



CENTER FOR THE  
STUDY *of*  
DIVERSITY

Engaging Worldview Diversity and Interfaith Cooperation  
At the University of Delaware

A report prepared for the Center for the Study of Diversity

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## Introduction

As part of a student research grant for the Center for the Study of Diversity at the University of Delaware, I set out to explore the student experience related to worldview diversity and interfaith cooperation at the University of Delaware, with the assertion that strengthening efforts around these areas can strengthen key diversity initiatives and student outcomes at the University of Delaware. Research has demonstrated that religion and spirituality are salient aspects of college students' lives, that campus climate around religion/worldview shape the experience of students in significant ways, and that interfaith cooperation contributes positively to students' development and success in college (Astin, Astin & Lindholm, 2011; Mayhew & Rockenbach, 2014). Bowman, Rockenbach, and Mayhew (2015) demonstrate that an inclusive climate around religious and worldview diversity on college campuses is positively associated with participation in high impact practices such as study abroad, service learning, engaged learning pedagogies, and interactions across racial/ethnic difference.

This project served as an exploratory study with the ultimate goal of developing a set of recommendations for the University of Delaware around supporting worldview diversity and fostering interfaith cooperation. I assessed the University of Delaware's current efforts using the nine leadership practices published by Interfaith Youth Core (IFYC), developed to guide institutions of higher education to develop interfaith leadership cooperation on campus (Patel, Bringman Baxter, & Silverman, 2016). Based on this assessment, it was evident that UD lacks formal efforts related to interfaith cooperation. The recommendations developed for this report were guided by current research and literature, best practices at public institutions who are proactively engaging worldview diversity, and data collected from students at the University of Delaware. These recommendations also align with the University of Delaware's Action Plan for Diversity along with other strategic priorities. For the purposes of this project, Worldview is defined as a guiding life philosophy, which may be based on a particular religious tradition, spiritual orientation, non-religious perspective, or some combination of these (Rockenbach, 2014). Interfaith cooperation is defined as "Individuals from diverse religious and non-religious worldviews coming together in a way that respects diverse religious and non-religious identities, builds mutually inspiring relationships, and engages in common issues of shared social concern" (Patel & Meyer, 2010).

This project also aligned with the aims of the Center for the Study of Diversity and the University of Delaware's Action Plan for Diversity. The Center for the Study of Diversity (CSD) seeks to "facilitate dialogues about and understanding of the social and academic impact of diversity". Furthermore, the CSD, through the grant that funded this project, hoped to "inform and support diversity practices within our community". This project was designed to better understand the potential impact of engaging diversity within the context of religious difference for the University of Delaware. It also sought to promote a larger conversation about ways in which the University of Delaware can engage worldview diversity when striving for an inclusive campus.

The Diversity Action plan states that the University will support and strengthen multicultural programming and activities that enhance the learning experiences of all students. Goal six calls for the University to nurture positive relationships and promote conversations around common ground values. These are a few examples of how I believe the Diversity Action plan aligns with the aims of interfaith cooperation and how the Plan guided this project.

## Problem and Background

The University of Delaware has expressed its commitment to diversity. The University Diversity Action Plan (2015) argues that diversity is a central part of the University's mission and that it is critical as we prepare students as citizens and leaders (p. 5). If this is the case, does worldview diversity and interfaith cooperation deserve to play a role in this effort to build diversity competence and create diverse interactions amongst our students? If it does, evidence is lacking to support a prioritization at Delaware.

I have used the nine leadership practices developed by IFYC (Patel, Bringman Baxter, & Silverman, 2016) to map the University of Delaware's progress related to supporting worldview diversity and fostering interfaith cooperation. These practices were developed based on IFYC's extensive work with hundreds of higher education institutions across the country. They align with what they identified as commonalities amongst institutions that were successful in supporting diverse worldview identities and developing a commitment to interfaith cooperation on their campuses. Patel, Bringman Baxter, and Silverman (2016) write that these practices are most effective when developed with a commitment to both breadth, where a large percentage of the campus community has at least minimal exposure, and depth, where there are groups within the community exploring the issues in detail. Of those nine practices, UD has made no formal efforts or progress related to five of them. They include establishing links to institutional diversity and mission, developing campus wide strategy, creating a public identity related to interfaith cooperation, making interfaith cooperation an academic priority, and doing campus wide assessment of campus climate and interfaith initiatives. Some progress has been made in the other four categories (demonstrating respect and accommodation for diverse religious identities, building staff and faculty competence and capacity, student leadership, and campus-community partnerships) though much of that progress is linked to actions I have taken with a small but committed group of staff and students at UD. Simply put, formal efforts to address worldview diversity and foster interfaith cooperation amongst students is lacking at UD.

The literature on this issue urges that we need to study this problem and address worldview diversity and interfaith cooperation on the University campus. Rockenbach and Mayhew (2014) write that within the large volume of campus climate research, relatively little attention has been given specifically to how college students' worldviews shape their perceptions of experiences on campus. They note that on campuses and in the literature the conception of diversity continues to broaden and because of this religious and worldview diversity warrants attention. One reason Rockenbach and Mayhew argue empirical research on religious diversity on college campuses is necessary is that, as others also point out (Astin, Astin, and Lindholm, 2010), spirituality matters to college students. Astin, Astin, and Lindholm (2010) have demonstrated in a national study with the Higher Education Research Institute at UCLA that students have an interest in spirituality and integrating it into their lives. Rockenbach and Mayhew also point to multiple studies demonstrating that the dynamics of religious diversity on campus can be a potential source of strife, especially for religious minority students (Cole & Ahmadi, 2003; Seggie & Sanford, 2010; Bryant & Craft, 2010). Even religious majority students (i.e., Protestant Christians), despite claims by some of having a "privileged status," have been found to report feelings of stereotypes toward their Christian faith and ostracism on campus (Magolda & Gross, 2009; Moran, 2007; Moran, Lang, & Oliver, 2007).

Similar to students' interest in exploring spirituality, students also see value in pursuing relationships with others from diverse religious and nonreligious backgrounds. The Interfaith

Diversity Experiences and Attitudes Longitudinal Survey (IDEALS) is a longitudinal survey begun in Fall 2015, with over 20,000 students completing it from 122 campuses. Eighty-three percent of incoming first year students who took the survey in 2015 believe it is important to work with people of different religious and nonreligious backgrounds on issues of common concern. Eighty-five percent of students believe it is “important” or “very important” that their college or university provides a welcoming environment for people of diverse religious perspectives. Seventy-one percent of students believe that it is “important” or “very important” to have opportunities to get to know students from other religious and non-religious perspectives.

