

# **UUA Religious Education Credentialing Committee**

**October 17-21 2005 Philadelphia, Pennsylvania**

## **Observers Report for the Committee**

**Layne Richard-Hammock, Credentialed Observer**

### **RECC Members Present:**

*Chair and LREDA Representative- Liz Jones , Masters Level Credentialed Religious Educator Representative - Gail Forsyth-Vail, Parish Minister Representative - Rev. Kirk Loadman-Copeland, Lay Leader Representatives - Steve Lynn, Kathryn Warrior and Sue McGovern, Minister of Religious Education Representative - Rev. Betty Jo Middleton, UUA Board of Trustees Liaison to the RECC - Rev. Dr. Pam Allen-Thompson*

### **Ex Officio:**

*Director of Ministry and Professional Leadership, Rev. David Hubner, UUA Staff ; REC Director Rev. Beth Williams, UUA Staff and Recorder and Assistant to REC Director - A'ashia Short, UUA Staff*

### **Credentialed Observer:**

*Layne Richard-Hammock CDRE Heritage UU Church, Cincinnati OH*

### **Overview Observations:**

The RECC, Religious Education Credentialing Committee is personed by an amazing array of prophetic and dedicated souls engaged in work that is individually and institutionally transformational. Due to the work of this UUA appointed committee, the vision to develop a professional credentialing process for religious educators that parallels that of our clergy is coming into full relief as the process has evolved beyond the pioneering stage.

I observed a committee process and attended personal interactions of extraordinary respect, integrity and devotion to right relations in all its many faces. The members of this group share fully and listen deeply, encourage differing points of view and value the wisdom of making decisions based on consideration of a variety of perspectives. The need for task accomplishment was consistently and intentionally balanced with the need for processing all considerations voiced by those at the table. Additionally, care was taken to think beyond the voices at the table and anticipate as best as possible, the needs of a variety of other voices not actually in the meeting. Intentional and deliberate awareness was given to issues of anti-oppression and anti-racism.

The only committee process observation I made where adjustments may be considered, was several occasions where passion and energy resulted in multiple simultaneous speakers, making it difficult to hear all the good things being said.

I see the work of everyone involved much like systems described in the LREDA Conference, a series of interdependent systems of individuals, institutions and the greater culture and a group of folks who are already evolved in the tenants of appreciative inquiry and resulting abilities to think out of the box in resolving difficulties.

While the chair primarily facilitated the meeting, I observed that all members moved with ease between leadership roles, listening roles, processing roles and moving the group toward closure and task accomplishment. As a whole the group is skilled at restating ideas and checking for unchecked assumptions before finalizing decisions.

Having been in most of the other phases of this process, ie. Mentor, mentee and candidate I was able to engage in this observation function through the lenses of those experiences. My own appreciation for and understanding of the work of this committee and the Credentialing program in all its phases, has been greatly enhanced through the opportunity to serve as the credentialed observer.

It is from this variety of 'lenses' that I offer the following observations and suggestions for consideration by the RECC:

### **The Agenda:**

When this first arrived in my on email, I was amazed at the depth and breadth of work intended to be accomplished during the business meeting time. It was my first clue that *this had to be* the high functioning committee I had expected to, and did indeed observe.

1. Consider maintaining the use of the 'action items' review with the names and tasks that were embedded in the agenda. As the observer, I found that information very helpful in orienting myself to your process and understanding what was due from previous meetings, what was current, and what was coming next.
2. Consider extending the use of the horizontal lines within the table format used in the agenda. That would make reading 'across' the time blocks more visually friendly. Consider carrying over the day of the week header onto pages 2, 3, etc.

### **The AO/AR Lens**

I observed a working group committed to making and taking time to intentionally consider issues of anti-oppression and anti-racism in their work and daily, assign a specific observer to record process notes. More importantly, this group takes time daily to evaluate their progress and make adjustments based on the AO/AR observer's feedback.

1. Consider sharing this process and the observers form in a venue/s that would make this easily accessible to religious educators as something to consider implementing in RE Committee or other meetings. Venues such as LREDA-L, Faithworks, REACH-L or possibly Interconnections where it would reach a wider leadership audience might be considered.

This committee expanded the AO/AR dialogue through what was named as a *Web of Accountability* as a paradigm. They demonstrated sensitivity to the need to balance inclusion of evolving program parameters, updates and outcomes from committee processes with the need of individuals IN the credentialing program to have and be able to count on clear, stable program expectations. Within the 'web of accountability' the committee included self evaluation on how its work is accountable to the various constituents, including the congregations who call or hire credentialed religious educators.

1. Consider creating a 'visual image' of this web of accountability, a 'snapshot' if you will for inclusion in 'promotion materials', and the program plan. Such a visual would clarify for many who are not yet well informed, of the many connections among many levels of our UU institutions. Additionally such a visual would contribute to ease angst among potential participants in terms of shifting expectations. As an accessibility issue, I lift up

that all learners do not process the written word at the same level of efficiency and the reality is, the program plan has lots of words. As they say, a picture is worth a thousand words.

Another AO/AR lens consideration was in the area of the reading lists in terms of updating the suggested and/or required volumes to reflect the latest wisdom and authors on this important subject.

1. Suggestions that came out of this conversation included the possibility of revamping the construction of the reading list to parallel the competency categories, to foster candidates identifying areas of strength and growth edges thus encouraging additional effort for personal growth, and combining the lists levels 2 and 3. Consider doing these things, I believe them to all be helpful organizational and self help tools and ideas.

#### **Addition of:**

#### **Self Assessment Tool and Reflections on Professional Context**

The result of the dialogue around the development of these items concluded in a decision to move forward. These tools would serve as means for the RECC portfolio readers to enhance their ability to approach candidate materials, framed with information that informs the best understanding of the candidate's own self view and of their working environment.

#### **Development of an Outcomes Surveys**

Dialog regarding the need to develop a means for evaluating the efficacy of the credentialing program produced a decision to develop outcomes surveys designed to gather information from persons who participated in the program and another for appropriate review groups such as the mentoring system group, congregation leaders, UUA board etc. My observation of this process reflects the dedication of the RECC to continually evolve the credentialing program to meet the needs of the variety of 'consumers'.

#### **Standardizing Formats for Equivalencies and Substitutions**

As the credentialing program passes out of the pioneer phase, the RECC is focusing more energy on standardizing processes, supporting candidates in submitting work in a more defined and specific format. This is another step in refining the submission process and clarifying the evaluation process. These will be phased in over time.

Yours in the Faith,  
Layne Richard-Hammock