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# Campus Ministry Handbook

Created by the Office of Youth and  
Young Adult Ministries



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# Welcome

Greetings!

This handbook is focused on giving campus ministry leaders of all kinds tips and ideas for organizing campus ministry with institutional connections. College campuses are rich and vibrant places of intergenerational activity that offer many blessings for our Unitarian Universalist communities and congregations. Historically our faith has strong connections with the university community, encouraging the critical thinking and questioning of students on a liberal religious search for truth and meaning.

There are many models of campus ministry in Unitarian Universalism. Some are led by non-student volunteers, some by paid staff, others by students. Some are primarily supported by one or more congregations, others by their schools. “Ministry” in campus ministry is the work of ministers, lay campus chaplains, and other religious professionals, as well as students and lay members of the church who provide pastoral care and community building and who help facilitate the spiritual growth of the community’s members.

We encourage you to connect with your regional staff and with the UUA Young Adult and Campus Ministry Associate for information on current events, opportunities, and other local groups you may form relationships with. Be sure to put your campus ministry group on The Hub Map.

Lastly, we thank Joseph Santos-Lyons, former Director of Campus Ministry and Field Organizing, who wrote the first edition of the *Campus Organizer’s Handbook* in 2003. As always, please contact our office with questions or requests for additional resources!

Sincerely,

The Office of Youth and Young Adult Ministries

## Getting Started: People, purpose, partners

1. **Gather the people** who will be the core organizers for your group. You might be lay leaders or staff members at a UU congregation. You might be students, staff or faculty at a campus. You might be a mix of both. Remember to reach out to your regional staff or area ministers to make sure you're not leaving out any key organizers. Take the time to build relationship: worship together, do spiritual practices together, really get to know each other.
2. **Discern your purpose** together. What can your group offer the campus that is unique? Why do the core leaders want a UU campus ministry at this location? Where do your gifts meet the community's needs? It's important that this purpose feel spiritually meaningful to the core people and is specific enough to give your group direction.
3. **Contact potential partners** you can think of who would be involved in campus ministry. Think broadly. Ask for help from friends in the church and at school. Do you know UU students, faculty or staff? UU alumni or parents of UU students? Progressive leaders on campus? The head of the LGBT center or the Interfaith group? Chaplains or student life staff? Supporters in local congregations? Staff in local congregations? These partners may join your group or leadership or they may offer other forms of support such as space to meet in, donated food, help with publicity or collaboration on events.

## **Institutional Support: Congregation and Campus**

It is so helpful for campus ministries to have institutional connections with one or more local UU congregations. It is also beneficial to have an institutional relationship with the school, possibly as a registered student organization. Lastly, connections with Regional Staff as well as the Young Adult and Campus Ministry Associate are recommended.

Institutional support from a congregation looks like:

- Referrals of students who drop by the congregation to you
- Referrals of interested adult volunteers
- Visibility in the congregation's printed and online publicity materials (bulletin, website, newsletter, etc.)
- Check-in/check-up phone calls and emails from congregation staff
- Consideration in the congregational budget
- Support such as donations of food, sending finals care packages, or working with students to involve them in congregational events

Institutional support from a school looks like:

- Referrals of students who identify as UU or express UU style questions and spirituality by student life staff
- Referrals of students by faculty
- Visibility in student publications, on the school's website, in the student life or religious life spaces
- Check-ins from chaplains or religious life staff
- Receiving a budget (usually as a registered student organization)
- Ability to reserve space for free (usually as a registered student organization)

## Outreach: Tabling and Beyond

Tabling is a common activity for outreach and can be an effective way to get the word out to new students. Tabling is best done during large student fairs, often at the beginning of the school term. Get creative with your tabling strategy and figure out what works! Will you sing together to draw attention? Get the extraverts out in front of the table engaging folks? Offer treats? Invite folks in for a simple ritual?

### Tabling ideas:

- Make or purchase a large poster or banner with your group name and the flaming chalice visible
- Make the table look worshipful: put out colored cloth, light a chalice, put decorative objects around it
- Get the info about your group out in a creative way. Flyers are easy to lose or recycle; what about pens that list your group's name and website? Magnets? Bookmarks?
- Invite people passing your table to engage in a meaningful activity, such as lighting a candle for a joy or sorrow, writing a word of intention on a stone with sharpies, or adding to a group art project
- Get contact information! Make sure interested folks clearly print their email address and give permission to contact them.

