Religious Literacy in the Public Sphere: Interfaith Educational Initiative in Northern Michigan

A Capstone Action Project

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Abstract

This paper seeks to detail the action project my local interfaith council – the Area Council on Religious Diversity (ACORD) and I have launched in an effort to provide a free religious literacy opportunity in our rural, Northern Michigan community. This effort has been undertaken to promote not only education relative to diversity, but to increase interfaith community in our region. Following a consideration of the work that has been done in this area, as well as current trends, we collaboratively developed the approach and structure of the project which consists of quarterly programs throughout 2017 at our local library. As of the date of this paper, a single iteration of the project has occurred in February 2017, presenting us with the opportunity to launch this initiative as well as evaluate the approach for the future.
Acknowledgements

I am deeply fortunate to work with the incredible members of the Area Council on Religious Diversity in the pursuit of encouraging active engagement with diversity, and the goal of dynamic interfaith opportunities. Because of their fine work, we are making great strides toward understanding, appreciation, religious literacy and pluralism in our region. I am profoundly grateful to Claremont Lincoln University for the opportunity to engage in this study, and to the astounding faculty and staff that have guided and inspired me throughout this journey.

I acknowledge my professional colleagues here in Traverse City, MI who cheered for me, brainstormed with me, and listened to me. I express thanks to my parents for instilling in me the love of learning, and to my maternal grandparents for being beacons of strength, commitment, and a passion for acting in ways that uplift others. To my children I extend a warm embrace for all the times mommy had to do homework instead of other things. Lastly this project, and in fact the entire pursuit of this degree would not have been possible without the unwavering, loving support and encouragement of my husband, Denny Richards. He is my rock.
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CHAPTER 1 - Introduction to Project and Evidence of Mindfulness

Given the limited opportunities for members of the public in our geographical region to engage in free education regarding diverse religious perspectives, along with dialogue between individuals who hold these perspectives, I, along with ACORD – The Area Council on Religious Diversity propose a quarterly educational opportunity aimed at increasing the religious and cultural literacy of our community in the hopes of increasing interfaith engagement. This began in February 2017 and will occur quarterly throughout 2017, with the hope that it would continue into the future, possibly with greater frequency. Through various mediums such as lecture, panel presentation, art, on-line engagement (such as conferencing in speakers from remote locations) and music, we hope to increase community awareness around diverse spiritual perspectives as well as humanist, atheist, and agnostic perspectives. These educational opportunities will be informational, and include a moderated discussion component as well as opportunities for small group break-out sessions. We have arranged to offer these free, educational programs in one of the rooms at the Woodmere Branch of the Traverse Area District Library in Traverse City, MI where the opportunities are easily accessible to our community, and where everyone might feel comfortable, welcome, and eager to learn. We believe that given the increasingly connected nature of our world that it is more important than ever that citizens begin to become more aware of the diversity that surrounds them through increased religious literacy, and engage that diversity through interfaith community.

Key Terms

The following terms or phrases are used throughout this document in reference to the project itself, the stakeholders involved, and the background and rational:
**Interfaith/Interfaith Council** - For the purposes of this project, the term *interfaith* refers to the intentional engagement with “…various faith/non-faith traditions …”, and an *interfaith council* is a group or organization of representatives of these “…various faith/non-faith traditions …” that gather or meet to some for some collective or mutually agreed upon purpose.

**ACORD** – Area Council on Religious Diversity. This is the name for the Interfaith Council I have been working with in Traverse City, MI. The council describes itself as

> “…a Traverse City-based interfaith organization working to educate, communicate and support religious diversity in northwestern lower Michigan and around the world. [They] are a grassroots organization with representatives from various faith/non-faith traditions who seek to bring hope by working together in mutual cooperation and respect”.

**Religious Literacy** – When referring to *religious literacy*, I do so using the “…definition of religious literacy articulated by Diane L. Moore has been adopted by the American Academy of Religion to help educators understand what is required for a basic understanding of religion and its roles in human experience:

> Religious literacy entails the ability to discern and analyze the fundamental intersections of religion and social/political/cultural life through multiple lenses. Specifically, a religiously literate person will possess 1) a basic understanding of the history, central texts (where applicable), beliefs, practices and contemporary manifestations of several of the world’s religious traditions as they arose out of and continue to be shaped by particular social, historical and cultural contexts; and 2) the ability to discern and explore the religious dimensions of political, social and cultural expressions across time and place”.

**Stakeholder(s)** – Primary stakeholders are those individuals that I worked with from the Interfaith Council, and other stakeholders include the participants of general public attending the programs offered as part of this project.

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United States Secretary of State John Kerry stated:

“One of the most interesting challenges we face in global diplomacy today is the need to fully understand and engage the great impact that a wide range of religious traditions have on foreign affairs. I often say that if I headed back to college today, I would major in comparative religions rather than political science. That is because religious actors and institutions are playing an influential role in every region of the world and on nearly every issue central to U.S. foreign policy”.

In this statement, John Kerry recognizes that religion has a direct impact on current world affairs.

Given this, it is important that citizens of the United States increase their knowledge and awareness of a wider array of religious and cultural traditions through increasing their literacy in these areas.

Consider the following data of religions practiced in the United States vs. the world:

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Data on world religious adherents suggests that greater diversity exists in the world as a whole than in the United States. This can be seen in the chart below which is rounded to the nearest whole percentage.5

![Religious Adherents - World](Image)

When considering the world religious adherent numbers compared to those in the United States, the percentage of those who identify as Christian drop to approximately 33%.

Additionally, religions that comprise the ‘non-Christian’ category in the United States such as Hinduism are a vastly larger percentage in the rest of the world.7 If the members of our community are to be equipped to engage with this more diverse population, they must receive accurate information not only about the religions and cultures involved, but about the importance of dialogue and pluralism in the modern world.

*Change Proposed*

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6 Wormald.

7 “Religious Adherents”. 
As noted above, there are currently very limited opportunities for members of our community to learn about and engage with diverse religious perspectives. Our local community college occasionally offers a few courses through their Learn for Life program that would address this; however the courses are costly and are very limited.\(^8\) To put forward a program such as the one we are proposing would be a change for our community in that to my knowledge there is no precedent for an ongoing, free opportunity with this specific focus. In addition to the educational benefits, it is our hope that offering this kind of engaged learning opportunity will advance and enhance local interfaith relations. According to the United Religions Initiative, “Interfaith describes an interaction between people of different religions or faith traditions. But it is more than that. It is about understanding our significant differences, but recognizing our similarities, and working together for peace, justice and healing in our world”.\(^9\) In this sense, this project will not only educate, but nurture “Interfaith friendships [that encourage individuals to] reach out across the stereotypes and misunderstandings…” that might divide us.\(^10\)

This project, while clearly beneficial for the reasons already noted, began as an observation that I made while teaching comparative religion at our local community college as adjunct faculty in the philosophy department. After just one semester in the classroom, it was abundantly clear to me that the learners were coming to the objective study of religion with little to no background or experience, and many remarked not only how much they learned from the course, but how they wished they had been exposed to the concepts earlier in their career as students. Having grown up not far from the Traverse City area, I am well acquainted with Northern Michigan and its culture. It is not unheard of for individuals who have grown up here to

