

STATEMENT FROM THE PANEL ON THEOLOGICAL EDUCATION WITH ADDENDUM

At its April, 2007, meeting, the UUA Board of Trustees passed the following motion:

“VOTED: that the Board of Trustees directs the Panel on Theological Education to present recommendations to the Board of Trustees that would make the funding of ministerial formation, development, and excellence the first priority for the use of the Panel’s resources, rather than the current singular focus on support for theological schools. The Board asks that the Panel present a timeline for the preparation of these recommendations to the Board for its June 2007 meeting.

Trustees asked that it be noted that this motion was adopted unanimously.”

The UUA’s Panel on Theological Education was advised of this motion at its meeting on April 23-24, 2007. Reflecting its responsibility to exercise due diligence and good stewardship in keeping with the Board’s directive, the Panel is recommending for the Board’s action at its June, 2007, meeting that the allocation of the Theological Trust funds for FYI 2008 be reduced by 10% to Starr King School for the Ministry and Meadville Lombard Theological School.

If approved, the Panel will use those funds during FY 2008 for a consultative process to clearly articulate a vision for the ongoing use of Theological Trust funds for Unitarian Universalist ministerial formation, development and excellence. Significant conversations will be held with a broad range of critical stakeholders including theological schools, the Unitarian Universalist Congregation at Shelter Rock, the Unitarian Universalist Ministers Association (UUMA), its CENTER committee and other professional organizations, students, congregational and District leaders, and non-UU organizations such as the Alban Institute, other denominations, etc.

The result of this process will be recommendations for further action at the UUA Board of Trustees’ June 2008 meeting in keeping with the timeline called for in the motion. POTE anticipates a three-year graduated reduction to eliminate funding for the general operating costs for Starr King and Meadville Lombard. The Panel looks forward to the full participation of both schools in addressing the challenges for ministerial formation, development, and excellence not only for their own seminarians, but for the 65% - 70% of Unitarian Universalist seminarians schooled elsewhere and for the continuing development of all of our clergy.

ADDENDUM

The UUA Board requested that the Panel on Theological Education present, at the June 2007 Board meeting, a timeline for a process to determine how best to use the Panel’s funds to support formation, development and excellence in ministry. The Panel believes the following questions should guide its work:

Equity. How can the available funds be used to support UU ministerial formation for students at both UU schools and for the majority of students who prepare at non-UU schools?

System Thinking. How can we call the various independent parts of our ministerial formation and development system into relationship, with excellence of our ministry as the shared goal?

Accountability. How can the Panel create and maintain relationships of accountability with all parts of our ministerial formation and development system, including the central accountability to our congregations?

In response to the Board's motion, the Panel proposes to spend the next 18 months engaged in the following three part process. The objective is to develop a long term strategy to foster excellence in Unitarian Universalist ministry. Beyond shaping the Panel's funding decisions, we expect this plan to point to needs for significant additional fundraising.

The specifics of this preliminary time-line include the following:

First, an on-line survey instrument will be created this summer and circulated widely early in September. The survey will gather specific information (and from specific groups) concerning focused questions relating to ministerial formation, development and excellence in ministry. Results of the survey will provide important information to institutions/individuals responding to the Request for Proposal process, described next. Survey creation and analysis will be done by an independent professional research firm.

Second, in August, the Panel will request proposals for diagnosis, analysis, and creative new approaches to support formation, development and excellence in ministry. A wide range of institutional stakeholders will be invited to submit proposals. Modest grants (\$1,000-\$10,000) will be awarded to fund or provide seed money for these projects. Grant awards will be made at the Panel's October meeting with reports and findings expected at the Panel's April, 2008 meeting.

It is the Panel's hope that proposals will expand our current thinking. But several specific proposals will be invited from specific institutions, based upon our current understanding of the issues:

From UUMA, undertake a review of the supports for on-going ministerial development, especially in the first 5 years of service and an evaluation of the current strengths in our system and its gaps.

From M/L, undertake a review of opportunities to deepen the UU formation of students attending non-UU schools.

From SKSM: consider how can students at non-UU schools develop the capacity to counter oppression in their ministries.

From the MFC: engage in reflection on what would be required to adjust our standards from adequacy to excellence?

From ANTS/HDS: consider how non-UU seminaries can best deliver UU ministerial formation.

Many additional groups (LREDA, DRUUMM, YRUU and the Youth Ministry staff at the UUA, the District President's Association inter alia) will also be invited to make proposals.

Third, using the additional learning from the survey, and the information and pilot programs generated by the Proposals, a conference, facilitated by an outside consultant, will be gathered in October, 2008, with all relevant stakeholder groups, including congregational leaders, represented. Together we will attempt to articulate the goals that should inform our ministerial formation and development process, address those forces which are holding us back and identify priorities for moving toward a system that will deliver excellence in ministry. This conference will also be used as a foundation for the development of additional capital formation and fundraising to support excellence in UU ministry.

Based on the work of the conference, the Panel will present an analysis and a vision for formation, development and excellence in ministry to the UUA Board, including the ramifications for the use of Panel funds.

Timeline:

June 2007- Board affirms Panel plan;

August 2007- advertisement of RFP process;

September 2007- release of survey instrument;

October 2007- Board meeting followed by POTE meeting to review RFP's;

January 2008- POTE report to Board re: RFP decisions;

April 2008- Board meeting followed by POTE review of RFP's selected in October 2007;

June 2008- POTE report to Board re: directions being identified to inform conference;

October 2008- Board & POTE meetings and conference;

January 2009- POTE report re: vision articulated by conference;

April 2009 - Board meeting followed by POTE meeting, recommendations made to BOT;