The body of research is expanding related to interfaith cooperation. (As noted, Patel and Meyer (2010) define this term in three parts: respect for difference, relationships across difference; and a common goal, or action toward the common good.) Rockenbach, Mayhew, Morin, Crandall, and Selznick (2015) have built on this conceptual understanding of interfaith cooperation to understand how interfaith co-curricular engagement in college fosters pluralism orientation. Pluralism orientation is defined as the ability to see the world from another’s perspective, ability to work with those from diverse backgrounds, and tolerance for difference (Engberg, Meader, & Hurtado, 2003). This definition of pluralism orientation closely relates to the University of Delaware’s general education objective that states that students should be able to “work collaboratively and independently within and across a variety of cultural contexts and a spectrum of differences” (Faculty Senate Resolution on General Education, 2014).

Rockenbach, Mayhew, Morin, Crandall, and Selznick (2015) developed a conceptual model to understand how institutional type, student characteristics (gender identity, race, worldview, etc.) and student experiences (curricular and co-curricular; formal and informal) lead to the outcome of pluralism orientation. Data for this study originated from the Campus Religious and Spiritual Climate Survey, which was administered annually on 52 institutions between 2011 and 2014. This study has a number of important implications, including:

- Perceptions of campus climate shape pluralism orientation. Students who perceive space for support and spiritual expression tend to be more pluralistically oriented.
- Informal interactions with religiously diverse peers (like dining, studying, living together, and socializing), along with engaging in interfaith dialogue and activities is positively associated with pluralism orientation.
- Co-curricular environments are more supportive of pluralism orientation related to worldview diversity than that of classroom environments.

To expand on the last point, Rockenbach et al. (2015) posit that the classroom environment tends to be characterized by hierarchies between faculty and student and amongst students. These environments may also promote competition over collaboration, both of which violate principles of positive intergroup contact (Allport, 1954; Pettigrew, 1998). Co-curricular environments may reduce the sense of hierarchy and can often be more cooperative rather than competitive.

With this in mind, and using both the goals of the Center for the Study of Diversity and UD’s Diversity Action Plan for guidance, I sought to understand the student experience as it relates to worldview diversity and interfaith cooperation as an opportunity to seek out potential areas for growth at UD. This happened through gathering data from the Residence Life & Housing Fall Floor Feedback survey which is sent out to all residential students every fall, and through two focus groups hosted with students whose worldview is a salient identity for them. I also spoke with individuals at three public institutions of higher education on the east coast, each of which have made a proactive commitment to interfaith cooperation through the creation of interfaith centers on their respective campuses, along with hiring University staff to lead

interfaith efforts on campus. These conversations were designed to learn about common themes related to leading efforts around worldview diversity and interfaith cooperation from institutions who have already made strides in this area. The remainder of this report will share what I learned through these efforts, including major themes from my conversations that I think may be particularly relevant for thinking about change at UD. The report will end with recommendations, additional areas for consideration, and opportunities for further exploration related to interfaith cooperation and worldview diversity at UD.

### **Insights from Residence Life and Housing Fall Floor Feedback**

The Office of Residence Life and Housing's Fall Floor Feedback Survey, sent annually to all residential students during the Fall semester, was used to explore questions of worldview identity and student's attitudes toward interacting with others who come from worldview identities different from their own. It also collected demographic data, including how students identified their own worldview (see Appendix B). The total sample of the 2016 Fall Floor Feedback survey was 4,990. First-year students were overrepresented in the sample, accounting for approximately 58% of the total respondents. Upper-division students (second year at UD or more) accounted for 41%, and first-year transfer students accounted for just about 1% of the sample. Women were also overrepresented in the sample, with approximately 61% of respondents identifying as woman/female/feminine, compared to 36% who identified as man/male/masculine. The sample captures nearly 70% of the total residence hall population, allowing us to generalize findings to the total population living in the halls.

Recognizing that the term worldview may be unfamiliar to some students, they were given the following prompt before the survey asked any questions about their worldview, "The following questions are related to your religious or non-religious worldview. Worldview is defined as a guiding life philosophy, which may be based on a particular religious tradition, spiritual orientation, nonreligious perspective, or some combination of these." In the demographic section of the survey, students were also given the option to share their worldview identity. A list of options was presented along with an option to write-in how they would describe their worldview. Table 1 represents the responses to that demographic question. Because of the various worldview identities, this report also breaks down the categories into three sections; Majority worldview, minority worldview, and nonreligious worldview. Because Christianity is the majority worldview in the U.S., all students who responded with some form of Christian identity are captured in majority worldview. All students who responded with a particular religious identity that did not identify as Christian were placed in the minority worldview category. Any nonreligious identity, or a worldview not related to a specific religious tradition, was placed in the nonreligious category. It is important to recognize that there is a tremendous amount of diversity amongst each category, however making these distinctions makes it easier to understand the data, considering representation in some of the categories is so small.

Based on this data, just under half of our students identify with some type of Christian identity, with many of those (or about one third of the total sample from the survey) identifying as Catholic. Just over twenty percent identify with another religious worldview. UD has a large Jewish population, with eight percent of students identifying as Jewish on the survey. Lastly, twenty-nine percent of our students do not identify with a religious identity. There are a variety of categories that are represented here, from atheist, agnostic, to spiritual or just simply

nonreligious. The nonreligious identity is currently the fastest growing worldview category amongst college aged students (Pew Religious Landscape Report, 2016).

**Table 1: Regarding your current religious or nonreligious perspective, with which of the following descriptors do you most closely identify?**

<b>Worldview Identity</b>	<b>Count</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
<i>Majority Worldview</i>	2234	49
Christianity, Catholic	1503	33
Christianity, Evangelical Protestant	94	2
Christianity, Protestant	489	11
Christianity, Non-Denominational	32	>1
Christianity, Orthodox	116	3
<i>Minority Worldview</i>	999	22
Baha'i Faith	19	>1
Buddhism	67	1
Confucianism	23	>1
Daoism	22	>1
Hinduism	56	1
Islam	51	1
Jainism	15	>1
Judaism	347	8
Native American Tradition(s)	17	>1
Mormonism*	71	2
Omnism	1	>1
Paganism	33	>1
Pantheist	2	>1
Sikhism	22	>1
Unitarian Universalism	33	>1
Zoroastrianism	22	>1
<i>Nonreligious Worldview</i>	1335	29
Agnosticism	374	8
Atheism	343	8
None	249	6
Nonreligious	270	6
Secular Humanism	18	>1
Spiritual	81	2

n=4538

\*Mormonism is included in the minority worldview category despite identifying as a Christian religious identify. This was done because previous research indicates that Mormons' experiences more often align with those from other minority religious identities rather than Christian identities.

