

Draft Summary RECC Observer Report

(RECC Members: Sara Lewis, Art Nava, Robert Renjilian, Emily Gage, Mia Morse, Patti Withers, Peter Kandis, Aastha Poudel and Sarah Gettie McNeill)

April 23-April 27 2023

Sarah Cannon

As someone who completed my credentialing interview last April, I feel fortunate to have the opportunity to observe the work of the Religious Education Credentialing Committee this year. I was more nervous about going through the credentialing process than any job interview I've ever had, because by moving into the field of religious education, I'd integrated my career and my faith. This week, I got a closer look at what it means to hold empathy for that experience while also taking on the responsibility of assessing candidates' readiness.

1. **Collaborative Mindset.** It's clear that the committee has worked hard to develop trust between each other and deep grounding in both the practical and spiritual aspects of the work itself, and because of this are able to work collaboratively and have thoughtful, nuanced discussions about candidates in a window of time that seemed infinite to me when I was waiting to hear my fate, but was suddenly much shorter when I was on the other side of the process. Looking back at the week, I'm impressed with how smoothly everything flowed, and how care was given to process and time management, but it never felt urgent or rigid.
2. **Contextual Decision Making.** I was gratified to witness that the committee is constantly mindful of the larger landscape in which religious educators are doing their work— the things that the committee can know (such as the still-unfolding consequences of serving congregations during and after the COVID shutdowns) and at times the things they cannot. As they analyzed portfolios and interview responses, there was always care to avoid assuming facts not in evidence.
3. **Justice and Compassion.** The committee is a community of care, and they are genuinely rooting for every candidate. They are clear-eyed about growing edges, and they also encourage candidates to apply their particular gifts and skills in new contexts. All conversations are deeply grounded in anti-oppression, anti-racism, multiculturalism, and disability justice, and I've also been privy to ongoing conversations about improving process and equity in years to come.

Future Considerations:

Specifying Desired Outcomes

While there is an existing portfolio rubric, an interview rubric may also be helpful to clarify the specific outcomes that constitute a complete and thorough answer to each question. For example, should candidates be able to articulate theories, demonstrate applied practices that reflect them, or both? This is particularly important (and also, I realize, more complex) with regard to individualized questions that are not sent to candidates ahead of time.

Worship and Presentation Feedback

As an observer, it's not always clear what the expectations are for the worship and presentation portions of the interview or how they affect the decision making process. It's clear that if there were large deficits during these portions (lack of preparation, problematic content, etc.) it would have a negative impact, but it seemed to me that constructive feedback would be helpful. For example, how was the worship with regard to pacing, age differentiation, disability inclusion, technology use, and so on?

Note: I can honestly state that the committee was excellent at self-reflection, both in medias res and during debriefings after the conclusion of all the interviews. I feel confident I'm not naming anything they don't already plan to address.