



## **Interfaith and Pre-Professional Curricular Grants *Request for Proposals***

As part of an ongoing collaboration with the Teagle Foundation to foster the field of Interfaith Studies, Interfaith Youth Core (IFYC) is pleased to announce grants of up to \$10,000 to colleges and universities to support the development of undergraduate curricular programs in Interfaith Studies that deliberately and proactively bridge liberal arts and pre-professional education models.

Faculty or other campus personnel interested in applying for these grants should consider attending *Interfaith Studies: Curricular Programs & Core Competencies* (<http://bit.ly/InterfaithStudies2016>), March 13-16, 2016 at California Lutheran University, which will provide guidance and support for the granting process. IFYC will also be hosting a webinar on March 23, during which we will review the details and requirements of the grants and the application process.

**The deadline for grant proposals is April 15, 2016.** An independent jury of scholars will award 10-15 grants on June 1, 2016 for implementation from July 2016 – July 2017.

Questions about the grants or application process are welcome, and may be addressed to Esther Boyd, Curriculum Development Manager at IFYC, at [esther@ifyc.org](mailto:esther@ifyc.org) or 312.376.4777.

### ***The Opportunity: Bridging the Liberal Arts and Professional Preparation through Interfaith Studies***

The American religious landscape is rapidly diversifying. According to some estimates, the United States is now the most religiously diverse nation in the world.<sup>1</sup> Whereas once that diversity may have been limited to the nation's coastal metropolises, the "new religious America" that Diana Eck describes is increasingly characteristic of every corner of American life, from Boston to Bozeman and Miami to Minneapolis.

As this religious diversity reaches college and university campuses, and religion maintains a prominent role in public affairs, institutions of higher learning are striving to discern how to prepare young people to succeed in such a religiously diverse society and world. While many campuses have made great strides in fostering interfaith cooperation and pluralism through co-curricular programming, one of the emerging discussions is how interfaith engagement can be addressed in the college classroom as part of a more comprehensive preparation for global citizenship. This discussion has coalesced around the idea of a new interdisciplinary and

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<sup>1</sup> Eck, D. (2001) *A New Religious America: How a "Christian Country" Has Become the World's Most Religiously Diverse Nation*. New York, NY: HarperCollins Publishers.



practitioner field that might be called *Interfaith Studies*.<sup>2</sup> If such a nascent field does, or should, exist, what are the learning outcomes of such a field? How will students successfully apply their learnings in real world practical applications post-graduation? What professional fields will Interfaith Studies students enter post-graduation?

Alongside this trend, the humanities – and the liberal arts more generally – are coming under increased scrutiny for their purported lack of direct career viability. In light of this reality, one striking theme to emerge from the development of Interfaith Studies thus far is its latent potential to provide a bridge between traditional liberal arts education and undergraduate preparation for the professions. The study of how people who orient around religion differently interact has intrinsic value for human understanding and flourishing, but it also has real-world and ever more necessary applications in fields as varied as healthcare, education, and business.

Furthermore, in the development of curricular programs in Interfaith Studies, many faculty have recognized new opportunities to create or strengthen the relationships between liberal arts faculty and curricula and professional environments and schools. At its best, this can be a dynamic and multi-dimensional relationship. For example:

- Local professional environments – such as hospitals, social service agencies, schools, companies, etc. – are excellent internship sites for students to both apply their learning as well as conduct research on the important subject of how religious diversity is reshaping contemporary professional environments.
- The resulting research can then inform the development of individual courses on local religious dynamics. Moreover, it can guide the broader curriculum – especially undergraduate preparation for the professions – to better prepare students to meet the needs of local and national professional employers vis-à-vis religious diversity.
- Particularly compelling sites and stories can be developed into case studies to be taught and integrated into coursework. Such cases invite students to inhabit particular characters and have been shown by Harvard Business School and others to be especially good preparation for professional success.
- Finally, the relationships that liberal arts faculty develop with local professional agencies through conducting the research, as well as the strengthened collaboration with their colleagues teaching in the professions, can be parlayed into recommendations for graduate professional schools and internship and job placement opportunities for students. These students will gain experience in professional environments early in their career trajectories, the leaders in those agencies can meet and evaluate the students for future employment, and the faculty will develop networks that they can use to help with job placement for their graduating students.

