BETTER TOGETHER INTERFAITH YOUTH CORE

2013 QUICK START TOOLKIT
Images and stories of religious conflict dominate the evening news and shape our understanding of global current events. Yet thousands of college students are working together across religious and non-religious beliefs, making their campuses the ground for a global movement of interfaith action, addressing social issues most important to their campus. Students from campuses of all sizes across the country are participating in Better Together, a student-led campaign for interfaith action.

Better Together leaders raised the bar on interfaith cooperation in a big way at Syracuse University last year. At their fall Juice Jam concert, they got 7,000 diverse students chanting the message of Better Together and giving $30,000 for famine relief in the Horn of Africa. Later in the year they hosted a “shack-a-thon,” where students slept in shacks and talked about the values in their traditions that called them to tackle homelessness. The pinnacle of their campaign came when they turned a rivalry into an opportunity to showcase the power of interfaith cooperation: basketball rivals Syracuse and Georgetown came together host a canned food drive at a game and showed a halftime video about being Better Together. The event engaged 27,000 basketball fans, raised nearly $1,600, and collected thousands of pounds of food. Their work led them far down the path of transforming their campus for interfaith cooperation and won them the top Better Together Award for the year. Check out their pinboard of photos from the campaign year in Pinterest!

This toolkit will help you get started, but before you turn the page, visit the Better Together page (ifyc.org/bettertogether) to sign up for the campaign.

Add your campus to the map and watch “The Update” to stay current on the latest news. Once you sign up, your regional contact at IFYC will get in touch to help you get your campaign off the ground.

Go to Facebook (facebook.com/WeAreBetterTogether) and like the page to join the national conversation.
Getting Started…

Building Your Campaign Team

Movements are built when a core group of leaders come together around a common cause. Your campaign team is that core group of leaders: people who are committed to making interfaith action a movement on campus. Here are some general guidelines for building your team:

**Committed to making interfaith cooperation a reality:** Among the most important things you can do for the success of your campaign is building a leadership team of people who are passionate about interfaith cooperation. Be sure to keep the mission alive by regularly discussing the purpose of your work, and creating opportunities for your team to Voice, Engage and Act together.

**Connected and networked:** If building a movement is about getting a critical mass of people involved in your work, you’ll want to work with leaders who have connections to a wide variety of groups and networks.

**Representative of campus diversity:** Interfaith events are more successful when the diverse constituents of a campus are brought in from the beginning and given a stake in the vision.

As you think about who will be on your campaign team, it’s also helpful to think about what the leaders on your campaign team can do to make your campaign a success. Here are some suggested campaign team roles and ideas for finding a great fit:

**Outreach Lead:** your friend who seems to be friends with everyone on campus. All he’ll have to do is post a status on his Facebook profile or ask a few friends to put up flyers and many who’ve never heard the word “interfaith” will learn about your campaign.

**Action Issue Lead:** your friend who’s involved in so many causes that you’ve lost count. She’ll have a ton of experience in leading participants in action around your campaign issue.

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Request to join your regional Better Together group on Facebook to connect with other organizers, share campaign stories, and more!

**Northeast** - CT. DE. ME. MD. MA. NH. NJ. NY. PA. RI. VT. DC
on.fb.me/NEregion

**Southeast** - AL. AR. FL. GA. LA. MS. NC. SC. TN. VA. WV
on.fb.me/SEregion

**West/Midwest** - IL. IN. IA. KY. MI. MN. MO. NE. ND. OH. SD. WI. WY
on.fb.me/WMWregion

**Southwest** - AZ. CO. KS. NM. OK. TX. UT
on.fb.me/SWESTregion

**West Coast** - AK. CA. HI. ID. NV. OR. WA
on.fb.me/Westregion

**Campus Staff and Faculty** – National
on.fb.me/IFAllies

Run one (or more) Better Together event and let us know how it goes!
Finding Your Allies

Your campus may already have great interfaith and service programming going on and there are likely events and initiatives already planned for the upcoming school year. Your Better Together campaign can only be strengthened by collaborating with others, so you should identify and reach out to the people on your campus that you can connect with. You should identify: your staff or faculty ally who will support and mentor your team and help you connect with institutional resources like money and space, key influencers (university president, newspaper editor, popular professors), student groups that may identify with interfaith or your action issue (faith groups, alternative spring break organizers), community allies (local faith communities, homeless shelter).