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\(^10\) Ibid.
never move far from the area, thus limiting their exposure to perspectives different than those immediately available in our region. It has been my experience that this narrow scope of both perspective and experience extends to many aspects of life for these individuals, as well as many of the other citizens who move here from other areas. In terms of the learners who arrived in my classes, I realized that my course might be the only opportunity some of the learners would have in terms of exposure to diverse religious literacy. This raised the question for me – if the opportunities remain this limited, how might those individuals in our community who do not attend the college learn about diverse religious perspectives? How might a lack of knowledge in this regard contribute to their worldview and ability to engage as global citizens? How might this impact the message that their children are receiving? If we were to offer this kind of community learning experience, how could we offer it in such a way that it was non-threatening and approachable? Might such learning then lead to greater interfaith cooperation in our region, as well as more understanding and tolerance directed to the wider world? It is with these questions in mind, and research in hand, that I approached ACORD to develop and offer a community project.

Record of Initial Mindfulness

While engaging in this project, I have been called upon to collaborate on various levels with stakeholders. This has presented all of us involved with opportunities to learn, grow, and develop both together and as individuals, and is crucial if we are to be open and mindful of not only of our own roles in the situation, but what others can bring to the task at hand. In his chapter entitled “You are Never Not Whole”, Jon Kabat-Zinn offers a potential approach called “The Prepared Mind”.\textsuperscript{11} For Zinn, the prepared mind “… is a ready mind, an open mind, a mind that

\textsuperscript{11} Kabat-Zinn, Jon. \textit{Mindfulness for beginners: reclaiming the present moment--and your life}. Boulder, CO: Sounds True, 2012. p. 74
knows or maybe just intuits what it doesn’t know, questions its own tacit assumptions, and is
drawn to inquire…” In this approach, Zinn challenges us “… to look more deeply beneath the
appearance of things and perhaps behind the conventional narrative about why things are or
aren’t the way they are”. This notion has been helpful when working with a diverse group of
primary stakeholders in that it presents me with a framework for thoughtfully, openly,
considering that which lies beneath to develop real insight and be innovative together. I have
also employed it when considering how our community member/participants might view or
approach the program we’ve developed. What are their narratives? What assumptions are we
making? How can we be even more open to the perspectives not only of those who would be
drawn to a program of this nature, but to those who might initially be reluctant to participate? It
is my hope that mindfully approaching these questions in addition to developing and adapting the
program itself upon consideration of feedback received, lessons learned, etc. will be important if
we are to create something that is sustainable and impactful.

Limitations

This project is limited in scope to the presentation of four quarterly programs in 2017, the
first of which occurred on February, 9th 2017. Initial results from data collected relative to
attendance, and survey data from before and after the presentations will not be compiled until the
end of February 2017 when the council reconvenes to assess. Additionally, given the timeline of
university project deadlines and the fact that the second program will occur after these deadlines,
we will not have two iterations of the program to use for comparative purposes to consider.

12 Ibid.
CHAPTER 2 - Literature Review and Initial Stakeholder Dialogue

In order to accomplish the work of offering an educational program that not only increases knowledge but encourages interfaith community engagement, our group will need to develop the leadership skills necessary not only to construct the program itself, but to work with public officials at the library to meet whatever their program stipulations are. Additionally, we need to take care and consideration in presenting a program that is not only balanced and objective, but takes into account the fact that we are presenting in a forum that is funded by public dollars. In preparing for this project, I would like to consider the questions: *How are opportunities for the public regarding religious literacy and education surrounding religious diversity being addressed, and how are leaders in this area approaching interfaith engagement or education?* Through a review of the literature on this subject I have gained insight regarding the programs that currently exist, as well as how the project we are proposing could act to help address any gap that might exist in what is currently being done. I have also worked with my primary stakeholders to develop our approach to the change opportunity at hand.

*Evidence and Literature Review – Historical Perspective*

I began my research searching for the precedent of programs for education about religion in the public sphere. In this effort I did not include what was being offered within faith communities because I wanted to see how individual leaders and groups have navigated legislation that exists on the subject. I believe this is an important place to start when considering my Capstone Project because questions may arise regarding education about religion being offered in a space that is supported by public funding. Resources used for this literature review include national guidelines for education, legal and Supreme Court precedent for education concerning religion in the public sphere, and case studies and best practices from groups such as
the First Amendment Center and the American Academy of Religion. This review also included a consideration of local library precedent and guidelines, current work being done in the field by experts such as Eboo Patel, and the case material provided by regional groups available through the Pluralism Project.

_The Praeger Handbook of Religion and Education in the United States_ offers a good starting point for considering the historical context of the development of curriculum rulings and guidelines for public education and comparative religion. While this section of text points specifically to developments in the mid 1990’s and later, it, like others that I found, makes reference to the importance of The Supreme Court case _The School District of Abington, Pennsylvania vs. Schempp_. According the actual decision, the Supreme Court ruled that prayer is not allowed in public school classrooms. However, in Justice Clark’s opinion on the case he states that: “…it might well be said that one's education is not complete without a study of comparative religion or the history of religion and its relationship to the advancement of civilization”. He goes on to state that the decision of the court was not related to objective educational activities (comparative religion), but was in reference to the necessary separation between prayer/practice and public schools. This ruling has important bearing because it makes the distinction between learning about religions in a public space and practicing religion in a public space, and serves as the reference point used later by the leaders who developed guides and recommendations on the subject.

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15 Ibid, p 225.
Moving forward from the *Abington vs. Schempp* ruling, organizations such as The First Amendment Center, The Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, and the American Academy of Religions have developed the idea that comparative religion is a necessary part of “civilization”\(^\text{16}\) and have offered materials to guide educators and leaders on the ways in which to offer a “secular program of education”.\(^\text{17}\) In *A Teacher’s Guide to Religion in Public Schools*, Charles Haynes, a significant figure in this field, offers practical guidelines for including the study of religion in the public sector, specifically in public schools.\(^\text{18}\) This guide is important because it offers thoughts that leaders and educators may be able to apply to public venues other than the k-12 education setting that is specifically addresses. It likewise points back to the Supreme Court rulings and constitutional justification for this type of education.\(^\text{19}\) Further advice on this subject comes in the form of actual curriculum recommendations for a public setting. *The First Amendment Center* offers some further guidance in this regard stating that:

> “Public schools may not inculcate nor inhibit religion. They must be places where religion and religious conviction are treated with fairness and respect. Public schools uphold the First Amendment when they protect the religious liberty rights of students of all faiths or none. Schools demonstrate fairness when they ensure that the curriculum includes study about religion, where appropriate, as an important part of a complete education”.\(^\text{20}\)

For the purposes of my project, I would extend this notion of fairness and respect to the educational opportunities that we intend to offer in a public library setting. This notion of the

\(^{16}\) Ibid.

\(^{17}\) Ibid.


