussion from religiously diverse leaders from around the Chicago area. In the words of President Ray, “At a time when religious rhetoric justifies acts of violence and non-religious rhetoric attacks constitutionally protected speech and worship, Elmhurst College is providing opportunities where the proper role of religion in our public life can be explored, debated, and defined.”

### CAMPUS WIDE ASSET MAPPING AND STRATEGIC PLANNING — DEPAUL UNIVERSITY

As President of the country's largest Catholic university, Father Dennis Holtschneider of DePaul University in Chicago has committed to advancing a culture of interfaith cooperation at DePaul. DePaul has a history of supporting religious diversity on campus and has put significant resources and staff time toward interfaith programming. Under the guidance of President Holtschneider and with the vision of key faculty and staff leaders, great strides are being made to advance the field of interfaith studies, including but not limited to the development of a Concentration in Interfaith Leadership, the University Ministry's interfaith programming and the work of the Center for Inter-Religious Engagement.

From May to August, 2010, DePaul University and Interfaith Youth Core (IFYC) completed an asset mapping and strategic planning process to build on DePaul's existing interfaith commitments and model a culture of interfaith cooperation at DePaul. The assessment and asset mapping began with a student survey designed to measure student attitudes and behaviors related to issues of religious identity, diversity and interfaith cooperation. The asset mapping process illuminated existing DePaul resources and began to identify opportunities to build off of DePaul's strengths in order to spread a culture of interfaith cooperation institution-wide. Four

Task Groups of DePaul stakeholders researched existing assets for interfaith cooperation at DePaul and made recommendations for ways to augment current efforts. DePaul and IFYC stakeholders designed and distributed student, staff and faculty questionnaires to solicit additional insights into attitudes and behaviors related to religious identity, diversity and interfaith cooperation as well as to surface

faculty and staff capacity to support interfaith cooperation. IFYC staff facilitated focus groups of students, staff and faculty to further mine the data and begin to generate recommendations for future programming. Finally, IFYC staff led a strategic planning process with DePaul faculty, staff and students that built off of the results of the asset mapping to propose and prioritize future initiatives.



## Conclusion

In his inauguration speech on January 20, 2009, President Barack Obama explained,

“For we know that our patchwork heritage is a strength, not a weakness. We are a nation of Christians and Muslims, Jews and Hindus — and nonbelievers. We are shaped by every language and culture, drawn from every end of this Earth; and because we have tasted the bitter swill of civil war and segregation, and emerged from that dark chapter stronger and more united, we cannot help but believe that the old hatreds shall someday pass; that the lines of tribe shall soon dissolve; that as the world grows smaller, our common humanity shall reveal itself; and that America must play its role in ushering in a new era of peace.”

Just as higher education has helped American society as a whole to respond positively and constructively to other social issues, so does higher education have the opportunity to play a leadership role in helping society to embrace its patchwork heritage of religious diversity. The White House Office of Faith-based and Neighborhood Partnerships believes that

higher education has a unique role to play in strengthening social cohesion, building social capital and addressing social problems through interfaith cooperation.

As this report demonstrates, there is already a great deal of exceptional work around interfaith cooperation in higher education underway. What this work also demonstrates is that there is still a need to share and cultivate best practices, foster the growth of this work amongst campus and higher education networks and build capacity within individual institutions. The work, vision and leadership of the institutions represented in this report show a growing movement of interfaith cooperation in higher education.

Interfaith Youth Core is committed to supporting this growing field through ongoing gatherings and networking opportunities and direct partnerships with individual campuses. For more information, please see the list of represented institutions below or contact Mary Ellen Giess, Manager of Campus Outreach, Interfaith Youth Core: [maryellen@ifyc.org](mailto:maryellen@ifyc.org) or 312.573.8924.

## *Institutions Represented at the Convening on Interfaith Cooperation and Higher Education, August 9-10, 2010*

### **CONVENING HOSTS:**

DePaul University, Chicago, IL:  
<http://studentaffairs.depaul.edu/ministry/>

Interfaith Youth Core, Chicago, IL:  
[www.ifyc.org](http://www.ifyc.org)

### **INSTITUTIONS REPRESENTED:**

ACPA College Student Educators International:  
<http://www2.myacpa.org/>

Amherst College — Religious Life:  
<https://www.amherst.edu/campuslife/religiouslife>

Andover Newton Theological Seminary —  
Center for Interreligious and Communal  
Leadership Education:  
<http://www.ants.edu/circle>

Berea College — Campus Christian Center:  
<http://www.berea.edu/campuschristiancenter/>

Berea College — Department of Religion  
and Philosophy:  
[http://www.berea.edu/philosophyandreligion/  
default.asp](http://www.berea.edu/philosophyandreligion/default.asp)

Brown University — Office of the Chaplains and  
Religious Life:  
[http://www.brown.edu/Administration/  
Chaplains/](http://www.brown.edu/Administration/Chaplains/)

Catholic Theological Union — Interreligious  
Studies:  
[http://www.ctu.edu/Courses\\_and\\_Programs/  
Certificates/Interreligious-Studies](http://www.ctu.edu/Courses_and_Programs/Certificates/Interreligious-Studies)