Spreading the Word

A key difference between an activity and a movement is numbers. Change will only come when masses of people act together around a shared vision. Making people on your campus aware of Better Together serves to build that community, gives people a common language and rallying point for people who want to make the world better together, and will amplify the impact of your campaign. Here are some key ways to spread your message:

Choosing Action Issues and Making Them Interfaith

Selecting action issues (you can choose one or multiple) for your campaign begins with two simple steps: asking and listening.

- Talk to the people on campus: What matters to them? What does their religious or non-religious tradition compel them to work for in the world? What projects are they already working on that could benefit from the support of an interfaith coalition?

- Connect with the broader community organizations in your area or region: What challenges or opportunities are they facing that others could collaborate with them on? Where could you realistically make an inspiring or important difference in the time you’ll have?

Keep in mind that “interfaith” is the focus of the movement we are building, and people of all religious and non-religious backgrounds should feel welcome participating in the Better Together campaign. Choose issues to work in that everyone can get behind, which may sometimes mean saying no to issues that many people (including your campaign team members) are very passionate about.

Event Logistics Lead: your friend who pays attention to detail and never forgets a meeting. He’ll make sure that you’ve thought of every detail for your project and planning meetings, from ordering kosher and halal food to reserving space to meet.

Social Media Lead: your friend who is always on her computer or her iPhone, and knew about Twitter from the start will know how to creatively get the word out online and through other communications platforms.

Finance Lead: your friend who has experience with how other student groups or community organizations manage their finances. She’s been a leader in other groups, and knows the best ways to budget money for projects.

Campus Ally: the staff or faculty member who is excited to help you succeed. He may be the chaplain or religious studies faculty or a staff person in student or multicultural affairs. He doesn’t need to be at all your meetings, but will help you access institutional resources like funding and space for your event and help your campaign get the whole campus involved.

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Social Media

Facebook
- Start a Better Together group for your campus and make it a dynamic online meeting place for your campus supporters.
- Join the national conversation by posting your campus campaign news on the national Better Together Facebook page (facebook.com/wearebettogether).
- Join your region’s Better Together Organizers Facebook Group and post your events, ideas, and questions.

Twitter
- Stay informed on Twitter by following @ifyc and using the hashtag #BetterTogether.
- Set up a Twitter account for your campaign and use it to Tweet at people on campus.

Your Better Together Campaign’s Key Components…

Building Awareness

Kick off Weeks:
When school starts, spend some time raising awareness about your campaign: You want people on campus to know what Better Together is and to get interested in learning more. Be creative because the fall kickoff will set the tone for your campaign and help set you up for success with future events. Then, when you come back from winter break, it’s time to raise awareness again. During your winter kickoff, you’ll do the same sorts of things you did in the fall, but you can also share your fall accomplishments, which will help with recruitment to your campaign’s spring events.

Better Together Gear:
IFYC offers Better Together t-shirts, bracelets, and promotional kits (containing Better Together buttons, wristbands and stickers) that help you spread your message. Visit www.ifyc.org/bettogether to get your own.

Better Together Events
Better Together events are the backbone of your campaign. While you will likely use a variety of strategies to spread the message of interfaith cooperation and get your campus voicing, engaging, and acting, many of them are likely to involve bringing people together to do something.

The way you design your events, what you name them, how you publicize them and who you involve in them are all critical to your success.

You can use any event for your Better Together campaign, including pre-existing events that already have a lot of momentum and could be a great platform for interfaith action. In order for your events to be “Better Together,” they simply need to:

Include Better Together in their name. For example, you could turn a run to raise money against hunger “Run Better Together” or an annual concert into “Better Together Jam.”

Guerilla Marketing
Use creative ways to raise awareness of your campaign and spread your message:
- Poster, stencil, sticker, and banner your way through campus.*
- Organize a flash mob or another “impromptu” mass event.
- Wear Better Together t-shirts, wrist bands, and pins.

Traditional Media
- Invite reporters from your campus or local community paper to attend your events.
- Write op-eds for your campus or local community paper about your campaign.

