

Credentialed Observer Report
April 23, 2010

Religious Education Credentialing Committee,

I submit this report to the committee whose work offered me compelling and relevant knowledge, coupled with compelling, serious, well-accomplished practitioners of life, and team players. The various RE credentialing committees have a history of pronounced intentionality and optimism for the professionalization of religious educators by which the Unitarian Universalist movement can grow in effective ways. This 2010 committee obviously contributes in the most positive and productive ways to this living history. I hope my experience in serving Unitarian Universalism in different settings provides integrity and authenticity to this report.

I felt during this week a bit like Dorothy in the Wizard of Oz taking a peek behind the wizard's curtain---how does this committee do its work? Is it powerful, magical, skillful and able to generate special effects? Behind this curtain I have observed the following:

A balance of seriousness and lightness recognizing the need to respect and honor the hard work of the candidates, but also knowing that the lightness of play, laughter and casual conversations reenergizes you. Taking care of yourselves you are better prepared to be fully present with the candidates and with each other during work.

The inherent and healthy tension between staff and a volunteer committee. You manage this with:

- excellent preparation
- high expectations of one another
- reliance on staff for advice, clarity, collaboration, and historical perspective
- periods of silence and centering
- excellent time management
- daily process review
- big picture focus

Might you also consider a written covenant at the beginning of the week to ensure this healthy tension?

Accountability for objective evaluation of the candidates

You resisted the urge to compare and contrast one candidate with another and proceeded to evaluate each of them with objective criteria. If language was vague or subjective someone on the committee reminded everyone to refer to the appropriate forms or documents that have show the objective criteria.

New members asking questions

These recommendations may already be happening, but I couldn't determine that from a few days. Perhaps the committee could devise different ways to

educate/inform new members before their first meeting. Those ways could include a list of FAQs, in depth phone conversations, a member notebook with miscellaneous information, etc. Questions were received with a gracious manner and indeed these well-framed questions offered challenges to the committee for further and deeper thought.

AR/AO/MC

You shared deeply and honestly during the committee's activity focused on these concerns

During the entire week and especially in candidate reviews you focused your decision-making not only on what was right, but also what was fair and just. You clearly recognize the need and have the desire for more diversity on the committee

Professionalism

It is obvious there is a sense of congruency with each member of the committee. If you say you'll take on a task you do it in a timely manner and with great responsibility.

Everyone was on time every day

Communication was respectful and effective

There is a clear sense of not over-tasking anyone. Jan, as chair, clearly stays focused on the work, but sensitive to delegation and sharing of this work.

While there was clear anxiety about how to deal with the work of next year's twelve candidates, everyone remains confident and oriented towards problem solving.

Most of us know how to promote leadership as a spiritual and formative practice. You might want to use this practice within your committee. Remind each other, share with each other how this work nurtures you and helps you grow in empathy, compassion and love.

I conclude with my observations that you are all wizards with magical yet real abilities to transform Unitarian Universalism through the professionalization of religious educators. Like the characters in the Wizard of Oz you clearly have the brains, the hearts and certainly the courage to continue with this arduous and important work.

Thanks to you all for giving me the privilege of working with you

Benette Sherman

Credentialed religious educator