The University has over twenty faith-based student organizations on campus. Often times, these organizations are overseen both by a faculty or staff advisor and by staff not directly affiliated with UD but employed by the particular religious group serving the students. Over 16% of students identified as having participated in a faith based student group while on campus. Not surprisingly, students in the nonreligious worldview category have the lowest percentage of

participants in faith based student groups. Students who identify as evangelical Christians and Jewish are most likely to indicate participation in a faith-based student group (46% and 34% respectively). According to past Residence Life and Housing survey data, on average, students who participate in faith-based groups report higher levels of involvement on campus and in the residence halls, a greater sense of belonging on campus, and greater self-efficacy when compared to those who do not participate in faith-based student groups (Pritchett, 2015).

**Table 2: Faith-Based Student Group Participation**

	<b>I have participated in a faith based student group</b>			
	Yes		No	
	Count	%	Count	%
All Students	730	16.54	3684	83.46
Majority	407	19.6	1672	80.42
Minority	149	28.01	383	7199
Nonreligious	80	7.5	980	92.5

n=4,414

Students were also asked to rate four statements regarding their worldview on a likert scale between strongly agree and strongly disagree. Those statements were:

- My worldview is important to me.
- I am comfortable expressing my worldview.
- I believe it's important to have opportunities to get to know students who have worldviews that are different from my own.
- I make time to engage others who have worldviews who are different from my own.

It is interesting to note that amongst these four questions, while there are slight variations to student responses, there are no significant differences between how the three groups responded (see Table 3).

Students overwhelmingly agree with the statement that their worldview is important to them, with less than 4% disagreeing with this statement. Similarly, the vast majority of students say they feel comfortable expressing their worldview on campus, with less than 8% of students saying that they are not comfortable expressing their worldview. Though there were no significant differences between the three groups related to the question around comfort, looking deeper into the data indicates that there are some worldview identities do not feel comfortable expressing their worldview far above and beyond the average of the sample. For example, over 25% of students who identify as Muslim do not feel comfortable expressing their worldview identity on campus. Other minority worldview identities that have very small representation in the sample also disagree with this statement far above and beyond the overall sample, including those who identify with the Baha'i faith (25%), Confucianism (34%), Jainism (40%), Native American traditions (36%), and Sikhism (30%).

**Table 3: Worldview questions from 2016 Fall Floor Feedback**

	SA		A		D		SD	
	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%
<b>My worldview is important to me.</b>								
All Students	2296	50.4	2097	46.1	121	2.7	34	.8
Majority	1086	51.5	971	46.04	41	1.94	11	.5
Minority	294	54.2	224	41.3	19	3.5	5	.9
Nonreligious	525	48.8	498	46.3	43	4	10	.9



<b>I am comfortable expressing my worldview.</b>								
All Students	1859	40.9	2335	51.4	283	6.23	68	1.5
Majority	874	41.5	1063	50.5	136	6.5	34	1.6
Minority	238	43.9	261	48.2	36	6.6	7	1.3
Nonreligious	429	39.9	562	52.3	65	6.1	19	1.8
<b>I believe it's important to have opportunities to get to know students who have worldviews that are different than my own.</b>								
All Students	2258	49.7	2156	47.5	94	2.07	36	.79
Majority	1059	50.3	998	47.4	37	1.8	13	.62
Minority	289	53.3	238	43.9	7	1.29	8	1.5
Nonreligious	526	48.9	502	46.7	36	3.4	10	.9
<b>I make time to engage others who have worldviews who are different from my own.</b>								
All Students	1725	38.00	2282	50.3	478	10.5	55	1.21
Majority	799	37.9	1040	49.4	245	11.6	23	1.1
Minority	237	43.9	251	46.5	41	7.6	11	2.1
Nonreligious	384	35.8	540	50.4	132	12.3	16	1.5

Lastly, nearly all students indicate agreement with the statement that it is important to have opportunities to get to know students who have worldviews that are different than their own, with less than 3% disagreeing with this statement. Similarly, students indicate that they make time to engage with others who have different worldviews who are different from theirs, though there is about a 9% difference between students who believe it is important to engage with others and those who indicate that they actually make time to do so. In some ways, this is not surprising considering the worldview identity demographics of the sample. Even if engagement isn't specifically happening around conversations of religious and worldview, it is inevitable that students will have informal engagement with identities who are different than them during their time at UD.

As evidenced by the data from the 2016 Fall Floor Feedback, students identify in a wide variety of ways when it comes to their worldview identity, with significant numbers of students identifying with identities that fall within all three categories. If we believe that helping students engage with others from diverse worldview backgrounds adds value to the overall diversity objectives of the University of Delaware, it appears that the diversity exists for that engagement should students be willing. It is also reassuring that students are indicating that their worldview is important to them, that they feel comfortable on campus, and that they are willing to engage with others. However, we must not overgeneralize, as evidenced by the statement regarding comfort expressing worldview identity and the fact that students from many minority worldview identities not well represented on campus are much less likely to say they are comfortable expressing their worldview. Furthermore, while this data presents some very broad insights, the student focus groups conducted as part of this report provide a more detailed understanding of how students' worldview identity shapes their on-campus experience at UD.

### **University of Delaware Student Focus Groups**

During the 2016 Fall Semester, I hosted two focus groups with University of Delaware undergraduate students. To recruit students, I used purposive sampling, sending an invitation to participate through the University of Delaware Religious Leaders and student leaders of the various faith based registered student organizations. I also sent the same invitation to students who had previously participated in a grant funded program focused on interfaith cooperation

called “Serving Better Together”. My rationale for this was to attract students whose worldview identity was salient for them.

Demographic information was collected about the participants at the beginning of each focus group. In total, eighteen students participated across the two focus groups. Nine of the students identified as second year students, four as juniors, and three as seniors. All of them identified as domestic students and sixteen of the eighteen identified as women.