\(^{19}\) Ibid.

inclusion of comparative religion in a public setting has moved beyond theoretical and to actual practice as we see in a case study conducted by The First Amendment Center in Modesto, California. An article describing the project argues for this kind of education, offering that “Knowledge of the world’s religions is essential for comprehending much of history, literature, art and contemporary events. Moreover, learning about religions promotes religious freedom and creates understanding across religious differences”.

Furthermore, “According to the study, taking the world religions course increases student support for the rights of others. Moreover, students leave the course with a greater understanding of the major world religions and a fuller appreciation of the moral values shared across differences. At the same time, learning about various religions does not encourage students to change their own religious convictions.”

This study offers actual research regarding the benefits of having comparative religion available to the public, which could be applied to venues other than schools because of implications of the connections between what people learn and increased tolerance in the wider community. This is specifically one of the goals that my interfaith council wants to address. Lastly, relative to the precedent for comparative religion in the public sphere, I consulted The American Academy of Religions. In their educational guidelines for k-12 they offer further support of the effort to increase religious literacy amongst the public based on three premises: “that illiteracy regarding religion 1) is widespread, 2) fuels prejudice and antagonism, and 3) can be diminished by teaching about religion in public schools using a non-devotional, academic perspective, called religious studies”.

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22 Ibid, p ii.

While much literature is available relative to what can be included in the content of public education programs and what leaders and pioneers in this area have done to bring comparative religion to the public, most of what is available relates to the k-12 public schools or public universities. When searching for specific examples of what can be offered in other public settings, specifically public libraries, I found that each public library has their own criteria for what programs are acceptable in their buildings. I thought it prudent to specifically review the materials available for my local public library, the Traverse Area District Library, given that its main branch location is the preferred site of the educational programs at the heart of my Capstone Project. It was my hope that such a review might inform the types of questions I should be prepared to field, or skills that I might need in preparing a proposal for their consideration. Upon this review, I see no prohibition to what we are proposing, and the materials I have found supporting the legality of offering such a program, as well as the suggestions for taking the lead relative to designing an appropriate program for the public may prove helpful when making our case for their support. Furthermore, we have recently received confirmation from the Library Director that indeed our program is welcome in their facility and, depending upon the space we are interested in, we may utilize their facilities either for free or at a significantly reduced rate.

Current Perspective

When considering the shape that our educational program might take, it seems prudent to consider what is already being offered by educators and interfaith leaders around the country in this vein. Much work has been done by Eboo Patel, the profoundly influential leader and founder of the Interfaith Youth Core, in this regard. In his article Toward a Field of Interfaith Studies, Patel offers that “As an academic field, interfaith studies would examine the multiple dimensions

of how individuals and groups who orient around religion differently interact with one another, along with the implications of this interaction for communities, civil society, and global politics”. While this article is important because it goes on to provide a systematic offering of how a program could be developed, the manual that Patel and Brodeur provide entitled *Building the Interfaith Youth Movement: Beyond Dialogue to Action* more specifically addresses the kinds of programs we are seeking to develop in my community, and the skills necessary for developing such a program. Their work helpfully addresses community trainings which include education aimed at “…strengthening religious identity, encouraging understanding between religious communities, and facilitating service for the common good”. The type of understanding and relationship building they refer to would be important as my interfaith council and I develop in our efforts to become leaders, as noted in *Organizing for Social Change*.27

When searching for specific examples of programs and the venues in which they are offered, the most helpful resources I located were articles provided by the Pluralism Project. *Weston-Wayland Interfaith Action Group (WWIAG)* for instance made specific note of the need for increased understanding about the various members of their community.28 Leaders in their community began to offer opportunities to gather socially to learn about one another as well as build relationships, including “…public events such as film screenings, guest lectures and annual meetings [which] rotate between houses of worship so members can explore each other’s sacred


spaces”. It is particularly interesting to me that the group was able to offer their events in the spaces owned by various faith communities vs. in a public space. There is not a diverse swath of faith groups in my immediate community, causing me to wonder what skills might be necessary to persuade the communities that we do have here to host educational presentations on traditions other than their own. The article *The Hindu and the Cowboy... and other Kansas City Stories* offer some additional examples of how interfaith groups are leading in the area of community education. Through the use of theater, the group is educating and encouraging people to tell their stories via playwriting and drama. This is an example of a more interactive and entertaining mode of education, and is important because our interfaith council has expressed wanting to use different mediums – music, dance, art, etc. to educate in addition to lecture. Creativity is most certainly a quality that those who intend to design and direct a new program must possess.

Lastly, *The Interfaith Council of Southern Nevada* provides an example of an interfaith community that offers:

> “...educational programs such as an “Interfaith Table Talk,” the Amazing Faiths Dinner Dialogues, and a series of Interfaith Forums every autumn that culminate in an interfaith Thanksgiving celebration. The annual forums focus on a specific theme or topic and include representatives from five different faith traditions who speak before the floor is opened for public comment”.

While there is precedent for leadership in terms of education about religion in the public sphere and for the creation of curriculum that meets legal statues, most of the research available on this points the arenas of k-12 and public university education. It seems reasonable that the

29 Ibid.


same laws that apply to public schools would apply to programs in other publicly funded venues, but there is a need to address this particular aspect further, as well as the skills required to navigate the system. Likewise, a review of the efforts that are currently being made by interfaith leaders shows that many of these efforts occur in individual homes or in buildings associated with faith communities. This literature review has indeed shed light on what is being done and what can legally be done in regards to increasing religious literacy in communities, but the question that still needs to be addressed, the gap that needs to be explored, is what is specifically required to take the lead in bringing religious literacy opportunities to the public in settings that are not funded by faith communities. The leadership required to address my particular concern would include knowledge of not just interfaith, but the workings of public policy. Clearly though, there is much evidence to suggest the positive benefits of education about religion and religious diversity in a public setting.

Future Perspective

As has been previously noted herein, many experts have pointed to the importance of an educated public in regards to religious diversity and various spiritual and non-spiritual perspectives that influence worldview. Most notably, experts in the field of religion and interfaith such as Eboo Patel of the Interfaith Youth Core\(^33\) and Diana Eck of the Harvard Pluralism Project\(^34\) have shed light on the critical nature of this type of engagement, along with experienced diplomats such as Secretary of State John Kerry.\(^35\) Through continued work in k-12 curriculum development and legal precedent, there are possibilities in that sphere for reaching

\(^{33}\) Patel.


\(^{35}\) Kerry.
children and teens with this kind of objective study of religion. It is clear though through my literature review that it will take programs being implemented, such as the one suggested here, to begin to develop best practices for offering options in public settings that receive public funding. But what of those who are no longer in a k-12 setting, as well as those who are either not affiliated with a faith community or who would be reticent to participate in education offered in a particular faith community? This is the gap or the sphere which has yet to be fully addressed, and needs to be addressed. While we can look to the leadership of those who have taken on this effort in other settings, it is we who will forge ahead to create a new path or new option who will be the ones to set precedent for free, accessible, welcoming programs for individuals to engage in this kind of education and dialogue who would otherwise not have the opportunity to do so. This will require working with any local officials or employees of organizations that are stewards of public buildings to cooperatively and creatively navigate those systems that would be related to offering these free public opportunities.