Other outreach ideas include: posters, brochures, chalking, student paper advertising, t-shirts, interfaith newsletters, networking with other student groups, encouraging interpersonal invitations, hosting a campus-wide event, holding public outdoor worship during nice weather, celebrating a holiday with a UU spin (such as sending out Standing on the Side of Love valentines).

## Regular Meetings

UU groups are most successful when they meet weekly or every other week, with the cycle of the college student. Pick a day, time and location and stick with it as best as you can. Most groups meet on campus or near campus on a weekday for one to two hours in the evening. Using a sacred space (such as a school chapel, shared campus ministry house, or local congregation) creates a worshipful atmosphere. Consistency is important even if turnout is low for a few sessions. Don't hesitate to reach out to folks who usually show up if they miss and check in with them!

Serving food at meetings is a great way to attract students and to build community. Eating together intentionally is a spiritual practice. Think about ways to provide meals or snacks. Can someone from the local congregation cook? Is there a budget from the school that can be used? Remember to be sensitive to dietary restrictions.

Build your contact list, and let it grow. Not everyone on your list will attend events regularly, but they still benefit from receiving your messages, and may help spread the word about the group. Be strategic about how you communicate. Email, Facebook, texting, phone calls and other methods all have their place. Try to keep communication consistent.

Regular meetings can take many forms. Small group ministry is the most common form of UU campus ministry, which usually means one or two people facilitating an intentional conversation on a topic with deep listening and silence incorporated into the experience. Other possibilities include: small group worship, informal conversations on spiritual or ethical topics, creative art projects, service projects, advocacy on justice issues, game nights, movie nights, cooking together, etc.

## Other Events

Along with regular meetings of the whole group and regular planning meetings for leadership, many groups benefit from occasional activities outside of the usual schedule that help the group bond, deepen their spirituality or live out their values.

### Here are some ideas:

- Fall Welcome event for Students hosted at a local congregation with food, drinks and a meaningful activity such as worship
- Overnight retreat for the students on campus or at a local congregation
- Ecumenical or Interfaith event with other student religious organizations such as sharing food, celebrating holidays together, or playing a fun game like “interfaith jeopardy”
- Student led worship at a local congregation
- Potluck dinner for student members and their friends
- Student led worship on campus for the wider community
- Brunch together after local UU Sunday service
- Planning or participating in a witness event such as a protest, rally, march or vigil
- Volunteering together on a service project
- Fun outing together such as a sporting event, outdoor activity, trivia night at a local restaurant, etc.
- Creating art or other crafts together, or even making your own group T-shirts
- Registering as a team in a charity activity such as a walk or run that benefits a cause
- Participating in advocacy work together around a cause by gathering signatures or writing letters

## Creating Inclusive Community

Unitarian Universalism is a covenantal faith. Creating a covenant together is an important step toward building inclusive community. For more on covenant building, visit [blueboat.blogs.uua.org](http://blueboat.blogs.uua.org) and search “covenanting” to read about strategies that work well for youth groups and beyond (including campus ministries).

Make sure to keep the covenant central to your meetings and introduce visitors to the agreements you’ve made together. You can post the covenant somewhere prominent or read parts or all of it during each meeting. This will discourage behavior that breaks the covenant and will provide a way for members to call one another back into right relationship after a covenant breach.

To build inclusive community **do**:

- use anti-oppressive language (see pg. 9)
- balance discussion and interaction with listening, sharing in pairs or individuals reflection
- use arts, games, movement and other less “word based” ways of engaging with a topic or theme
- use spaces and host activities that are accessible for students with mobility limitations
- serve a variety of foods with awareness of people’s dietary restrictions
- get regular feedback from members on what is and isn’t working for them
- compassionately call people back into right relationship when their behavior is harmful

To build inclusive community **don’t**:

- make assumptions about anyone’s identities or abilities based on how they look, talk or act
- use insider language about the group or about Unitarian Universalism
- focus on difficult or triggering topics without setting up ways to access pastoral or psychological care afterward

# Spiritual Development

While college students have access to many groups that build community and work toward justice, religious groups and campus ministries are one of the few places students can find spiritual nourishment. As Unitarian Universalists we can provide a spiritually enriching community that honors each student's search for meaning. This is our unique contribution to campuses.

There are many ways to promote spiritual development in campus ministry.

