



To: UUA Panel on Theological Education
FROM: LREDA R.E. Education Futures Committee
SUBJECT: Report on meeting of February 12-13, 2008
DATE:

The LREDA R.E. Education Futures Committee had a very productive meeting in Boston in February, and we wish to thank the panel again for providing the funds for us to gather. We enclose our report on our proceedings and our timeline for future work. The notable outcomes of our meeting were a working vision statement for education in the area of religious education and working goals for our committee including a timeline for addressing our goals. The final product at the end of this timeline will be a strategic plan which will be shared with all those institutions we identify as having a stake in quality graduate and continuing educational opportunities in RE Education. This document will also serve as the blueprint for action for the ongoing work of the LREDA RE Education Futures Committee.

We are confident that our work as it proceeds will be a useful source to inform your task of evaluating and supporting ministerial and professional formation, and assuring excellence in education for ministers and religious educators. We are in hope that our vision and goals, included in this report, even at this early stage will provide some useful input to your process. Please let us know if there is any other information about the meeting that you wish.

We understand that you will meet in the fall of 2008, to review input from various groups (stakeholders). We would welcome an invitation for one of our committee members to attend that meeting. Sharing your desire for formation of excellent ministers, all of whom will impact the ministry of education in our congregations, we wholeheartedly support your endeavors.

Sincerely yours,

Rev. Dr. Barry M. Andrews, Chair

REPORT ON MEETING OF LREDA R.E. EDUCATION FUTURES COMMITTEE

February 12-13, 2008, Pickett & Elliot House, Boston, MA

For The Panel on Theological Education

Participants:

- Rev. Barry Andrews, chair
- Rev. Susan Archer, liaison to the LREDA Board
- Rev. Margaret Corletti
- Betsy Darr, CDRE
- Pat Ellenwood, DRE
- Rev. Richard Gilbert
- Robin Pugh, DRE

Agenda:

- To create a vision for improved education in religious education.
- To set goals for realizing this vision.

Funding for this meeting: Final accounting of expenses in process.

Summary Overview of Initial Concerns:

The members of the committee discussed a wide range of concerns about the state of RE education for religious professionals at all levels, noting

- Lack of adequate opportunities for continuing education beyond Renaissance modules for RE practitioners;
- Inadequate opportunities in seminaries, including
 - lack of grounding in the theology and history of Unitarian Universalism as it relates to the philosophy and application of religious education in our congregations ‘
 - lack of knowledge and understanding of learning needs throughout the life cycle and experiences and analysis of experiences in the practice of teaching.
 - Inadequate understanding in the planning of seminary curriculum of the importance of experience in religious education in the formation of ministers (noting the importance those experiences have played in the past – e.g. at St. Lawrence under the tutelage of Angus MacLean).
 - Lack of joint opportunities at the graduate level for those preparing for ministry and those preparing for professional religious education leadership roles to find and affirm commonalities in theology, understandings and values and can practice partnership for future leadership in congregations.
- Absence of cutting edge thinking to carry forward our tradition of excellence in the forging an outstanding future of religious education for our movement.

- The need for connection and partnership among UU institutions that have stakes in the future of RE Education.

Proceedings:

I. Though each person knew most of the others from participation in LREDA and other interactions as colleagues, we spent some time “checking in” and getting better acquainted.

II. Chair Barry Andrews gave us some background on the organization that funded this meeting. The Panel on Theological Education, currently chaired by Rev. Barbara Merritt, makes annual grants from the income of the Fund for Theological Education, providing financial support for the UU seminaries, continuing education of ministers and training of religious educators. So far as the training of religious educators is concerned, the Panel has provided funding for the Independent Study Program, administered by the UUA, and its successor, the Modified Residency Program, established by Meadville Theological School. The Fund has supported and continues to support the Renaissance Program, now operated out of the UUA.

III. Process to articulate vision of professional formation, development, and excellence of religious education professionals, and create vision statement. (Notes from the brainstorming of this session are appended.)
After much wordsmithing the following was acclaimed as our working vision:

Working Vision Statement:

For the future of our faith, we envision religious education for a broad range of religious professionals that will hold up religious education as central to the growth and health of our congregations. We envision religious leaders who will develop theological grounding for their work and articulate an inspiring philosophy of religious education that will transform religious life in Unitarian Universalist congregations, our liberal religious movement, and the wider world.