**Table 4: Racial/Ethnic Identity of Focus Group Participants**

Racial/Ethnic Identity	Count	Percentage
African American or Black	4	22
Arab or Middle Eastern	2	11
Asian or Asian American	2	11
Multiracial or Biracial	1	6
White or Caucasian or European American	9	50

**Table 5: Worldview Identity of Focus Group Participants**

Worldview Identity	Count	Percentage
Majority Worldview: Christian	8	44
Minority Worldview	7	39
Jewish	2	
Muslim	3	
Unitarian Universalist	2	
Nonreligious Worldview	3	17
Agnostic	1	
Atheist	1	
Open/Spiritual	1	

As evidenced by table 4, half of the participants identified as non-white. Furthermore, over half of the participants identified with a worldview identity other than Christian, which is the largest worldview on campus (as evidenced by Table 1).

Over the course of approximately one hour, a series of questions (See Appendix C) were used to lead a conversation with the focus group participants. Generally speaking, the questions fell into three categories, including the importance of their worldview as it relates to their experience as a college student at UD, experiences interacting with individuals from worldviews different from their own, and actions UD can take to more proactively engage worldview diversity. Based on these conversations, I’ve identified four themes that were prevalent throughout both focus groups.

### *Belonging*

Many students throughout the course of the focus groups shared with the other participants that finding a faith-based group on campus lead to them feeling a greater sense of belonging at UD. One student said, “I really found my place here at UD with the Episcopal ministry. I feel like it’s my home. I didn’t have that at UD until I joined that group. I always feel like I belong there.” Similar sentiments were expressed from students affiliated with other student groups, including the Catholic Campus Ministry and Hillel.

Some students, however, have had different experiences. One student who identified as agnostic said:

There are a lot of great spaces on campus if you are Catholic, or Jewish, or some of the other religions. You can go to the oratory or Hillel. But for a lot of the smaller groups there just aren't those places they can easily find. Activities night doesn't always cut it. I'm agnostic but what I believe is important to me. And it's important for me to get to know other people from different backgrounds too. So it'd be nice to find a space for that.

Other students echoed this sentiment, recognizing that depending on a student's worldview identity it may be easier or harder to find space and a group on campus to feel a sense of belonging with.

### *Challenging Experiences on Campus*

Generally speaking, most students expressed that they felt comfortable on campus as it related to their worldview identity, and overall have had many positive experiences. However, many stories were also shared where they expressed challenges or feelings of exclusion. For students from Christian religious identities, often times these stories related to experiences with their peers. One student who identifies as Catholic said:

I think there can be judgment on this campus for people who actively practice their religion sometimes for whatever reason. I remember on the first Sunday I was here and planned on going to church I asked if anyone wanted to come and they just laughed at me. It kind of looks weird on my hall when I am up at 9 on Sunday getting ready and when I'm getting back people are just rolling out of bed in their sweatpants.

One Muslim student recognized the intersection of being a person of color on campus along with coming from a minority religious background, and how that created both a sense of inclusion and also created some challenges for her:

I feel more comfortable expressing (my religion) among other minorities. I feel like if I can walk up to the CBC (Center for Black Culture) and be like, 'I'm going to go upstairs and pray' and I won't get a lot of...they'll be more understanding. I've tried to pray before in Trabant and there it's different. People don't really feel comfortable around that. They look at you a little funny. So it does depend who I'm around and what I'm doing.

Institutional challenges were also brought up, particularly amongst students who identify with a minority religious tradition. A Muslim student participant mentioned:

A lot of the Muslim students in the Muslim Student Association don't live on campus. They might be commuters. So we've really wanted to find a space to pray. It's not like you can just go to your dorm room and pray. I know they are always struggling on where to pray, and it can be hard on this campus.

Other examples include a Jewish student who discussed a challenge related to missing class for a religious holiday, discussing the various permissions she needed to receive and how she felt like the faculty member was not very accommodating. A Muslim student who does not wear a hijab (a head covering worn by some Muslim women) noted a late night conversation in the residence halls where her peers were making false and insensitive statements about Muslims. When she

informed them that she was Muslim they questioned if she was being truthful because she was not wearing a hijab and then disengaged from conversation with her. All of these are examples of times when one of the participant's worldview identity created a challenge for them at UD, whether it be institutional barriers or negative perceptions from their peers.

### *The Importance of Relationships*

While multiple students discussed challenges related to their peers, another theme that emerged was the powerful experiences that can be had when interacting with others as it relates to worldview identity. Student participants spoke about how engaging their peers both helped them learn about themselves and gain a new appreciation for others. College is a time when some students more deeply engage with their religious identity, and others experience a period of questioning and exploration (Astin, et al., 2011), and this is often times connected to interaction with others from diverse worldviews.

For some, coming to UD had been the first time they've had the chance to engage in meaningful ways with individuals from different worldview identities. One participant noted, "Until coming to college the only way I could really learn about others religions was from books, but since I got here I could talk to Christians, and people who were atheist or agnostic. It's challenged my worldview and pushed me to ask more questions."

Others were able to recognize the importance of relationships as a way to challenge bias and prejudice. She said, "I've seen a lot of prejudice against other groups. In order to counter those prejudices, you have to get to know someone for who they are, and then respect their identity as their own identity. It helps you respect them as a person and respect what they believe." This idea aligns closely with empirical research around the importance of relationships in creating positive attitudes and knowledge about different worldview identities (Putnam and Campbell, 2010).

### *Desire for Increased Engagement*

The students also expressed a desire to find ways for further engagement with those from different worldview identities. On one hand, this shouldn't seem entirely surprising as they volunteered to participate in a focus group on this topic. However, they were able to discuss a variety of ways that further engagement might be possible at UD.

One topic that the second focus group spent a lot of time discussing was the idea of an interfaith council, essentially bringing together individuals from every faith based group on campus in an effort to advocate for the needs of students, create opportunities for religious literacy, and develop campus programming. (In fact, students from this particular focus group have since developed a proposal and have met with various University administrators related to starting this effort.) Students also discussed a desire to have opportunities for dialogue, and students from both focus groups spent time discussing the need for space that is accessible to all on campus for interfaith engagement. One Christian student mentioned:

Some of the groups on campus have really cool spaces. I know so many people who go to Hillel. But some groups are really small, and struggle. And people from different backgrounds might not feel comfortable coming into one of these spaces if they don't know anyone. So it would be really great if there was a place on campus that all different groups had access to. It would make things more equitable. It could also be a central place where a lot of interfaith stuff could happen.