## **Here are some ideas:**

- incorporate rituals into every meeting: light a chalice, do a short reading, spend time in silence, sing together, etc.
- use a small group ministry curriculum such as "Finding Your Path" available on the UUA website
- use readings and reflections from the UU young adult meditation manual "Becoming;" information available on the UUA website
- have group members lead sessions on their favorite spiritual practices or religious stories
- invite guests from the campus or local congregation to come and lead a session on a spiritual practice they know well
- practice deep listening and invite members to share stories of their spiritual journeys
- connect with other on-campus religious organizations to learn more about their traditions and practices
- have group members bring in recorded songs or poems/readings that hold meaning for them and allow each person time to share
- try new spiritual practices together during meetings or on your own time and report back on how it went
- make time for social activities and fun bonding so the group can build relationships and trust

## Anti-Racism and Anti-Oppression

Unitarian Universalists believe in the worth of every person, in justice, equity and compassion, and in our interdependence. We know that systems of oppression such as racism, transphobia, classism, ableism and heteronormativity violate our faith. It is important that our campus ministries try to combat oppression.

### Tips:

#### 1. watch your language.

Whether it's a racialized slur, an incorrect gender pronoun, a sexist joke, or a metaphor that equates disability with failure, our language can perpetuate oppression. Be careful with your words, apologize when you slip up, and keep learning!

#### 2. practice calling in.

How will you step up as a leader if someone uses offensive language? How will you respond if a member lets you know your words or practices were oppressive? Practice compassionately engaging with these issues so you're ready when they come up.

#### 3. partner up.

Connect with identity based and justice oriented groups on campus, in the congregation and in the wider community. You can support their events and learn from their work.

#### 4. build your network.

Know who you can refer students to when they need to process incidents of oppression they've experienced. UU clergy, campus counselors, identity based groups and centers might be good options, but build those relationships so you know who to trust.

### Resources:

- general UU justice resources: [uua.org/justice](http://uua.org/justice)
- Standing on the Side of Love: [uua.org/love](http://uua.org/love)
- Anti-racist resources: [uua.org/multiculturalism](http://uua.org/multiculturalism)
- Queer and Trans friendly resources: [uua.org/lgbtq](http://uua.org/lgbtq)
- Contact our Leadership Development Associate for Youth and Young Adults of Color: [yayaofcolor@uua.org](mailto:yayaofcolor@uua.org)

## Support for Campus Leaders

Being a campus ministry leader is hard work. Many of us are volunteers. Many are juggling other obligations such as school, paid work, family life, and other volunteer activities. Given the high turnover rates of campus ministry membership, there is a constant need for outreach alongside the work of maintaining and nurturing the group, keeping institutional connections strong, and making sure there is sufficient funding for staff or activities.

But here's the good news: you are not alone! There are many people who know this work is vital and are either actively engaged in it or support those who are.

To connect with other UU campus ministry leaders and stay informed of opportunities for further support visit [uua.org/campusministry](http://uua.org/campusministry) and scroll down till you see the heading "Connect" under "Ways to Get Involved." There you'll find Facebook pages and groups, listserves, blogs and twitter accounts to connect with.

You can also contact the UUA Young Adult and Campus Ministry Associate at [ya-cm@uua.org](mailto:ya-cm@uua.org). In the past this person has organized monthly drop-in conference calls and virtual small group ministry for campus leaders. They can get you up to date on whatever opportunities are available.

In addition, reaching out to UUA Regional Staff is a great way to get connected locally. To find out who you should contact you can visit [uua.org/directory/districts](http://uua.org/directory/districts) and click on your region to learn more.

If you are a professional campus minister, consider joining the National Campus Ministry Association. They are dedicated to educating, equipping and advocating for higher education ministry. Visit [www.campusministry.net](http://www.campusministry.net).

## Quick Reference: 10 Campus Organizing Tips

1. Don't go it alone; make sure there always at least two main organizers unless you have a paid staff person as the primary group leader.
2. Never underestimate the power of meaningful ritual and good food
3. Use a variety of communication methods (email, social media, cell phones, etc.)
4. No one session will meet all needs; strive for variety in terms of topic and approach
5. Make sure meeting spaces are clean and well set up prior to meetings and that all supplies are on hand
6. Strive for a mix of nourishing members spiritually, building fun community, and challenging members to live more intentionally
7. Set forth clear expectation and terms of office for leaders and honor transitions with ritual and celebration.
8. Non-student leaders should collaborate with students when possible and support them when they are overwhelmed, such as during finals.
9. Keep meetings as consistent as possible. Some weeks may have very low attendance, but it's good for folks to know the group is always there.
10. Reach out to collaborate and ask for help! Try on-campus staff in areas like student life, religious life, and community service. Stay in touch with staff and volunteers at local congregations. Network with other progressive student orgs, and be in relationship with your regional and national UUA staff.