

Outcome of RFP Process

In August 2007, the UUA Panel on Theological Education issued a request for proposals (RFP) for diagnosis, analysis and creative new approaches to support formation, development and excellence in ministry. A wide range of institutional stakeholders were invited to submit proposals.

At its recently completed meeting, the Panel reviewed 9 proposals (totaling \$65,000), approved 8, and will distribute \$49,000 to support these important pieces of work. The Panel's decisions were based on how closely the projects address the issue of excellence in ministry and how they reflect systems thinking. Proposals addressing specific Panel concerns, including formation for ministers at non-UU schools, were received with gratitude. You will see that the proposals were quite varied, from analysis to program development, but each will help us deepen our understanding.

The following are brief summaries of the projects which are receiving funding:

- 1) UUMA, CENTER: Research and analysis to develop guidelines for ministerial excellence, laying the ground work for program development in peer education/mentoring, "Life-long Professional Development" and "Conversations on Excellence" training workshops.
- 2) Meadville/Lombard Theological School: Identify opportunities to deepen the UU formation of students attending non-UU theological schools. The work will locate those points in the formation process that have the greatest impact on UU ministry and review opportunities for non-UU seminarians to be assisted/supported.
- 3) UUA Office of Youth Ministry: Convene a roundtable discussion on developing competency in ministry to and with youth among leaders of UU and non-UU theological schools, the MFC, UUMA, seminarians and youth.
- 4) Mountain Desert District: Develop a congregationally based curriculum ("UU Ministerial Student Support Project") to encourage congregations to participate in the ministerial formation process. Both support for seminarians and congregational learning about ministry are goals.
- 5) Harvard Divinity School: Develop baseline statistical data on length of ministries, size of congregations served, etc. by all UU ministers (using UUA data). Perceptions of HDS as a deliverer of UU theological education will also be explored. Interviews with UU ministers "generally considered to be excellent" will offer an opportunity for reflection on how seminary education was helpful and in what ways it could be improved.
- 6) Liberal Religious Educators Association: Support a face-to-face meeting of the LREDA RE Education Futures Committee, charged with exploring the needs for continuing education and seminary education in religious education among both religious educators and all ministers.

- 7) Senior Ministers of Large UU Congregations (SMOLUUC): Design a pilot project to nurture and equip 15-20 ministers not currently serving large congregations for outstanding ministerial service in our large congregations.

- 8) The Panel had hoped to receive a proposal focused on anti-racism/anti-oppression work as a component of excellent ministry, but one was not submitted. The Panel is therefore commissioning a research project to interview 15-20 ministers who identify as white allies to determine what in their formation and development allowed/encouraged them to claim this identity as central to their ministries.

Reports from each of these projects will be available in April, 2008, although several will move into additional phases in the coming years.