They also discussed how difficult it was to network with people from other faith-based groups on campus. A student from the Episcopal Campus Ministry noted:

I'm a member of the Episcopal student group and am supposed to be the outreach chair, but it's really hard to connect with other faith groups on campus. It would be great if there was a space to meet other like-minded people where faith is important but they are coming from different beliefs.

Overall, students were advocating for both physical space and organizational structures to bring together individuals from different worldview identities, opportunities to engage in dialogue, and increased programming related to worldview diversity.

These focus groups were enlightening in the sense that they provide a voice for students that wasn't necessarily captured in the quantitative data from the Fall Floor Feedback survey. And while these focus groups only shared stories from a small group of students whose worldview identity was particularly salient for them, they illustrate potential opportunities when thinking about engaging worldview diversity at UD.

### **Conversations with Public Institutions Engaging Worldview Diversity and Interfaith Cooperation**

As part of this study, I also spoke with staff at three public Universities located on the East Coast. Each of the three institutions is proactively engaging worldview diversity and interfaith cooperation on their campus. All three have at least one University paid staff member and each have a center on campus whose mission is to support religious diversity and interfaith cooperation. As I sought to explore ways that the University of Delaware could improve upon the work that it is doing in this area, I thought it best to learn what other institutions who have made this commitment are doing on their campuses.

Institution 1 is a large public university in the Mid-Atlantic region. It employs six full time staff members to manage its Center, which has been in existence since the 1950s. Institution 2 is a mid-sized University in the South East. Its Center has been in existence on campus since 2011 and employees three full-time staff members. Institution 3 is a mid-sized University located in the North East. Its Center opened in December, 2016 and has one full time staff member. I spoke with the Director of each respective Center.

In my interviews, I sought to learn about the history and context of interfaith cooperation and the Center on their respective campuses. I asked about their roles on campus, funding for their work, along with the services and programming they offer students on campus. I was also curious to learn more about the spaces they have on campus and how they work with other student religious groups (Appendix D). During these conversations, the following themes emerged:

#### *Worldview Diversity as an Integral Part of the Diversity Work Happening on Campus*

While each of the three individuals I spoke to described many unique features about their work and the Centers that they oversee, there was one common thread that ran through all three conversations. This was that they were able to do their work affectively, and their role existed on

campus in the first place, because there was institutional recognition that worldview diversity and interfaith cooperation added value to the broader diversity initiatives happening on campus. The participant from Institution 2 put it best when they said:

There was a recognition here that how we engaged diversity and supported underrepresented students needed to broaden. So about five years ago my position was created within the Division of Student Affairs. I had to spend some time helping others understand why I was here and the work I wanted to do, but now we are so integrated into all of the other diversity work on campus. The Interfaith Center now actually hosts a curriculum for everyone working in Student Affairs around cultural competency. It's really been special what we have been able to do in the last few years.

The other participants I spoke to also told their stories about how their role came to be, and it aligned with the unique needs of each institution. Institution 3, who most recently opened their Interfaith Center, was designed after a vote was passed by their SGA. Institution 1's space grew out of a chapel that was on campus to eventually focus on interfaith cooperation after their campus became increasingly diverse.

### *Funding*

Another interesting aspect of my conversations revolved around funding. Both roles for Institution 1 and Institution 2 are situated within their Division of Student Affairs. The position and Center at Institution 3 falls under their Multicultural Affairs office. The Center for Institution 1 was funded by private donors. The staff that works at the Center are paid by the University, however many of their services and programs are still funded privately. Institution 2 is funded in a more traditional fashion, similar to the other offices that exist within their Division of Student Affairs. The professional staff position at Institution 3 is funded through their International Office. This came after Institution 3 sought to increase their international population and recognized that they were ill equipped to meet the needs of students who came from countries that were traditionally religiously devout. The Interfaith Center at Institution 3 is in a building acquired by the institution. Their Multicultural Affairs and Student Affairs offices were able to fund basic renovations in order to open the Center.

### *Programming and Student Support*

All three Institutions offer multiple ways they support their students, though Institution 3 was still developing some of these initiatives as they are by far the newest of the three Interfaith Centers. There are some commonalities that existed throughout. Examples include:

- *Space*: Each of the Centers have space available to any student group, but particularly religiously affiliated groups. These spaces are designed to be flexible and meet the individual needs of different religious and spiritual traditions.
- *Student Leadership*: Each Center offers opportunities for students to develop as leaders within the context of interfaith cooperation. For example, Institution 2 has an interfaith internship program where students can apply and then work at the Center to promote interfaith cooperation on campus.
- *Religious Literacy & Education*: Each of the three Centers works to help their respective campuses develop religious literacy. By this, I mean they help students gain positive, truthful knowledge about diverse religious traditions.

- *Support for underrepresented students:* Each Center strives to provide support for students who come from underrepresented religious or spiritual traditions. This happens informally through creating a safe space where students know they can come and openly explore their worldview identity, through programming, dialogue, and also advocacy. For example, the Center at Institution 1 worked with dining services to ensure kosher and halal meals were readily available throughout campus. They also ensured that reflection spaces were created in the residence halls, particularly to ensure Muslim students had a space to pray if they could not pray in their room or could not make it to the Center.

Each center also has close relationships with the religiously affiliated student groups on their campus, along with the affiliate staff that serves those groups.

#### *Work with Affiliate Staff*

Individuals at all three institutions work closely with the “affiliate staff” for the various religiously affiliated student groups. These are the staff members not employed by the University but instead works for the organizations that support the various religiously affiliated student groups. For example, Hillel staff have their offices in the Center at Institution 1. Often times, the University employed staff members at these three institutions serve as the people who represent affiliate staff on behalf of the University. They serve as advocates to ensure affiliate staff have appropriate access to campus spaces, and provide opportunities for affiliate staff to have opportunities to come together and collaborate. Institution 2 developed an official campus chaplain program, which provides training for all affiliate staff related to interfaith cooperation and worldview diversity.

These conversations with the three participants from these institutions provided evidence that public institutions can cultivate opportunities to engage students across different worldview identities, provide support for underrepresented students, and offer flexible space that supports students from various identities. Furthermore, this work can be done with the recognition that it is adding value to the diversity efforts of their respective institution. Each of these participants were able to articulate how their work fit within the larger context of their institution. If the University of Delaware is to pursue any of opportunities described here, it too will need to assert how this work fits within the broader context of the institution.