Stakeholder Partner Organization Perspective

My stakeholder group, Area Council on Religious Diversity (accord) has been in existence since 2006, and was founded primarily by Facilitator-Pagan, Past-Participant-Unitarian Universalist, and two others. They meet monthly, although a small group is very willing to meet with me as needed to complete CLU requirements. They indicated that they have struggled getting religious leaders to participate in the group, and that many (but not all) of their participant-representatives are practitioners of a perspective and not ordained. They indicated that they were very interested in the “action” component of Interfaith, and were excited to work on projects together. We spent some time discussing my thoughts on the role of religious literacy, and spent a great deal of time discussing the importance of it, how it could be part of
public school education but often isn’t, and the role of interfaith groups in the promotion of religious literacy. After asking them questions regarding the work that they have already started, and where their interests lie, we collaborated on a concrete idea for our project together.

Together, we have worked to develop the program I have presented herein. The notion to engage in collaboration with the library was something that the members of the Area Council on Religious Diversity (ACORD) suggested, and was not a venue that had occurred to me prior to our collaboration. Additionally, the shape that the project has taken supports and coincides with the work of other interfaith groups that were part of my review. For instance, like the Weston-Wayland Interfaith Action Group (WWIAG) included in my review, the members of the Area Council on Religious Diversity (ACORD) seek to include a lecture component. Additionally, like the The Interfaith Council of Southern Nevada, they desire to have each program feature a theme or topic for the various speakers to approach. This confirms the notion that public programs offer a good opportunity to not only educate, but create the kind of connections the council is seeking to foster.

The approaches of the groups taken into account in the literature review, as well as the considerations that need to be made when approaching religion in the public sphere, have influenced the methods used to structure our community project. Some of these key ideas include the scope or focus of the information to be included in our presentations, such as background information regarding specific religions or worldviews to lay a foundation. This is similar to the information proposed in the various educator guides cited in the literature review. Likewise, as was seen in the case study of public school students, it is our hope that repeated exposure to these concepts creates greater understanding across lines of diversity, thus increasing interfaith
cooperation. It is important to keep these goals in mind as we continue to improve and develop the future iterations of our program.

CHAPTER 3 - Methods Determined with Stakeholders

This project would not have been possible without invested collaboration on that part of each individual involved in designing it. From primary stakeholders to those who are participants in the programs from the wider community, each has served to make the project what it is and will continue to shape it in the future. From its simple beginnings as the questions I posed to myself, it has very organically developed from the first meeting with my primary stakeholders in ACORD, all the way through our first program in the series of those offered as part of the project. The goal of our total project, comprised of a series of four programs (one offered/quarter in 2017), will be to increase knowledge of a variety of diverse religious perspectives as well as humanist perspectives, thereby increasing the likelihood of greater tolerance, understanding, and interfaith interaction. Together we have crafted a project that we believe has begun to meet these goals, and one that we are indeed proud to offer to our community.

Identification of Organization Stakeholders and Collaboration

The primary stakeholders of ACORD are all leaders in various faith communities as well as our local humanist community, or are senior members of said communities. As such, these stakeholders are very invested in the project, and have expressed that they have been interested in engaging in action of this type for some time, however did not have the impetus or push that was required to launch something. Each has offered to assist in various ways as they are able, and all are enthusiastic about the possibilities that it might open up for the future in terms of increasing their presence our wider community. Through my interactions with these organizational stakeholders, it has been clear that they enjoy sharing much responsibility for
tasks related to the project. This collaboration can be seen through a review of my Collaboration Log (Appendix B). It could be said that the vast majority of our meetings together have involved brainstorming, as well as getting to know one another better intellectually, philosophically, and as ordinary fellow travelers on this journey of life. Although I began meeting with them in the spring of 2016, it truly wasn’t until November of 2016 that we began to get some firm notions written down concerning the religious traditions and perspectives such as humanism that we wanted to include, the structure of the panels of presenters at each program, the order for the evening, and assignments of specific tasks.

*Other Stakeholders*

I also recognize that the members of the public who participate in these programs represent a stakeholder position as well. In their roll, while not necessarily immediate, these stakeholders will serve to inform our development of future programs. Through various surveys at the programs themselves, ACORD will seek to interpret the feedback received in order to make what is offered more effective and meaningful.

*Stakeholder Partner Organization Background, Collaboration and Program Evaluation*

In my Collaboration Log (Appendix B) I note that the council meets monthly, if not more frequently to work on this project, as well as address their regular business. Through this process I have been invited to be a regular member-participant in ACORD, an invitation that extends beyond the scope of this Capstone Project and the completion of my CLU degree. In the course of the monthly face to face meetings, as well as through electronic or technology-mediated collaboration, we were able to successfully offer the first iteration of our project on Thursday, February 9th, 2017.

Together we decided that each quarterly program would have the following components: three perspectives represented, a theme, and each would address how their perspective helps
them to engage with diversity. After brainstorming themes, we matched perspectives or religious traditions with themes that we thought would fit well with their positions. At this time, we have matched the following themes with perspectives or religious traditions:

- Environmental Stewardship - Native American, Baha’i, Pagan
- Care of fellow wo/man - good works - charity - social support systems - Catholic, Islam, Judaism
- Death/dying - end of life issues - Buddhism, Shinto, Hindu
- Education - UCC, Humanist, Quakers

We decided that we would offer the Education theme with speakers representing The United Church of Christ (UCC), Humanist, and Quaker perspectives. One reason that this worked well was that there are Humanist and United Church of Christ representatives in the ACORD group, thus making the organizing of speakers a bit easier. I likewise had multiple Quaker contacts to reach out to in this regard. Together, we discussed the merits of several formats for the program itself, and we ultimately decided to try the following format, in the knowledge that our first program would be a learning experience, and everyone was open to the idea that the format could change at the next iteration in May of 2017.

- Introduction to program and ACORD (ACORD leader - Pagan)
- Introduce Speakers (self)
- Each speaker to address the theme in terms of the following question: How does your history/beliefs/practices inform your position on ____?
  - Speaker 1
  - Speaker 2
  - Speaker 3
- Brief Q&A for “burning questions”
- Each speaker to address the following question: How does the teachings of your perspective/path impact your interaction with others/people with diverse perspectives?
  - Speaker 1
  - Speaker 2
  - Speaker 3
- Moderated Q&A (ACORD leader - Pagan)
- Closing
- Refreshments (organized by ACORD leader – Baha’i
- Pre-presentation survey and post-presentation survey conducted
We ultimately followed this format on February 9th, 2017, and successfully presented our program to approximately 50 people.

_Evaluating the Approach and Sustaining Proposed Change_

The council has discussed how to assess the project/program on several occasions. After conversation with Dr. Stan Ward of CLU, I worked with the primary stakeholders in ACORD to discern how to evaluate the approach we are taking, as well as consider those individuals that we might not be reaching in this approach. Each iteration of our project, or each quarterly educational program, will include its own evaluation process. As part of this process, I will be seeking to make qualitative data measurable by using quantitative methods. In order to do this, I will need to produce quantitative data that can be compared in an effort to promote continuous improvement. We have developed a pre-program survey and a post-program survey with questions that are tied to a scale or range. Dr. Ward made some wonderful suggestions in regards to the structure of these questions, which I brought to my primary stakeholders. Below is a copy of the pre-program survey that we used on February 9th, 2017.