IV. After much sharing of ideas and clarification of wording, we accepted the following as our goals, a working version subject to revision as we formulate objectives and strategies.

Draft Goals

In support of this vision we put forward the following goals for all/each religious professional/s*:

1. Recognition of religious growth and learning as essential to congregational life.
2. Theological grounding for UU religious education.

3. Education in theory and practice of UU religious education.
4. Comprehensive understanding of faith development throughout the life cycle.
5. Ability to articulate and model a philosophy of religious education appropriate to all ages.
6. Educational opportunities in religious education available and accessible at all levels of professional development.
7. [Stimulation of creative and] Cutting edge thinking in religious education.
8. A network of support in religious education through all stages of professional development.

*We strongly affirm that all ordained ministers are religious educators. While these goals apply to ministers and religious education professionals, we recognize that other religious professionals also have a role in the learning community.

V. Developed a timeline for future meetings.

Time commitment of members of LREFC:

Susan reviewed that the expected tenure of members of this group is 3 years/ approximately 6 meetings and all agreed they were willing to commit to this plan. It may be that subsets of this group would continue with tasks related to the work or perhaps individuals would represent the group beyond that time. To insure that we have the funds to continue this work Susan will press on with her efforts to secure grant money from LREDA 21st Century Committee, the UU Fund for Unitarian Universalism, the Saint Lawrence Foundation for Theological Education, the New York State Convention of Universalists, and the POTE.

March 30, 2008 - Report to POTE inclusive of vision, goals, and timeline plus agenda from these two days. Offer presence and participation of representative of this Committee at conference October 2008.

May 27-28, 2008 Meeting 2, to agree on objectives, revise goals as necessary, start work on strategies if possible); to continue to develop and refine list of those with whom we wish to meet, which may include but is not limited to representatives of Meadville Lombard and Starr King, the RECC and MFC, UUMA, Andover Newton, and Harvard, as well as individuals among whom we included Bobbie Nelson and Makaanah Morriss; determine off-line work assignments.

November 2008 Meeting 3 to continue to develop strategies for the work of the committee; to determine what information should be passed along to other groups or individuals; to determine off-line work assignments.

Three additional meetings during 2009 and 2010. Meetings will include conversations with representatives, or reports on conversations between committee members and representatives, of RECC, UUA groups (RECC, LFD, MPL, MFC, and others as identifies) as well as our UU seminaries, students for professional religious leadership and ministry, LREDA members, and foundations and others with stakes in UU RE Education. They will also be focused on: the development of detailed strategies for meeting all objectives; the creation and publication of a working guide to strategies for dissemination to stakeholders in RE Education; other work to lift up this resource to appropriate groups, individuals and institutions; the passing of this work to the next LREDA RE Education Futures Committee as the blueprint for its future work.

VI. Reviewed follow-up actions for this meeting. The primary action for all members was to articulate objectives for each of the goals, send them no later than May 1, 2008 to Pat at patellenwood@comcast.net She will collate them and send them on to everyone by May 20, 2008.

Appendix:

Brainstorming phrases for our vision

- Integrating educational opportunities across the spectrum of professional leadership
- Theological grounding for religious education
- Holistic understanding of the mission of the congregation
- What ministers need: an understanding of religious education.
- Religious education is fundamental to ministry.
- Congregations as educating communities.
- Religious education as the process of renewing and recreating of our values in every generation.
- Look back at the description of the vision on page 3 of POTE grant proposal.

Practicum ideas:

- Interns teaching in RE
- Teaching in a lab school
- Our desire for parish ministers to be immersed in RE; how about religious educators being immersed in congregational life?
- POTE is looking for our thoughts on what education should include for all ministers.
- Both ministers and religious educators need more holistic view. Religious Education understanding will enrich your ministry.
- Congregation wants to learn about RE from the minister as well as the religious educator.