### **Insights and Recommendations**

This report makes the argument that there is a need for higher education to engage worldview diversity and prioritize interfaith cooperation. It presents research and literature to support this claim, and sought to gain insight from other public institutions and students at the University of Delaware in an effort to explore how UD might support this work. I do recognize that the scope of this report is limited. While the Fall Floor Feedback survey reached a large proportion of the campus population, the worldview related questions were only a few of many asked on the survey. The focus groups offered tremendous insight, but only provided the perspective of a small percentage of students on campus whose worldview identity is salient to them. And there are far more than three public institutions seeking out ways to engage in this work, but time and resources did not allow for more than three to be included in this report.

With this being said, I do believe that the insights gained from UD students and those three public institutions, along with the national research and Leadership Practices (Patel et al, 2015) provide enough data to make considerations and recommendations for UD. Three are included here:

**Considerations for use of university resources;** The individuals at the public institutions I spoke with were able to do the work they did because of the institutional support and funding they received, both for their position and the space they worked in on campus. I fully recognize that space on a University campus and resources to fund staff positions is scarce. However, if UD is to proactively pursue work related to worldview diversity and interfaith cooperation, it should explore in what contexts and in what ways it can support this work.

Currently, there is no official staff position who has a responsibility to do this work, and no space on campus dedicated to it. There is no person or people ultimately responsible for work related to worldview diversity and interfaith cooperation, making it hard to sustain efforts. Students during the focus group portion of this study recognized the lack of space as problematic. They also identified challenging experiences on campus and there are few people on campus who have expertise helping them navigate those issues related to worldview. Students during the focus groups and on the Fall Floor Feedback survey also indicate a willingness for engagement in experiences related to worldview diversity. To move this work forward in a sustainable way, decisions will need to be made about whose responsibility it is to move it forward and in what ways they will be supported.

**Support student leadership;** IFYC, in their Leadership Practices (Patel et al., 2015) note the importance of student leadership. The University does have multiple faith based groups, and students are beginning to organize to pursue opportunities for interfaith cooperation. However, if students are going to be successful in pursuing this, it will be important for University staff and faculty to support their work. And if we want this work to add value to the University's efforts related to diversity and engagement with difference, it will be important for administrators and faculty to help open doors for students to pursue their goals. It will also be important to find sustainable ways to cultivate student leadership. Some of the students in the focus group referenced participating in "Serving Better Together", a grant funded program through the Division of Student Life and Office of the Provost, and how this program inspired them to pursue interfaith cooperation on campus. If we are to expand student leadership in this area, programs like "Serving Better Together" will need to grow on campus in sustainable ways and pathways for leadership will need to be encouraged.

**Integrate interfaith opportunities into existing campus experiences;** Research demonstrates that interfaith experiences are associated with a number of positive outcomes. Students at UD have also demonstrated positive learning experiences from their own interfaith experiences. However, formal interfaith engagement happens with a relatively small percentage of the campus population. Rockenbach and Mayhew (2014) report that only 3% of students are highly engaged in formal interfaith activities from their national sample. UD should explore how it can incorporate opportunities to explore worldview diversity and interfaith cooperation within current programs, traditions, and initiatives. Examples could include a speaker sponsored by the CSD who speaks about religious diversity, including interfaith topics into campus dialogue programs, introducing a first year reader that includes issues of religious diversity, or sponsoring



an event at UD's 1743 Welcome Days that provides an interfaith welcome to students arriving on campus for the first time.

This work and these recommendations closely align with the goals of the CSD and the Diversity Action Plan at UD, which seeks to cooperatively engage students from different backgrounds and create support for underrepresented students. As UD continues to pursue goals related to creating a more diverse campus that allows for the full participation of all, I hope that those who can influence that work consider how worldview diversity adds value to the diversity work on campus, and will pursue opportunities to influence it to that end.

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**Appendix A  
CSD Grant Proposal**

**Center for the Study of Diversity  
Graduate Student Research Grant Program**

**REVISED SUBMISSION**

<b>Full name: Joseph Pritchett</b>
<b>Department: Educational Leadership, School of Education</b>
<b>Email address: jepritch@udel.edu</b>
<b>Title of project: Supporting Religious Diversity and Interfaith Cooperation at the University of Delaware</b>
<b>Is this a doctoral dissertation project?</b> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <b>Yes</b> <input type="checkbox"/> <b>No</b> <b>If it is, please</b> submit a letter of support from your dissertation advisor – see the checklist below.

Please fill out this cover sheet and include it in a PDF file or Word document with your proposal and budget. Your final application should contain the following materials:



- Cover sheet
- Proposal
- Budget
- Letter of support from faculty advisor (in a separate file).  
*If you are requesting funds for dissertation research, please submit a letter of support from your dissertation advisor.*
- Curriculum vitae (in a separate file)

**Deadline to apply: Friday, January 8, 2016, 5:00 pm**

Applicants will be notified of the success of their proposals by February 29, 2016.

Please email this cover sheet and the above materials to Lisa Schulz at [lschulz@udel.edu](mailto:lschulz@udel.edu).

**Title: Supporting Religious Diversity and Interfaith Cooperation at the University of Delaware**

Submitted by: Joe Pritchett

**Project Overview**

This project is grounded in the assertion that focusing on religious diversity in higher education matters and contributes to an inclusive environment that supports student success. Research has demonstrated that religion and spirituality are salient aspects of college students' lives, that campus climate around religion/worldview shape the experience of students in significant ways, and that interfaith cooperation contributes positively to students' development and success in college (Astin, Astin & Lindholm, 2011; Mayhew & Rockenbach, 2014). Bowman, Rockenbach, and Mayhew (2015) demonstrate that inclusion around religious and worldview diversity on college campuses is positively associated with participation in high impact practices such as study abroad, service learning, engaged learning pedagogies, and interactions across racial/ethnic difference.

This project serves as an exploratory study where the ultimate goal is to develop a set of recommendations for the University of Delaware around supporting religious diversity and fostering interfaith cooperation. These recommendations will be guided by current research and literature, best practices at public institutions who are proactively engaging religious diversity, and data collected from stakeholders at the University of Delaware. These recommendations should also align with the University of Delaware's Action Plan for Diversity along with other strategic priorities. For the purposes of this project, interfaith cooperation is defined as "Individuals from diverse religious and non-religious worldviews coming together in a way that respects diverse religious and non-religious identities, builds mutually inspiring relationships, and engages in common issues of shared social concern" (Patel & Meyer, 2010).