![Pre-Program Survey](image)
Post-program questions are an attempt to ascertain if any growth or changed occurred for the participant stakeholders as a result of the program, and the following is a copy of our post-program survey used on February 9th, 2017.

![Post-Program Survey](image)

It is the intention of the council and I to gather to review the results of the surveys at the regular council meetings following the events to discuss our own impressions of the program, and consider what can be done to improve the next iteration. Additionally, we will be interviewing our speakers to ascertain what we can improve upon going forward. We will repeat this evaluation each time we present a program. These various levels of intentional evaluation speak to the strengths or positives of this particular approach to our change. By having a regular program, with a consistent format, we will have the opportunity to hone in on each specific aspect of the structure of the program and make any necessary alterations. Also, by offering this educational opportunity at no charge in a public setting, we have created the opportunity for a larger range or pool of individuals to participate, thus increasing the diversity of the representation in our data. Through evaluating and striving for continuous improvement, we
hope to offer the best possible program to not only increase knowledge, but to promote interfaith community, connection, and enthusiastic engagement with diversity.

Diversity is a central in this entire proposal. While we are attempting to offer an educational opportunity that encourages participants to learn about different faith perspectives and worldviews, or positive life philosophies, it is entirely possible that we could miss out reaching an entire segment of our community because of the nature of our change proposal. Such a shortcoming would land us short of meeting our goals of not only increasing religious literacy, but of generating and promoting interfaith engagement. Dr. Ward and I discussed this challenge at some length, particularly in regards to segments of the local Christian population for whom the content of this change proposal could be potentially threatening or at very least not of interest. This indeed presents us with a con, or test to overcome in that it is our hope to reach our entire community, especially those who are reticent to seek out information on diverse perspectives. In his book *Worldview Conversations: How to Share Your Faith and Keep Your Friends* (2011), Dr. Ward presents various ways in which those Christians who adhere to a more conservative Biblical worldview can have conversations with those whose perspective differs from their own. Throughout the course of the book, Dr. Ward discusses the importance of “…understanding your own assumptions, understanding the assumptions of others, and [recognition that] having an honest conversation is not a linear process”. These are wise words when considering a strategy for approaching the inclusion of all perspectives. One way that we have sought to address this is by asking the opinion of those who might relate to the worldview noted above in terms of what the circumstances would need to be for them to feel not only welcome to attend but interested in attending a program like the one we are developing.

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36 Ward, Stanley J. *Worldview conversations: how to share your faith and keep your friends*. Place of publication not identified: Publisher not identified, 2011.p 4.
When considering how to sustain this change in the long term, ACORD can utilize the four factors of change management brought up by Sirkin et al in their article *The Hard Side of Change Management*: “…project duration, particularly the time between project reviews; performance integrity, or the capabilities of project teams; the commitment of both senior executives and the staff whom the change will affect the most; and the additional effort [involved]…”.

**Duration:** In addition to the review sessions conducted following each quarterly program during which we reviewed the pre and post program surveys of the participants, we should consider an annual review of the entire project. During this annual review we can consider any program-wide changes that need to be made, and plan for the future.

**Performance Integrity:** We should consider the workload placed upon the various stakeholders involved to evaluate ways in which we can ensure that no one person or a small group of individuals are not shouldering the entire weight of the project. Creating a sense of balance will prevent burnout.

**Commitment:** If we are to succeed, we will need to look for ways to engage the ACORD members who participated in a very limited capacity for the February 9th, 2017 program. We will need to work with them to find out how we could make the project easier for them to commit to. Maybe there needs to be a better, clearly documented outline of the tasks associated with each program that people could commit to small portions of rather than feeling like they have to take on a whole portion of the program? Are the details overwhelming?

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**Effort:** I see this relating to commitment for our group since many of those who may be (and are even currently) participating in a limited capacity is doing so because of the weight of other commitments. To sustain the project, we will need to find ways for these individuals to be involved in some way that honors their other obligations. *Example – a full-time minister may find it difficult to participate in the planning of our educational project because of the workload involved in the daily needs of her community. How can we find ways to include her in a meaningful way that is likewise not taxing?*

**Summary**

Together my stakeholders and I advertised for and delivered a well organized program that was very much the product of continuous dialogue and collaboration. Our intentional, organized evaluation will likewise utilize the feedback from our other stakeholders in our efforts to mold and shape the program in such a way that we will both meet the needs of our participants and meet our goals as an organization. Just as we engage in course evaluations as part of Claremont Lincoln University’s efforts to continuously improve and enhance the experience they make available to their students, we must evaluate the community educational program we are offering as an interfaith organization. By considering the overall approach as well as strategies to sustain the change itself in collaboration with the stakeholders involved, it is my hope that we have created a program that not only continues, but one which has an increasing appeal in the community, an ever widening reach through intentional inclusion of diverse perspectives, and one that perhaps increases in frequency as well. Ideally, this program will lead to more community connections, and increased participation in interfaith action.
CHAPTER 4 - Methods Determined with Stakeholders

Actions Taken by Researcher and Stakeholders

We were able to offer our first program on February 9th, 2017 on schedule. In advance of the program we held a final meeting to check to make sure all of the details were covered. I was responsible for designing and printing the surveys, as well as creating an email/contact sheet to make available as an optional sign-up for participants. The group had previously decided that it might be beneficial to begin to compile an email list to update interested individuals on future events. Together we administered pre-program surveys and post-program surveys by placing one of each on every chair for people before they arrived. These surveys were an attempt to gauge the knowledge of participants before and after the presentation to begin to get some idea of the overall effectiveness of the program.

In order to replicate this program, an Interfaith Council would need to assign or secure the following:

- A public meeting space that is safe, open, and welcoming to all in the community
- A theme to guide the conversation such as the environment, death and dying, education, social/community service, etc.
- 3 individuals to present from a variety of perspectives, each of which would have received the format of the evening in advance to prepare (sample format on pg. 27 of this paper)
- Marketing of event via local media both print and electronic
- Surveys pre and post designed and printed (samples on pg. 28-29 of this paper)
• Set up of the room, including refreshments, a/v equipment, seating and information/surveys distributed

• Moderators present and prepared to introduce the event/speakers and lead discussions

• Clean-up

• Evaluate the program and review the surveys in within two weeks of the program

Given that I teach comparative religion at our local community college, I likewise offered extra credit to my students if they attended the program and wrote a paper that summarized and reviewed the program, as well as address the role of religious literacy in our community. This was a wonderful way to get some real feedback, as well as impact the total number of individuals in attendance.

*Measurement of Results*

Our pre-program surveys helped us to assess a measurable baseline of knowledge amongst the individuals in attendance. We likewise posed a question to begin to understand what other information our participants would be interested in. Of the approximately 50 people who were in attendance, we received 21 pre-program surveys.

