



The President's Interfaith and Community Service Campus Challenge **Advancing Interfaith Cooperation and Community Service** **In Higher Education**

Background

Since his inauguration, President Obama has emphasized interfaith cooperation and community service – “interfaith service” for short – as an important way to build understanding between different communities and contribute to the common good.

Interfaith service involves people from different religious and non-religious backgrounds tackling community challenges together – for example, Protestants and Catholics, Hindus and Jews, and Muslims and non-believers- building a Habitat for Humanity house together. Interfaith service impacts specific community challenges, from homelessness to mentoring to the environment, while helping to build social capital and civility.

American colleges, community colleges, universities, seminaries and rabbinical schools, have often been at the forefront of solving our nation's greatest challenges. The White House is encouraging institutions of higher education to make the vision for interfaith cooperation a reality on campuses across the country.

The White House is launching the *President's Interfaith and Community Service Campus Challenge*, an initiative inviting institutions of higher education to commit to a year of interfaith cooperation and community service programming on campus. This programming might take the form of diverse campus groups working together to implement a specific year-long service project. It might also involve students from a campus partnering with local religious groups to tackle a specific community challenge together.

The best examples of students coming together to help those in need will be recognized by the White House in summer 2012. **Challenge Components & Timeline**

1. **Interested institutions of higher learning should indicate their intention to participate in the *President's Interfaith and Community Service Campus Challenge* by emailing their interest to whpartnerships@who.eop.gov by **May 13, 2011**.**
2. **Institutions develop plans** to launch new or build on existing interfaith cooperation and community service initiatives during the 2011-2012 academic year. Institutions should utilize

the *President's Interfaith and Community Service Campus Challenge* Planning Template, found at www.whitehouse.gov/interfaithservice and submit final plans by **June 24, 2011**.

3. **Select institutions that submit plans** meeting the standards outlined **will be invited to the White House in Fall 2011** to network, learn from one another and be recognized for their commitment to interfaith service. Several outstanding plans will be highlighted.
4. **Institutions across the country will launch and execute their initiatives** to foster interfaith and community service throughout the 2011-2012 academic year.
5. **Institutions report** on their programmatic successes through written and digital media. Institutions will receive an official reporting format (to be distributed by the White House in Fall 2011) and submit final reports by May 1, 2012.
6. **Initiatives will be evaluated** on the implementation of their plans by the White House Office of Faith-Based and Neighborhood Partnerships and the Corporation for National and Community Service based on the guidelines below. The most exemplary initiatives will be recognized by the White House in Summer 2012.

Plans for Interfaith and Community Service

Institutions should signal their commitment to participate in the *Challenge* by emailing whpartnerships@who.eop.gov by May 13, 2011. They will then submit plans for their service initiative according to the following guidelines:

1. Identification of which academic or institutional office will lead the initiative, for example, the President's Office, the Office of Student Affairs, the Dean of Students, the Religion Department, Chaplains, Offices of Religious Life, or the Office of Service-Learning. Include the name of the faculty or administration member who will oversee the initiative;
2. Outline of how this initiative will involve cross-campus support, including inter-departmental efforts as well as student leadership;
3. Determination of a service priority(s) for the year long initiative;
4. Identification of how this interfaith and community service initiative seeks to advance your institution's ability to positively engage diversity and build a culture of inter-religious and inter-cultural cooperation; and
5. Clear description of the plan for program implementation, documentation, impact evaluation, and sustainability of interfaith engagement and service on campus.

Plans should be submitted by June 24, 2011 to whpartnerships@who.eop.gov