*Posters, stencils, stickers and other tools are available to download at ifyc.org/bettogether
Integrate the core goals of Better Together by getting as many students as possible to …

- **Voice** their religious/non-religious values, experiences, and identities;
- **Engage** others across lines of religious difference in meaningful conversation about those values; and
- **Act** together on shared values to make a positive impact on issues important to their campus community.

Here’s an example of a project that embodied the goals of Better Together …

**Serve Better Together**

The ultimate action-goal of Ohio University’s Better Together campaign was to raise $5,000 to build a well in the global south with the nonprofit charity: water. To make the issue relevant to their student body, they organized a local stream clean-up and interfaith dialogue. After hauling over 100 bags of trash out of the streambed, the 40-plus participants dove deeper into conversations about how their faith and ethical beliefs called them to act for water justice.

Through **Serve Better Together**, Ohio University students:

- **Voiced** by directly discussing the ways their religious and non-religious values, experiences, and identities related to the issue of water justice and compelled them to take personal action. If they had just talked about water justice and skipped over relating it to their religious/non-religious identity, they would not have been voicing.
- **Engaged** by building meaningful relationships while working side by side through the day, talking and joking with each other as they went. They continued to engage through the final dialogue.
- **Acted** together on their shared values of caring for the environment and empowering the poor. They had an impact in three different ways: they raised awareness about local and global water justice issues, they directly changed the environment of their local stream, and they raised funds for building a well in the global south.

See if you can pick out the ways some other events from recent campaigns achieved the goals of Better Together:

**Live Better Together**

The residence halls at Ohio University got in on the interfaith action too. Better Together organizers created a competition among the residence halls to raise money for their well-building project with charity: water and to develop interfaith literacy and meaningful relationships along the way. Organizers gave interfaith presentations for RAs and at their Hall Council meetings. The challenge not only raised over $1,000 for the well, but got hundreds of students coming together to dialogue about their traditions and to organize fundraising activities (selling food, tie-dying shirts, penny wars, trash for cash, etc.) for the cause. The team credits this initiative with more than doubling the reach of their campaign and making interfaith cooperation a sustainable institutional priority.

**Fast Better Together**

Augustana College held a fast-a-thon around Thanksgiving with 120 people. Fasting is an important practice in many religious traditions, often serving both as a time of self-purification and as a reminder of those around the world who struggle to meet basic needs. Organizers invited students to fast for the day and donate the money they would have spent on food to Theplace2b, a safe haven for at-risk and homeless youth. They broke their fast together with a meal and reflected on why they each chose to fast and how their choice related to their faith and philosophical beliefs.

**Talk Better Together**

Nearly 100 people came together at Dominican University for fast-paced conversations about the ways their religious and non-religious values, experiences, and identities called them to serve others. The event design limited conversations to five minutes each to ensure high-energy conversations and introduce everyone to the diversity of perspectives in the room. Their conversations helped them recruit people to take action together in service projects throughout the year.
Have a bigger appetite for action? Consider running a Better Together Week: Pack in a series of events over the course of the week to get your campus collectively voicing, engaging, and acting.

The year's top campaigns will be recognized with the Better Together Awards in June of 2013 and win prizes that will help them amplify their impact.

Connect to the National Movement…

Thousands of students are leading Better Together campaigns on campuses throughout the country this year. Join the national conversation by cross-posting news about your campaign to the national Facebook page.

Spread the word further by tagging the page on your personal wall posts whenever you’re posting about your campaign. Your friends will be able to easily link to the Better Together Facebook Page (www.facebook.com/wearebettertogether) and find out more about your campaign.

Liking the Better Together page not only helps you spread word of the campaign, but it also means you'll receive important campaign news and updates from IFYC.

Join your Better Together Organizers’ Group on Facebook based on your campus’ region (Northeast, Southeast, West-Midwest, Southwest, and West Coast) to connect with other organizers & IFYC coaches. Find yours by clicking the “info” tab on www.facebook.com/wearebettertogether.

Connect with the national movement through IFYC’s website. There, you can:

Watch “The Update” to get the latest news on the Better Together campaign, the challenge, and awards.

Learn about IFYC’s Interfaith Leadership Institutes where you can get intensive training and meet organizers from around the country.

Download Better Together resources.

Read blogs written by national interfaith thoughtleaders and student organizers.