Questions 1-3 asked participants to rate their knowledge of the perspectives represented on a scale from 1-10, with 1 being the lowest. Perspectives represented were Quakers, United Church of Christ, and Humanists and their results were as follows:
Question 4: On a scale from 1-10, with 10 being the highest, how would you rate your level of comfort engaging in a worldview conversation with those of a faith perspective or worldview different than your own?

Question 5: What might you hope to learn in terms of diverse perspectives and interacting with diversity?

Responses to this question included:

- How these three perspectives interact with each other.
• Open-mindedness between diverse perspectives and how they can come/work together.

• How to facilitate productive communication.

• More education on this topic so I am able to engage in intellectual conversation.

• I hope to learn more about how to approach diversity with an objective view.

Our post-program surveys helped us to assess any increase in knowledge base amongst the individuals in attendance. We likewise posed a question to find out what more we could have offered and where other interests lie. Of the approximately 50 people who were in attendance, we received 21 pre-program surveys.

Questions 1-3 asked participants to rate their knowledge or understanding of the perspectives represented on a scale from 1-10 with 1 being the lowest following the program and the results were as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Post-Program Question 1</th>
<th>Quakers Tally</th>
<th></th>
<th>Post-Program Question 2</th>
<th>UCC Tally</th>
<th></th>
<th>Post-Program Question 3</th>
<th>Humanist Tally</th>
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</table>
Question 4: On a scale from 1-10, with 10 being the highest, how would you rate your level of comfort engaging in a worldview conversation with those of a faith perspective or worldview different than your own following the program?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Post-Program</th>
<th>Tally</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Q4</td>
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Question 5: What were the strengths of the program, and what do you wish had been included?

Responses to this question included:

- I thought the program was conducted in a positive manner.
- The program presented each philosophy very well and it was easy to follow.
- I wish they talked a little more clearly about education.
- Collect the “before” slips ahead of the talks.
- It was very organized and each perspective was clear to understand. I’m walking out with a different mindset and feel more comfortable.

General feedback from the extra credit papers submitted by my students included:

- Wished that the United Church of Christ presenter had spoken more and shown less film.
• Glad that this opportunity is available in our community, and wished that more people would take advantage of it.

• Gratitude for having the opportunity to attend.

• Interested in future events offered by the interfaith council.

• Desire for fact-sheet type take-aways for each perspective represented.

Communication of Results to Stakeholders

The council met on February 20\textsuperscript{th}, 2017 for their regular monthly meeting. At that time I was able to discuss the compiled results above, as well as the feedback from my students. I was unable to provide them with copies of some of the student’s papers with identifying information removed at that time because the grading was yet to be completed. I discussed providing these at our next meeting. We reviewed the hard copies of the survey forms, and likewise engaged in a conversation regarding our personal impressions of the program.

Assessment of Goal Achievement

Overall, the council and I feel very positively about the results of the first of our quarterly programs that are part of this larger project. Given that there was marked improvement in the surveyed areas, we were able to determine that our message had been clearly conveyed. Based on the comments and written feedback, we have determined that the format is generally appropriate, and that the individuals who participated were not only glad that they had done so, but were interested in future events of this nature. We will be modifying the program in May to reflect the suggestion that we pick up the pre-program surveys at the start of the program. We intend to try to include some of the questions or areas of interest expressed on those forms as seed-questions to start the question and answer portion of the evening. At this time it is difficult
to assess if the level of engagement with interfaith community and diversity has increased or will increase, as this will no doubt be an on-going process. It can be said however that the council’s Facebook page has seen an increase in “likes” as well as people following and sharing posts from the page, indicating at very least an increased awareness of the council as well as a general interest in engagement.

CHAPTER 5 – Final Reflections and Recommendations

Overall Project Summary

The results of our project thus far have been incredibly rewarding. We held our first panel/quarterly program at the Woodmere Branch of the Traverse Area District Library on February 9th. From the very first meeting the intention was to create more understanding and harmony in our region through education and dialogue. Everyone involved recognized the importance of increasing knowledge in the hopes that it would lead to more cooperation and enthusiastic engagement with diversity. While we have only offered one iteration of the programs to date, I would say that we have remained true to these guiding values in our design and implementation of the project. We have seen improved Facebook page traffic, which demonstrates some increased social media engagement, which I hope will lead to even more interest and attendance at future events and gatherings. Additionally, we had two new individuals attend our February 20th meeting of the council to learn more.
This particular iteration of the project included representatives from the United Church of Christ, The Quakers, and Humanists, each of which offered insight into their perspectives or beliefs as well as addressing the theme of education, and how they actively engage with diversity. There were approximately 50 individuals in attendance (40 chairs were initially set up, and we needed to go get more chairs as individuals arrived toward the start time). The program proceeded without any glitches, and the refreshments that were served were much appreciated. After reading the responses made by my students via their extra credit papers, and upon review of the pre/post surveys conducted the night of the event, we intend to maintain much of the structure of our next panel/quarterly program on May 4th, 2017. Slight changes will be included when we collect the pre-program surveys, an addition to the final Q&A, and a recommendation for our future speakers.

Upon review of the extra credit papers that were submitted by my students, I have concluded that not only should we continue this quarterly project, but that the 18-30yr olds who responded would welcome more events hosted by our interfaith council – ACORD (Area
Council on Religious Diversity). Many mentioned that they are interested in knowing what the schedule and topics would be for the quarterly series in 2017, and all noted the importance of providing religious literacy opportunities in our community in a free and welcoming setting.

The pre & post program surveys showed positive trends. When asked to rate their knowledge of the perspectives represented prior to the start of the program on a scale of 1-10 with 10 being the highest, the vast majority indicated limited knowledge. When asked to rate their knowledge of the perspectives represented after the program on a scale of 1-10 with 10 being the highest, there was significant improvement, indicating that the speakers were successful in conveying information both about their particular perspective as well as how they interact with others and engage with diversity.

While the entire evening went very well, there are a few aspects that I would recommend modifying in the future. Some of these suggestions are based on the feedback we received from the surveys, as well as the extra credit papers my students submitted, a sample of which are included in Chapter 4 of this document. Additional insights were gained by participating in a follow up conversation/meeting on February 20th with members of our Interfaith council who were able to attend. First, I would collect the pre-program surveys before the program began. While the speakers were presenting, I would review the section of each survey where participants could indicate questions that they might have, or things they might have an interest in. After reviewing and looking for key questions or themes, I would pass a selection of them to the moderator of the Q&A. These questions could serve to jump start the Q&A portion of the evening. Also, going forward I will suggest to our speakers that while they might include audio or visual components, showing a video for the bulk of their time would not be recommended. This final recommendation is based on feedback for the extra credit papers.
Consistency of Guiding Values

This project was guided by the core values expressed by Claremont Lincoln University\textsuperscript{38}, values that I believe are beneficial to any endeavor of this nature.

\textbf{Compassion} – Follow the Golden Rule: Do unto others as you would have them do unto you.

