

2020-2021 Board of Trustees Report

The Board adopted the Commission on Institutional Change's (COIC) recommendations as guiding its work in a formal Resolution at their September 14, 2020 meeting.

Reforming UUA Governance

The COIC called upon the Board to "reexamine the current governance structure and identify changes that will allow a more agile and flexible structure that can meet the challenges of a rapidly changing religious landscape."

The Bylaws: The Board's Response to the COIC's Challenge

- (1) A committee of the Board, (informally called the "Deep Divers" and headed by Trustee Barbara de Leeuw) is undertaking a multi-year comprehensive review of the bylaws, with the goal of the "more agile and flexible structure" called for by the Commission on Institutional Change. The goal is to simplify and streamline the governance structure and move more requirements into Rules and Policies.
- (2) At General Assembly 2021, the Board is proposing bylaw amendments that govern Presidential Elections. The 2021 GA needs to implement these changes now so that they can take effect in the next Presidential election.
 - Under the proposed changes, the Presidential Search Committee will nominate 1 or more candidates for President, rather than requiring 2 or more candidates.
 - Other amendments shorten the campaign season.
- (3) In the meantime, the Board is seeking authority to treat the bylaws more flexibly, especially in the recruitment efforts for committees and commissions, in a documented and transparent way, in order to focus volunteer and staff resources on more critical functions.

The General Assembly: The Board's Response

The highest authority in the UUA is the General Assembly. The Board of Trustees has worked this year to keep General Assembly safe during a pandemic, with greater participation by Unitarian Universalists, and as an easier-to-understand experience. To that end, the Board:

- Summed our experience with the 2020 virtual GA and extended our gratitude and appreciation to the General Assembly and Conferences Services and Information Technology Services staff groups for their outstanding work in making GA 2020 a success.
- Conducted conversations with both the Association of Unitarian Universalist Music Ministries and the Youth and Young Adult Staff and Volunteers from GA 2020 to resolve outstanding difficulties that hampered their participation in past General Assemblies.
- Voted to conduct the 2021 General Assembly on an all-virtual basis, and to plan the 2022 GA as a multi-platform to spend up to \$500,000 from unrestricted assets to cover potential cancellation costs arising from these changes.
- Recast the Rules of Procedure for the 2021 General Assembly in Plain Language.

Accountability Body: The Board's Response

The COIC recommended that an Accountability Body be created to work proactively with the Board to ensure that the Board's work continues in an anti-racist, anti-oppressive and multicultural direction.

The Accountability Body would continue the work of the Journey Toward Wholeness Transformation Committee.

Trustees Suzanne Fast and Leslie MacFadyen serve on the design team to create such an accountability body.

Development of Youth Trustee Position

In the past 3 years, since the 2018 bylaw change that retired youth observers and created youth trustees, the board has worked to establish the responsibilities of the youth trustee position, holding youth empowerment and collaboration as goals. This year, we wrote a full detailed job description reflective of what the current youth trustees are expected to do, in line with youth experience levels. We have found that our lack of experience, relative to other trustees, provides the board with a different view of board work. In this way, the youth trustee position has not only been benefiting youth communities, but the Unitarian Universalist community as a whole.

YUUP

The Young Unitarian Universalists' Project, or YUUP, is an ongoing youth driven project working to fill the need for national youth community. Currently, YUUP is on mighty networks, hosting worships, community building events, and utilizing the platform's post options to connect youth nationwide. Although not a board project or requirement of the youth trustee position, both youth trustees serve on the YUUP leadership team, collaborating with other youth and Lifespan Faith Engagement (LFE) staff.

Appointments

The Board of Trustees is responsible for filling 168 positions on Unitarian Universalist committees, commissions, and task forces. These positions constitute a leadership development pipeline, where volunteers gain experience in the work of the Association. The Appointments Committee, a Board-appointed Committee, recommends volunteers for appointed positions.

The Appointments Committee is charged with recommending people for committees who reflect the full diversity of the Association, especially from historically marginalized communities.

The Board also recognizes the need to make Associational leadership accessible to a much wider range of people, including youth and young adults, people with families, people who do not have jobs or incomes make it easy to dedicate hours during the workday, and those with disabilities.

Two groups of appointments received particular attention by this Board:

The Article 2 Study Commission

Article 2 of the UUA's ByLaws, which contain the Principles, the Purposes, the Sources Statements was last revised in 1987. In 2017, after a discussion of the proposed 8th Principle, the GA instructed the Board to launch a process by which Article 2 would be revised. For that purpose, the Board has appointed The Article 2 Study Commission and charged it with preparing proposed revisions. The Commission is organizing an Association-wide conversation about the statements that best express our religious movement.

The 2019 Board appointed four members of the Article 2 Study Commission:

Rev. Cheryl M. Walker
Becky Brooks
Paula Jones Cole
Rob Spirko

The 2020 Board completed the appointment process, choosing two youth/young adult members of the Commission:

Maya Waller
Satya Mamdani

The Presidential Search Committee

The Presidential Search Committee consults widely within the Association and then nominates candidates for the President of the UUA. The following people were appointed to the Committee by the Board.

Jaimie Dingus
Rev. Jason Lydon
Denise Rimes
Cathy Seggel
James Snell
Rev. Theresa Soto
Marva Williams

Board Roles and Responsibilities

- Charles Du Mond and Rev. Meg Riley serve as Co-Moderators.
- Leslie MacFadyen and John Newhall Serve as Vice Moderators #1 and #2, respectively.
- Bill Young is the Board Secretary.
- Kathy Burek is the Financial Secretary and Chair of the Values and Resources Alignment Working Group.
- Lucia Santini Field is the Financial Advisor.
- Genevieve Baldwin and Rebecca Throop serve as Youth Trustees.

Board Development

At both its October and April retreats, the Board engaged noted Disability Activist Vilissa Thompson to train the Board about Disability Justice. Many more people have been able to participate in congregational worship and activities during the Covid pandemic. A strong commitment to Disability Justice is required if “going back to normal” is not “going back to exclusion.” The Board’s recent efforts to use plain language arose from these trainings.