This this project will include three phases of original research. They include:

***Exploring practices of other public institutions proactively engaging religious diversity on their campuses.*** Public institutions are addressing religious diversity on their campuses. They are creating physical interfaith spaces and hiring staff across academic and administrative units. I will conduct individual interviews with staff at three institutions. Those institutions include the University of North Florida, Penn State, and the University of Vermont. The participants oversee respective offices within their institution that is responsible for spiritual life and interfaith engagement. I have worked with Interfaith Youth Core, a leading non-profit based in Chicago, IL whose mission is to foster interfaith cooperation amongst college students, to identify public institutions who have formal roles and offices that are dedicated to religious diversity.

I will use existing literature around religious diversity in higher education and also consider context at the University of Delaware created by the Diversity Action Plan and other strategic initiatives around diversity to develop an interview protocol. Interviews will seek to explore the purpose of their role/space on their campus, services they provide to students, policies they have developed, how their work supports diversity on campus, and what educational benefits their role provides to students. Furthermore, I will seek to explore the origin behind the creation of their role and space on campus, along with seeking to understand the key staff, faculty, and student partners with whom they primarily work. I will also use secondary

resources such as documents provided by the participants and publically available materials online and elsewhere to learn more about the work that takes place around religious diversity on those campuses. Interviews will take place on Skype.

***Conducting focus groups with stakeholders at the University of Delaware.*** The next phase of this project will involve using information gathered from my site study to inform the development of two focus groups on the University of Delaware's campus. The first focus group will involve undergraduate students involved in diverse religious student groups on campus. I will reach out to student leaders of each of the recognized religious student groups on campus and invite them to participate. These groups include the Muslim Student Association, Hillel, Intervarsity Christian Fellowship, the Indian Student Association, and others. The two goals of this focus group will be to explore their experiences with religious diversity and interaction with religious difference on campus and to gain their perspectives around what the University might do to better support religious diversity in the future.

The second focus group will invite University of Delaware staff, faculty, and administrators to participate in a conversation exploring similar topics as outlined above. Again, the site study and existing literature will be crucial to developing a focus group protocol that explores the topic in a way that is both situated within the context of the University of Delaware while also keeping in mind the practices of other public institutions and what national research tells us about students' experience with religiously diverse others. I anticipate participants in this second focus group ranging of individuals involved in diversity work, religious studies, student life, and religious and spiritual life on campus.

***Quantitative Data:*** To strengthen this exploratory study, I will work with the Office of Residence Life and Housing to include questions on our 2016 fall floor feedback survey. This survey goes to every residential student on campus and had over 5000 participants this past academic year. On the 2015 survey, students were given the option of sharing their worldview identity as part of the demographic information we collected and also asked if they were actively involved in a faith based student group. I plan to add a branch for those who respond that they are actively involved in a faith based student group to measure the frequency and quality of interactions with religiously diverse others. These questions will be adopted from a valid and reliable scale on the Campus Religious and Spiritual Climate Survey, a national survey developed by Dr. Alyssa Rockenbach and Dr. Matthew Mayhew.

### **Impact Statement**

The University is home to over twenty-six different student religious organizations tied loosely together by a group of religious leaders and one volunteer liaison to the Division of Student Life. Students have had the opportunity for interfaith engagement in the past, most notably through a Unidel funded grant initiative called Serving Better Together. This initiative, which took place over the 2015 and 2016 winter session, sought to connect students from diverse religious backgrounds through service. The program was awarded the Division of Student Life's "Bright Initiative" award in 2015 and also lead to the creation of an interfaith student organization, "Better Together at UD". The positive outcomes from this initiative have demonstrated that interfaith engagement is a means through which students can interact across

lines of difference in meaningful ways that also contributes to their co-curricular experience while at college.

This exploratory project proposes to develop concrete recommendations to strengthen these efforts in ways that creates a more inclusive campus environment. These recommendations will be grounded in national research, exploring space and staffing around religious diversity at other public institutions, and through the perspectives of Delaware students, staff, and faculty.

The Center for the Study of Diversity (CSD) seeks to “facilitate dialogues about and understanding of the social and academic impact of diversity”. Furthermore, the CSD, through this grant, hopes to “inform and support diversity practices within our community”. This project will help us better understand the potential impact of engaging diversity within the context of religious difference for the University of Delaware. It will also seek to promote a larger conversation about ways in which the University of Delaware can engage religious diversity when striving for an inclusive campus.

This project will use the Action Plan for Diversity both to shape the project’s interviews and focus groups as well as for developing recommendations for the University of Delaware based on that work. The Diversity Action plan states that the University will support and strengthen multicultural programming and activities that enhance the learning experiences of all students”. Goal six calls for the University to nurture positive relationships and promote conversations around common ground values. These are a few examples of how I believe the Diversity Action plan aligns with the aims of interfaith cooperation and will align with this project.

### **Timeline**

- |                 |  |
|-----------------|--|
| April 2016:     | Complete literature review regarding impacts of engaging religious diversity through interfaith cooperation on college campuses. Identify institutions and schedule interviews with colleagues at public institutions. Complete IRB approval for project. Begin outreach for student and faculty/staff focus groups. |
| May/June 2016:  | Complete interviews with colleagues at public institutions and complete student focus group.   |
| August 2016:    | Submit two page report on research progress to Center for Diversity Studies.   |
| September 2016: | Complete staff/faculty focus group. Submit a conference proposal to 2017 ACPA National Conference or other professional conference based on project findings. Add appropriate questions to 2016 Residence Life & Housing Fall Floor Feedback   |
| December 2016:  | Complete writing for University of Delaware specific recommendations based on research analysis. Explore publishing opportunities.   |
| December 2016:  | Submit as artifacts toward Educational Leadership Portfolio (ELP) toward graduation requirements as part of the Ed.D in Educational Leadership   |

program. Decide on at least one additional opportunity to publish information about project.

February 2017: Submit final report regarding project to Center for Diversity Studies.