\textbf{Integrity} – Be consistent and transparent in our values, actions and outcomes. \textbf{Respect} – Value and be mindful of other’s views and traditions”.\textsuperscript{39} Throughout this entire process, everyone involved collaborated with compassion for one another. Each stakeholder was understanding and supportive of the efforts of everyone involved. From the beginning, the values of the council were paramount to the endeavor, and the mission to promote understanding, tolerance, and an appreciation for diversity impacted our actions. Out of an abundance of respect not only for one another, but for any perspective that could be represented not only by the speakers on our panels but buy those individuals who participated by attending, we were as inclusive as possible and took a pluralistic approach.

\textbf{Diligence} – Have a commitment to continually improve and the strength to make a difference.

\textbf{Individual Responsibility} – Hold ourselves accountable; deliver on our promises”.\textsuperscript{40} I cannot imagine any stakeholder group being more diligent and responsible then the interfaith Council I was privileged to work with. Through not only their monthly meetings, but in additional work sessions we were able to get to know one another, dialogue, and craft an approach to religious literacy in our community as well as an effort to increase interest in interfaith community as well as engagement with diversity. Everyone who took on and accepted various tasks associated with

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{39} Ibid.
\item \textsuperscript{40} Ibid.
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\end{footnotesize}
the first iteration of this project not only followed through, but went above and beyond to ensure that this first program in our ongoing project was a success.

“Innovation – Strive to define new ways to make education better. Social Impact – Make the world a better place”. 41 No project like this has been attempted to our knowledge in our region prior to this, making it a fresh new approach to promoting diversity, understanding, and creating connection in our community. Through continued pursuit of these connections we hope to not only positively impact our immediate community, but to likewise impact the wider world. This will be made possible by the actions of individuals whom we have connected with as they reach out and engage beyond our own community. I think we have made great strides in this regard, given that this is the first program of its kind in our region to our knowledge.

Project Impact on Researcher

This project presented me with the opportunity to work with and incredibly diverse array of individuals, some of whom I had previously been acquainted with, and some who are now new friends. To be honest, I was previously unaware that there was an active interfaith Council in our region. Just the knowledge that there are people in our community so dedicated and committed to a just and peaceful world is incredibly encouraging. In short, this experience has given me great hope for the potential of increased cooperation and understanding in our world. Additionally, from a practical standpoint, this project and educational pursuit has presented me with an opportunity to go beyond my background in comparative religion and find ways to apply the knowledge that I came to the program with along with insight that I have gained through the program in real and meaningful ways.

41 Ibid.
The endeavor to engage in this pursuit taught me a lot about myself, and what I am able to accomplish, while balancing a multitude of outside responsibilities. In really celebrating my growth, I acknowledge the following as part of my journey in this program to complete this project:

- I have been profoundly grateful for the opportunity to be in school again and to have the chance to engage in real application of scholarship.
- I have missed out on things that I would have liked to be doing with my children because I had too much work to do – I have often had to say “I’m sorry, but mommy really needs to work on homework…”
- We found out we were going to be expecting a baby!
- I was able to dive deeply into work and study that I really loved, and found that the materials were regularly immediately applicable to my personal and professional life!
- I found that I needed to come to a place of acceptance of my own limitations. This is most certainly something I am still working on. There are still things that I need to let go of, and I need to try my best to not just fill the time with whatever once this program is over. I need to be much more intentional and much more at peace with just being. I need to be gentle with myself when I drop a ball, or don’t achieve a 100% on an assignment, or the house isn’t picked up, or have to excuse myself from a commitment because what I really need to do is just rest. This journey has forced me to really become mindful of this in my life.
- I have been reminded how good it feels to be supported intellectually, personally, and professionally - there were many days that the interactions with my classmates kept me
from losing my cool in my workplace, or brightened my day when things on other fronts weren’t going quite right. My classmates and instructors have all been so wise.

- We had our baby the last week of the term that ended in December of 2016, which meant I was doing work for the end of the term from the hospital.
- I have had the opportunity to engage with and learn from people in my community, most especially the stakeholders from my local interfaith council, in new and wonderful ways. I have also had the opportunity to deepen relationships that I already had.
- I have experienced the exhilaration of engaging in REAL ACTION in my community – to live and breathe my passion for encouraging engagement with diversity and increasing understanding of cultures and faith perspectives.

Project Impact on Stakeholders

It is my impression that the primary stakeholders involved had a positive experience during the development of this project. On numerous occasions they were kind enough to express their gratitude to me for my efforts. I believe that this project is only the beginning for the council, and I envision them taking a much more active role in our wider community going forward. In fact, brainstorming has already begun on future projects! Energy is high, and everyone is enthusiastic! As evidence of this, I have included a letter from the Stakeholder-Pagan that has been one of the primary collaborators in this project, and it can be viewed in its entirety as Appendix A. The stakeholder offers that

“The initial Capstone / Religious Literacy community presentation was so successful in fact, that ACORD has committed to an ongoing quarterly Community presentation for the remainder of the year beginning May 4th. Sarah's self-starting, enthusiastic, and creative abilities were paramount in this project's success”.

45
Overall Project Assessment

In general the project itself has been a success thus far in that we have offered the first of our quarterly programs which was well received. Additionally, the primary stakeholders seem to have had a good experience and the other stakeholders or individuals who participated had generally good feedback. As stated previously in this document, we will need to make sure that we involve as many primary stakeholders as possible going forward in an effort to not burn out those who have taken greater responsibility for tasks early on. We will likewise need to consider more marketing strategies for future events, including reaching out to segment of our community who may not ordinarily participate in events of this nature. The extent to which this effort will increase interfaith community and engagement with diversity is yet to be seen, but I believe this is a good first step. Together, we will promote much-needed understanding in a world that needs it desperately. I am exceedingly thrilled with the feedback given by Stakeholder-Pagan which is included as Appendix A in which he offers that

“Following an active Q & A interface after the presentations, the audience left with expanded knowledge and understanding relating to the United Church of Christ, The Quaker Faith, plus an Atheist / Humanist perspective about achieving balance, happiness and community service by living according to a Positive Life Philosophy. Equally important, was the audience and presenters alike experiencing first hand, people of widely varying religious and secular perspectives carry on an open, respectful, and otherwise productive dialogue”.

Recommendations for Future Projects

Future projects for this stakeholder group could include offering dialogue training to a variety of faith communities, a project they had previously expressed interest in. Additionally, I could see a next step in promoting community connection as the creation of social opportunities such as interfaith community meals, interfaith concerts, or perhaps an interfaith art show. These would serve as a nice balance to the more formal educational opportunities.
Works Cited


25. Ward, Stanley J. *Worldview conversations: how to share your faith and keep your friends*. Place of publication not identified: Publisher not identified, 2011


Appendix A

STAKEHOLDER-PAGAN LETTER

Claremont Lincoln University--To whom it may concern.

Re: Sarah Montgomery-Richards / Capstone Project

I am a member of The Area Council on Religious Diversity (ACORD) --- a Traverse City, Michigan Interfaith Organization founded in 2006. I want to convey on behalf of ACORD, that it has been pleasure working with Sarah Montgomery-Richards in connection with her leadership role in the "Religious Literacy /Capstone Project" Community Outreach program she proposed to ACORD in 2016.