Claremont School of Theology:  
[http://www.cst.edu/about\\_claremont/](http://www.cst.edu/about_claremont/)

Cornell University — Cornell United Religious  
Work:  
<http://www.curw.cornell.edu/>

Denison University — Office of Religious and  
Spiritual Life:  
<http://www.denison.edu/offices/religiouslife/>

DePaul University — Department  
of Religious Studies:  
<http://las.depaul.edu/rel/>

DePaul University — University Ministry:  
<http://studentaffairs.depaul.edu/ministry/>

Dominican University — Department of Theology  
and Pastoral Ministry:  
[http://www.dom.edu/departments/theology/  
index.html](http://www.dom.edu/departments/theology/index.html)

Dominican University — University Ministry:  
<http://www.dom.edu/ministry/>

Dominican University — Office of Service  
Learning:  
<http://www.dom.edu/service>

Duke University — Religious Life:  
<http://www.chapel.duke.edu/religiouslife.html>

Elmhurst College — College Chaplaincy:  
[http://public.elmhurst.edu/spirituallife/1314387.  
html](http://public.elmhurst.edu/spirituallife/1314387.html)

Elmhurst College — Office of Communications  
and Public Affairs:  
<http://public.elmhurst.edu/>

Emory University — Department of Religion:  
<http://www.religion.emory.edu/index.html>

Emory University — Office of the Dean of the  
Chapel and Religious Life:  
<http://www.religiouslife.emory.edu/>

Evangelical Lutheran Church in America —  
Lutheran Campus Ministry:  
[http://www.elca.org/Growing-In-Faith/Ministry/  
Campus-Ministry.aspx](http://www.elca.org/Growing-In-Faith/Ministry/Campus-Ministry.aspx)

Fiedler Hillel at Northwestern University:  
<http://www.nuhillel.org/>

Franklin College — Religious Life:  
[http://www.franklincollege.edu/student-life/  
religious-life](http://www.franklincollege.edu/student-life/religious-life)

Georgetown University — Berkley Center for  
Religion, Peace, & World Affairs:  
<http://berkeleycenter.georgetown.edu/>

Harvard University — Kennedy School  
of Government:  
<http://www.hks.harvard.edu/>

Hebrew College — Center for Interreligious and  
Communal Leadership Education:  
<http://www.hebrewcollege.edu/interfaith>

Illinois Campus Compact:  
<http://www.illinoiscompact.org/>

Indiana Campus Compact:  
<http://www.indianacampuscompact.org/>

The Journal of College and Character:  
<http://journals.naspa.org/jcc/>

Loyola University Chicago — Department  
of Theology:  
<http://www.luc.edu/theology/>

Loyola University Chicago — School of  
Education: [http://www.luc.edu/education/index.  
shtml](http://www.luc.edu/education/index.shtml)

Luther College — Diversity Center:  
<http://www.luther.edu/diversity/>

Mount Holyoke College — Office of Diversity  
and Inclusion:  
<http://www.illinoiscompact.org/>

Nazareth College — Center for Interfaith  
Studies and Dialogue:  
<http://www.naz.edu/dept/cisd/>

Nazareth College — Center for Spirituality:  
<http://www.naz.edu/dept/cfs/>

Northwestern University — Religious Life:  
<http://www.northwestern.edu/chaplain/>

Oberlin College — Office of Religious  
and Spiritual Life:  
[http://new.oberlin.edu/office/religious-and-  
spiritual-life/](http://new.oberlin.edu/office/religious-and-spiritual-life/)

Seattle University — Campus Ministry:  
[http://www.seattleu.edu/missionministry/  
campusministry/](http://www.seattleu.edu/missionministry/campusministry/)

Secular Students Alliance:  
<http://secularstudents.org/>

Smith College — Religious and Spiritual Life:  
<http://www.smith.edu/religiouslife/>

St. Mary's College of California — The Center for  
Engaged Religious Pluralism:  
[http://www.stmarys-ca.edu/academics/schools/  
school-of-liberal-arts/centers-and-institutes/  
engaged-pluralism/](http://www.stmarys-ca.edu/academics/schools/school-of-liberal-arts/centers-and-institutes/engaged-pluralism/)

Stanford University — Office for Religious Life:  
<http://www.stanford.edu/group/religiouslife/>

The University of Chicago — Booth School  
of Business:  
<http://www.chicagobooth.edu/>

University of Illinois at Chicago — Department  
of Philosophy:  
<http://www.uic.edu/depts/phil/index.htm>

University of Indianapolis — Office of Ecumenical  
and Interfaith Programs:  
<http://ministries.uindy.edu>

University of Notre Dame — Kroc Institute for  
International Peace Studies: <http://kroc.nd.edu/>

University of Pennsylvania — Office of Equity  
and Access: <http://www.vpul.upenn.edu/aap/>

University of Wisconsin, Madison — Lubar  
Institute for the Study of Abrahamic Religions:  
<http://lisar.lss.wisc.edu/>

Vanderbilt University — Divinity School and  
Graduate Department of Religion: [http://www.  
vanderbilt.edu/divinity/](http://www.vanderbilt.edu/divinity/)

Wellesley College — Office of Religious and  
Spiritual Life: <http://www.wellesley.edu/rellife/>

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