### **Assessment**

The timeline listed above provides checkpoints when evaluating progress of this project. Because it has a few distinct phases, including literature review, interviewing, collection of quantitative data, analysis, and dissemination of findings, there are multiple points to reflect on the direction of the work and make appropriate changes. This work will be submitted as artifacts for my ELP as part of my Ed.D program, and those elements will need to be submitted by end of Winter Session 2017 in order to remain on track to graduate Spring 2017. My faculty advisor and committee will provide additional critical feedback and also help me remain within my timeframe.

### **Dissemination Goals**

With attendance at the CSD brown bag lunches required, I will share the project findings internally with interested colleagues. Recommendations generated from this work will also guide who I share this project with at the University of Delaware in the form of a white paper and possible presentations. This project will be included in my Educational Leadership Portfolio toward the completion of my doctoral program. I will seek publication opportunities outside of the University of Delaware and present at professional conferences in 2016-2017.

### **Sustainability Goals**

Continuation of this project will be grounded in the recommendations that stem from it and the potential opportunities to implement said recommendations.

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### **Proposal Updates Rationale**

*In bold are questions or concerns raised by the review committee. For each, I have included a description of changes made to address those questions or concerns for the purposes of this proposal.*

**Lack of enthusiasm from Faculty Letter of Support:** I contacted my faculty advisor and asked him if he would be willing to resubmit his letter including rationale for why he supports this project, which he did willingly.

**Need to travel to outside institutions for purposes of research and choice of interview sites:** A point was raised that it was unnecessary to travel to other institutions and that interviews with staff at those institutions could happen via skype. This would allow for a better use of funds toward focus groups or other aspects of the project. I have taken this into consideration and modified the proposal noting that interviews will take place over skype. The budget has been updated accordingly. I was also asked to clarify which institutions I've chosen to interview and why. I attempted to explain my rationale about the choice of institutions within the proposal. Hopefully this clarifying point makes the proposal clearer.

**Information regarding choice of interview representatives:** I've clarified the offices and positions of those I will be seeking to interview.

**Current interfaith activities taking place at the University of Delaware:** Within the proposal, I've added information regarding formal interfaith activities that have taken place at the University of Delaware. This will provide additional context related to why this is a worthy project.

**Analysis:** There were some concerns regarding methodology and analysis. Particularly, concerns were raised about whether or not the approach presented will allow for specific and actionable recommendations. I've addressed this through adding a research component to this exploratory study, and worked to address how these elements link in a way that should provide valuable information toward potential next steps at the University of Delaware

**Information regarding religious identity and experiences of student participants:** Questions were raised about which students would be invited to participate in focus groups and from which religious identities. I attempted to rectify this by being more specific in the updated proposal.

The timeline was also updated to reflect changes in this proposal.



**Budget**

\$600.00      Transcription services for qualitative data collected (at approximately .99 cents per minute)

\$240.00      Incentives for focus group participants (example: \$15.00 Starbucks gift cards with approximately 8 people participating in each focus group.)

\$100.00      Incentives for individual interview participants (example: \$20.00 per person gifts cards with approximately 3-5 interviews)

**Total:** \$940.00

**Appendix B**  
**2016 Fall Floor Feedback Questions**

**Worldview Diversity and Interfaith Cooperation Fall Floor Feedback Questions**

*The following questions are related to your religious or nonreligious worldview. Worldview is defined as a guiding life philosophy, which may be based on a particular religious tradition, spiritual orientation, nonreligious perspective, or some combination of these.*

Please indicate your agreement with the following statements....(SA-SD)

1. My worldview is important to me.
2. I am comfortable openly expressing my worldview at UD.
3. I believe it's important to have opportunities to get to know others who have worldviews that are different from my own.
4. I make time to engage with others who have worldviews that are different from my own.

## Appendix C Focus Group Protocol

### **Worldview Diversity and Interfaith Cooperation Focus Group Questions:**

1. Why did you decide to participate in this focus group today?
2. Tell us about how your worldview shapes your experience as a student at the University of Delaware. (Provide the following definition for “worldview”; a guiding life philosophy, which may be based on a particular religious tradition, spiritual orientation, non-religious perspective, or some combination of these. Share that we will be using this term instead of “religious identity” because it is more inclusive for those who have a non-religious worldview. )
  - a. Potential follow-ups:
    - i. Can you share a specific experience where your worldview identity had a major impact on your experience on campus?
3. How important is your worldview identity to you? Could you describe why?
4. Do you feel comfortable expressing your worldview identity to others on campus?
  - a. Potential follow-ups:
    - i. Could you describe in what contexts or an experience where it is comfortable/uncomfortable to express or discuss your worldview with others on campus?
5. Please describe an ideal campus environment where everyone feels supported in relation to their worldview.
  - a. Potential follow-ups:
    - i. What elements of that ideal campus environment currently exist at UD?
    - ii. What elements don't exist, and why?
6. What is one thing the University of Delaware could do to ensure this is an inclusive place for individuals of all different worldview identities and perspectives?
7. What do you believe students learn from having the opportunity to engage with those from different worldviews?
8. Could you describe a positive experience you've had interacting with someone from a different religious identity?
  - a. Potential follow-ups?
    - i. What elements of that interaction made it positive?
    - ii. Does anyone have a negative experience they wish to describe? What made that interaction negative?
9. What is at least one thing that the University of Delaware could do to create opportunities for students to engage positively across lines of difference related to their worldview?
  - a. Potential follow-ups:
    - i. What roles do students play in creating these opportunities?
    - ii. What roles do faculty and staff play in creating these opportunities?
10. Please take this time to share anything else that you think is important related to worldview diversity on campus and/or interfaith cooperation at UD.

**Appendix D**  
**Public University Staff Questions**

**Worldview Diversity and Interfaith Cooperation Partner Interviews**

1. Could you please tell me a little bit more about yourself and the work you do on your campus?
2. Describe the campus culture at your institution related to religious diversity and worldview diversity?
3. What are the goals of the center you oversee? What do students gain as a result of the interfaith center being on campus?
4. What types of programs, initiatives, support, and services does the center offer?
5. Do you have outcomes for your students? If so what are they?
6. How many students access the center/the work you do?
7. How do you assess your success?
  - a. Follow up Question:
    - i. What have been some of your biggest successes and challenges?
8. Who are some of your campus partners? How do you work with them?
9. In what direction do you see the work of religious diversity and interfaith cooperation moving on college campuses?
10. What recommendations do you have for universities who are seeking to develop more institutional support for religious diversity and interfaith cooperation?



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