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<sup>2</sup> It is important to note that there is a healthy degree of disagreement over terminology amongst scholars invested in this growing field. Due to IFYC's intellectual pedigree within the relevant fields, we prefer the term "interfaith" and, for the sake of consistency, use it exclusively through this request for proposals. In his recent book, *Interreligious Studies*, Oddbjørn Leirvik notes that, while there is disagreement, most scholars and practitioners tend to use the terms "interfaith" and "interreligious" interchangeably. We are not opposed to proposals from institutions that prefer alternate terminology.



Cumulatively, this could help a variety of institutions address the growing chasm between liberal education and undergraduate professional preparation from both sides. Students who may be naturally drawn more to modes of liberal education will, through Interfaith Studies programs, gain exposure to the immediate professional applicability of their learning through internships in local professional contexts. Conversely, students who may be initially drawn to pre-professional preparation will, through the infusion of new disciplinary content and perspectives on interfaith dynamics from the humanities and social sciences, gain exposure to the critical thinking, problem-solving, and communications skills traditionally associated with the liberal arts. Furthermore, as most professional environments become significantly more diverse, these institutions will be equipped to play an even more direct and positive role in their students' professional trajectory, while simultaneously developing educational programs and relationships that graduate leaders that can better serve that diversity.

## **Grant Parameters**

In order to help build the field to meet this opportunity, IFYC is offering grants to support the development of undergraduate curricular programs in Interfaith Studies that deliberately and proactively bridge liberal arts and pre-professional education models.<sup>3</sup>

IFYC will distribute grants to institutions that *either*:

- 1) Propose programs that build clear and sustainable partnerships between liberal arts faculty and professional schools and programs – either within the same institution or in cooperation with another institution – in fields such as medicine, education, or business; or
- 2) Propose programs that explicitly build partnerships with local employers to better identify the skill-sets required for effectively joining the local workforce. These partnerships must then be parlayed into curricular design and revision in the proposed curricular program.

We believe that curricular programs built in this fashion will not only help instantiate Interfaith Studies further within the Academy and bring greater focus to its educational objectives, but can also help bridge the liberal arts and pre-professional preparation. In order to accomplish these goals, applicants should consider the following guidelines when constructing their proposals. In keeping with the collaborative nature of the project as a whole, IFYC staff members are open to discuss proposals and offer feedback prior to submission.

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<sup>3</sup> This initiative is a continuation of a previous partnership between IFYC and the Teagle Foundation, through which grants were awarded to seventeen institutions of higher learning around the country to develop curricular programs in Interfaith Studies. Recipients of a previous Teagle-IFYC grant are eligible to apply for this opportunity, provided their proposal demonstrates how they will use Interfaith Studies as a bridge between the liberal arts and professional preparation, and does not merely continue the work of the previous grant project.



## **Project Guidelines**

### **Defining “Interfaith Studies”**

For the purpose of these grants, IFYC offers the following working definition of “Interfaith Studies”:

Interfaith Studies is an interdisciplinary field that examines the multiple dimensions of how people who orient around religion differently interact with one another, and the implications of these interactions for communities, civil society, and global politics. Scholarship and pedagogy in Interfaith Studies addresses questions both of theory – e.g. what do we mean by interfaith dialogue, and how has dialogue historically presented itself in different socio-political contexts? – and praxis: e.g., how do we assess the effectiveness of interreligious cooperation in any particular context?<sup>4</sup> A major goal of Interfaith Studies programs is the development of a cadre of professionals who can assume the mantle “interfaith leader,” defined as someone with the vision, knowledge base, and skill set to help individuals and communities who orient around religion differently in civil society and politics build mutual respect, positive relationships, and a commitment to the common good.<sup>5</sup>

As a working definition of an emerging field, we expect grant proposals to both build upon and expand this definition in the articulation of their projects. Furthermore, the execution of those projects will bring grantees and IFYC into a mutually enriching conversation that further establishes the contours of this developing field.