Sarah's coordinating guidance as an ACORD member resulted in a very successful local community Religious Literacy presentation on February 9, 2017 featuring two area faiths as well as a positive life philosophy perspective shared by a local Humanists Organization member. Following an active Q & A interface after the presentations, the audience left with expanded knowledge and understanding relating to the United Church of Christ, The Quaker Faith, plus an Atheist / Humanist perspective about achieving balance, happiness and community service by living according to a Positive Life Philosophy. Equally important, was the audience and presenters alike experiencing first hand, people of widely varying religious and secular perspectives carry on an open, respectful, and otherwise productive dialogue.

The initial Capstone / Religious Literacy community presentation was so successful in fact, that ACORD has committed to an ongoing quarterly Community presentation for the remainder of the year beginning May 4th. Sarah's self-starting, enthusiastic, and creative abilities were paramount in this project's success.

ACORD welcome's Sarah's continuing membership in ACORD, and look forward to having her support in achieving the organization's mission of serving the Greater Good of our community.

Sincerely,
Rev. (Stakeholder-Pagan)
Area Council on Religious Diversity
### CAPSTONE COLLABORATION LOG

**LOG ENTRIES**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Purpose</th>
<th>Participants</th>
<th>Actions and Outcomes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>06.20.2016</td>
<td>First meeting with ACORD</td>
<td>Facilitator, Pagan, Participant, Buddhist, Participant, Baha’i, Myself</td>
<td>Met to introduce myself to the council (although I knew many of them from previous interactions) and to describe the Interfaith program at CLU as well as the Capstone project.</td>
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<td>07.11.2016</td>
<td>Monthly ACORD meeting</td>
<td>Facilitator, Pagan, Participant, Buddhist, Participant, Baha’i, Participant, Judaism, Participant, Christian, Myself</td>
<td>Monthly council meeting. Explained program and Capstone project to those who were not at the last meeting. Discussed my idea for a religious literacy project. The group supported the idea and added their insight. Facilitator, Pagan, Participant, Buddhist, and Participant, Baha’i all offered to meet with me outside of their regular meeting if necessary to work on the project. Regular business of the council followed this discussion.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>08.15.2016</td>
<td>Monthly ACORD meeting</td>
<td>Facilitator, Pagan, Participant, Buddhist, Participant, Baha’i, Participant, Judaism, Myself</td>
<td>Monthly council meeting. Decided on approaching the local library as the venue for our project, and discussed best ways to contact/present the concept. I offered to reach out to my contact on the library board of directors. I also offered to write a proposal to attach to the email I would send the board member. I asked the council if they would please review the proposal before I sent it to the library board member, to which they agreed. Regular business of the council followed this discussion.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>09.01.2016</td>
<td>Email Library Proposal to ACORD for review</td>
<td>All ACORD members (email list)</td>
<td>Emailed draft of our program proposal to the council for their review before using it to approach the library board contact regarding building use. Emails circulated for a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Date</td>
<td>Activity</td>
<td>Participants</td>
<td>Details</td>
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<tr>
<td>09.12.2016</td>
<td>Emailed Library Board Contact</td>
<td>Library Board Member, Myself</td>
<td>Reached out to my contact on the library board of directors requesting information regarding the channels that needed to be navigated to utilize space at the library for our program. Attached copy of our proposal. Asked for there to be some consideration of discounting the rental fees if possible due to the educational nature of the program. I received a reply the same day with the contact information for the Library Director. The board member also noted that he had forwarded my email, along with the proposal to the Library Director who should be following up with me shortly.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>09.19.2016</td>
<td>Monthly ACORD meeting</td>
<td>Facilitator, Pagan, Participant, Baha’i, Participant, Judaism, Participant, Christian, Myself</td>
<td>Monthly council meeting. Provided status update of email exchange with library board contact. Discussed the Capstone lab assignment due that term, including how to measure our success/evaluate our program. Regular business of the council followed this discussion.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>09.27.2016</td>
<td>Email exchanges with Director of Library</td>
<td>Director of Library, Myself</td>
<td>Exchanged emails with Director of the Library. Was informed that the library had approved the use of space for our program and was excited about the project. Provided contact information for reserving the room/necessary equipment. Informed me that we could use one of the smaller rooms for free, or the larger room for a significantly discounted rate.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>09.27.2016</td>
<td>Email to ACORD relating library approval of room use</td>
<td>All ACORD members (email list)</td>
<td>Emailed council informing them of the library’s decisions. All decided that we would discuss the finances and schedule at our next regular meeting. Entire group was pleased</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Date</td>
<td>Event Description</td>
<td>Attendees</td>
<td>Details</td>
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<tr>
<td>10.17.2016</td>
<td>Monthly ACORD</td>
<td>Facilitator, Pagan; Participant, Buddhist; Participant, Baha’i; Participant, Judaism; Participant, Christian; Participant, Humanist; Myself</td>
<td>Discussed potential quarterly dates for presentations/programs. Discussed funding the minimal room rentals as well as refreshments and printed materials. Discussed advertising, title of the event(s) for use in publication. Revisited work thus far for Participant, Humanist who has been absent from several meetings. Regular business of the council followed this discussion.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11.21.2016</td>
<td>Monthly ACORD</td>
<td>Facilitator, Pagan; Participant, Baha’i; Participant, Humanist; Myself</td>
<td>Monthly council meeting. Facilitator, Pagan offered to follow up with the library reservation/AV contact to reserve the space for our February program. Was decided to hold a special work-bee meeting on 12.05.2016 to solidify plans for this initial launch. All ACORD members would be welcome, but Facilitator, Pagan and Participant, Baha’i committed to being there. Regular business of the council followed this discussion.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12.05.16</td>
<td>Workbee</td>
<td>Facilitator, Pagan; Participant, Baha’i; Participant, Humanist; Myself</td>
<td>Brainstormed format of program and assigned roles.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12.30.16</td>
<td>Workbee</td>
<td>Participant, Baha’i; Myself</td>
<td>Brainstormed additional themes and potential speakers for future programs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>01.16.17</td>
<td>Monthly ACORD</td>
<td>Facilitator, Pagan; Participant, Buddhist; Participant, Baha’i</td>
<td>Finalized program format, finalized roles, took group picture for publication</td>
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<tr>
<td>Date</td>
<td>Event Description</td>
<td>Participants</td>
<td>Summary</td>
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</table>
| 02.09.17 | First Program           | • Participant, Christian  
• Participant, Humanist  
• Myself  
• Facilitator, Pagan  
• Participant, Buddhist  
• Participant, Baha’i  
• Participant, Christian  
• Participant, Humanist  
• Myself  
• Speakers  
• Individuals from the community | Presented program to the community                                          |
| 02.20.17 | Monthly ACORD Meeting   | • Facilitator, Pagan  
• Myself  
• 2 Guests   | Reviewed the results, talked about further review with other stakeholders/participants. |