In addition to fostering an appreciation for and knowledge of religious diversity, IFYC is equally concerned with preparing students for engagement, civility, and participation in a diverse society. We seek to help students develop the type of knowledge that builds positive attitudes and relationships between people who orient around religion differently, and ultimately contributes to a civic social good. We therefore believe effective programs in Interfaith Studies include at least four main topics of exploration:

1. **Theologies or ethics of interfaith cooperation**, i.e. coherent narratives that incorporate and interpret the texts, histories, stories, heroes, literature, etc. within a given tradition that speak to the imperative of building positive relationships with the religious “other” and apply them to the contemporary dynamic of religious diversity;
2. **Appreciative knowledge of diverse religious traditions**, i.e. an understanding of the often lesser told histories and narratives of how diverse religious communities have positively contributed to the greater good in society and cooperated across lines of difference on common issues;
3. **Shared values between diverse religious traditions**, i.e. a comparative examination of how different traditions speak to common values in distinct ways; and

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<sup>4</sup> Jennifer Peace and Hodayra Ziad, “AAR New Group Proposal: Interreligious and Interfaith Studies Group” (proposal presented to the American Academy of Religion, November 2012).

<sup>5</sup> Eboo Patel, “Toward a Field of Interfaith Studies,” *Liberal Education* 99, no.4 (2013).



4. **The history of interfaith cooperation**, i.e. an analysis of the many moments in history when faith communities and leaders have worked together to enact shared values.<sup>6</sup>

### ***Interdisciplinarity***

Interfaith Studies learning objectives can be integrated through multiple disciplines across the humanities, sciences, social sciences, and the professions. Already there is a substantial and growing body of literature that approaches the field of Interfaith Studies from multiple perspectives, including history, critical theory, theology, political science, public policy, sociology, neurology, business, nursing, and pedagogy. Many of the most successful courses we have seen brought Interfaith Studies content into courses squarely set in other disciplines, have been co-taught by professors from different fields, or have intentionally brought in readings, case studies, and other resources from a variety of academic disciplines.

### ***Practitioner Component***

As is the case with similar interdisciplinary fields – e.g. urban studies, community development, peace and justice studies, social work, etc. – we believe there should be a strong practitioner component to the development of course sequences in Interfaith Studies. Scholars working in this emerging field ask and pursue critical research questions, but we believe they should also have an eye to creating programs of study that shape leaders who “do” in their areas. Correspondingly, because these course sequences draw from and build on pre-professional programs, at least one course in the sequence should offer particularly robust experiential learning opportunities, such as an internship with a local agency or a practicum component.

### ***Community of Scholars***

In addition to seeding new curricular programs, a secondary goal of this project is to create a community of scholars who are committed to building the field of Interfaith Studies across disciplines and institutions. Toward that end, IFYC will facilitate all grantees’ participation in a mid-project workshop, tentatively planned for January 2017. This workshop will provide an opportunity to share cross-institutionally the best practices and resources emerging through the grants, as well as to strategize future development and dissemination.

### ***Assessment***

Assessment is particularly important for this project in order to demonstrate the value of courses that infuse Interfaith Studies in professional education. IFYC will leverage its specialized team of assessment experts to run workshops exclusively for grantee faculty on designing learning outcomes and developing corresponding assessment tools. Assessment will also be a major theme of the mid-project workshop.

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<sup>6</sup> Eboo Patel & Cassie Meyer, “Interfaith Cooperation on Campus: Teaching Interfaith Literacy,” *Journal of College and Character* 12.4 (2011).



## ***Grant Logistics***

### ***Definition of a “Course Sequence”***

For the purposes of these grants, IFYC defines a “course sequence” as a minimum of three independent courses that jointly contribute to student learning objectives within the field of Interfaith Studies. Proposals should articulate these student learning objectives, how they fit within the field of Interfaith Studies as defined here and/or elaborated on in the proposal, and corresponding assessment methods over the scope of the course sequence curriculum. Course sequences may function in the overall curriculum as either a concentration, a minor, or a set of courses offered within the core curriculum. In certain cases, they may also exist as a series of individual courses bridging Interfaith Studies with multiple professional preparation programs rather than a course sequence building on cumulative student learning objectives. While preexisting or modified existing courses can be incorporated into proposed course sequences, if that is the case please take extra care to articulate how these courses contribute to the overall learning objectives of the course sequence in Interfaith Studies.

### ***Use of Funds***

Institutions should primarily use grant funds for support of stipends, working groups, retreats, and planning meetings that will develop curricula and course sequences. While institutions may use funds to send representatives to relevant meetings and/or offer small stipends to key project leaders, grantees should not use funds for capital expenditures or ongoing faculty and staff costs that the institution is presently providing. These are not faculty research grants. Rather, grantees should use the funds to offset one-time costs of program development and implementation. If you have questions about the appropriate use of grant funds, please feel free to contact IFYC.

## ***Proposal Requirements***

Proposals should be submitted via email to Esther Boyd at [esther@ifyc.org](mailto:esther@ifyc.org) as a single package and consist of the following components:

1. **A One-Paragraph Executive Summary of the Proposal** that offers a high-level snapshot of your project.
2. **A Three- to Five-Page Narrative that provides:**
  - Your understanding of Interfaith Studies and, if applicable, how this relates to your institution’s mission;
  - An assessment, if applicable, of your institution’s existing interfaith curricula;
  - An assessment, if applicable, of your institution’s existing relationships with local employers and/or existing partnerships between liberal arts and pre-professional faculty or programs;
  - A vision statement for your Interfaith Studies course sequence that articulates



- How you imagine your course sequence taking shape (you are encouraged but not required to list specific courses that will comprise the sequence),
- How your course sequence will bridge liberal arts and professional preparation for undergraduates,
- Why you think students will be interested in enrolling,
- What you plan to have accomplished by the end of the grant period, and
- Your definition of success for this project;
- A description of both the challenges and the opportunities that the grant would address in the institution's implementation of an Interfaith Studies course sequence;
- A preliminary plan for identifying and assessing student learning objectives over the scope of the course sequence;
- A plan for evaluation of the project both during and at the end of the grant period; and
- An indication of any extracurricular interfaith programming on your campus that may be integrated as a co-curricular element of your course sequence.

3. **A One-Page Project Timeline.**

4. **A One-Page Roster** of project leaders, including the name and contact information of the principal project contact as well as faculty members, administrators, and/or staff who will carry out the project and a description of each person's role.

5. **A Letter of Support** from the chief academic officer responsible for approving the program, be it minor, concentration, or revision to the core curriculum. In all cases, applicants are encouraged to submit additional letters of support from key administrators and/or faculty figures related to the project.

6. **A One-Page Budget** that describes the primary expense categories, including programmatic and personnel expenses, meals and travel for meetings, and costs of materials and supplies. Applicants should consult with their campus grant offices about any necessary administrative costs, and these costs should be included in the proposed budget, as well as the institution's financial support of this project and other relevant sources of additional funding. *Please note: Travel and meal costs should be modest and be used only to facilitate the participation of faculty or staff in key meetings that directly relate to the project.*

## ***Expectations of Grant Recipients***

If awarded an Interfaith Studies Course Sequence grant, the institution will first and foremost agree to work toward the establishment of an Interfaith Studies course sequence at their institution. Institutions will further agree to:

- Maintain regular communication with IFYC via email and individual phone calls;



- Whenever possible, attend remote networking opportunities with representatives of other grantee campuses in order to help create a network of institutions engaged in this field;
- Present on their work at the mid-project convening in January 2017;
- Provide a final report describing the outcome of the project, including a reflection on its successes, shortcomings, and student learning outcomes (if such an assessment has already taken place), with possible recommendations for future projects;
- Share all syllabi that comprise the Interfaith Studies course sequence with IFYC;
- Permit inclusion of information about its project in IFYC and Teagle Foundation publications; and
- Identify the funded activities as supported by IFYC and Teagle Foundation in all project materials and publicity.

### ***Selection***

IFYC will assemble an independent panel of scholars who will award 10-15 grants in accordance with the grant criteria articulated here. IFYC staff members will have the opportunity to discuss the proposals with the selection committee.

### ***Questions?***

IFYC staff members are available for consultation and feedback during the development of your proposal. Please contact Esther Boyd, curriculum development manager at IFYC, at [esther@ifyc.org](mailto:esther@ifyc.org) or 312.376.4777.