INTERRELIGIOUS ENGAGEMENT

UTAH VALLEY UNIVERSITY
As part of our ongoing commitment to inclusive excellence and intercultural dialogue, UVU is proud to support a variety of activities that foster exploration and understanding across religious lines. With the integration of academic study and community engagement, UVU is demonstrating leadership in areas of increasing importance in this culturally rich and interdependent world. We are proud of our tradition of convening timely and relevant dialogues.

Matthew S. Holland
President
Utah Valley University

For nearly twenty years, UVU has cultivated the academic exploration of religious diversity and diplomacy. Our location and mission provide a unique opportunity to facilitate dialogue among a variety of religious communities on our campus and in our region. We welcome a diversity of voices in exploring ideas that shape our culture and provide meaning as part of the human experience.

Brian D. Birch
Associate Vice President for Academic Affairs
Utah Valley University
With an increased emphasis on educating the whole person, President Matthew Holland has prioritized the effort to shape our university as an inclusive institution, a place in which people of all faiths or those outside of religious communities will be welcome and feel comfortable. UVU is committed to providing meaningful activities that contribute to students’ physical, academic, social, and spiritual well-being. Intercultural understanding is an educational imperative in higher education and is one of the central values of Utah Valley University. Because religion lies at the heart of social identity, it is important to the university to find ways to facilitate dialogue across religious and philosophical lines. Our community’s interest in religion provides opportunities for scholarship and dialogue in comparative studies and the role of religion in society.
REFLECTION CENTER

The UVU Reflection Center provides space for meditation, prayer, reflection, or other forms of individual religious expression. Located in the new Student Life & Wellness Center, the facility is designed to accommodate students, staff, and faculty from a diversity of faith traditions and philosophical perspectives. In addition to providing quiet space, the center will host lectures, workshops, interfaith student meetings, and other relevant activities.

» Space for reflection and meditation
» Convening space for lectures and workshops
» Enclosed space for religious expression
The Interfaith Student Council supports and facilities activities for students from a variety of backgrounds and faith traditions. The council is comprised of student representatives from UVU clubs and associations with the aim of collaboration and partnership on projects of common interest. The university also facilitates interaction with scholars and religious leaders to provide students with leadership and diplomacy skills.

- Atheist Club
- Baptist Campus Ministries
- Catholic Student Club
- Chi Alpha
- Hindu Club
- InterVarsity Christian Fellowship
- Latter-day Saint Student Association
- Muslim Student Association
- UVU Pagan Club
- Saudi Student Association
- Spiritual But Not Religious
- Utah Valley Interfaith Club
ACADEMIC PROGRAMMING

The initiative also hosts a variety of academic events related to religious diversity and interfaith dialogue. As a state university, UVU is dedicated to understanding a variety of cultures and perspectives in a welcoming and inclusive learning environment. For the past fifteen years, the university has hosted over seventy conferences, lectures, workshops, and symposia dedicated to the exploration of issues related to religious diversity and dialogue. We are honored to have hosted a variety of nationally and internationally recognized scholars and religious leaders. The university has also been active in building collaborative partnerships with other universities and foundations along with various non-profit organizations.
COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS

As a community engaged institution, UVU is building partnerships with local organizations that cultivate understanding across religious boundaries and further the mission of the university. The initiatives below are partnerships currently underway connecting UVU students, faculty, and staff with these important community resources.

» Bradley Center for Grieving Children & Families
» Foundation for Religious Diplomacy
» Utah Valley Interfaith
» Orem LDS Institute of Religion
» Utah Council for Citizen Diplomacy
CORE VALUES

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY
The Interreligious Engagement Initiative (IRI) seeks to maintain the highest standards of academic integrity and rigor consistent with the mission of Utah Valley University. This includes the promotion of critical and creative thinking, academic freedom, ethical integrity, accountability, and openness.

ENGAGEMENT
The IRI seeks to engage students, scholars, and our local community by supporting events and scholarly projects that promote civic and global engagement. Our programs facilitate the exploration of ideas and practices toward a mutually beneficial exchange of knowledge.

INCLUSIVITY
The IRI promotes the academic study of religion that is inclusive of its richness and variety. It supports cross-cultural, interreligious, and intra-traditional studies of religious history, theology, literature, folklore, and cultural life.

RESPECT
The activities of the IRI are grounded in the respect for a diversity of perspectives and seek to cultivate an atmosphere of productive dialogue and scholarly exchange.
Since 2000, the UVU Mormon Studies Program has been active in facilitating study and dialogue in Latter-day Saint history, literature, theology, and culture. The university has hosted over fifty events related to Mormon Studies with such titles as “The Expanded Canon,” “Perspectives on the Mormon Moment,” “Outmigration and the Mormon Quest for Education,” and “Mormonism in the Public Mind.” In light of the growth and development of this emerging field of study, we are pleased to announce that UVU will be focusing our efforts specifically in the area of interreligious dialogue and comparative studies. This emphasis will fit exceptionally well with our previous contributions in this area along with our broader institutional mission of inclusion and cross-cultural dialogue. We look forward to building upon our efforts to make a strong and sustained contribution in this area of study.
RECENT EVENTS

Since 1995, Utah Valley University has hosted over seventy conferences, lectures, and workshops related to the study and practice of interreligious understanding. Below is a sample of some of our more recent projects. Thousands of students have attended and participated in these events through internships, senior projects, service learning, and our University Forum program.

“Religious Disagreement Epistemological Perspectives” | September 19-20, 2013
This conference explored the theoretical dimensions of religious diversity in light of the most recent philosophical work on the nature of disagreement. Conference participants included leading thinkers in the contemporary discussion surrounding religious and ethical pluralism, the nature of belief, and theological pluralism.

“Intersecting Convictions: Core Beliefs and Civil Dialogue” | March 1, 2013
This conference facilitated disciplined dialogue on critical areas of engagement between religious communities and secular perspectives. The event convened interlocutors from Judaism, Humanism, Mormonism, and Evangelical Christianity to model serious and productive religious diplomacy.

Bishop John C. Wester Lecture and Workshop | September 18, 2012
The Interreligious Engagement Initiative collaborated with the Orem LDS Institute of Religion to host Bishop Wester of the Diocese of Salt Lake City. The Bishop spoke at the Orem Institute followed by a student workshop with President Matthew Holland on religious diversity and inclusion.
RECENT EVENTS

“Religion and the Art of Civil Dialogue” | September 21, 2012
Religion and the Art of the Civic Diplomacy was a symposium devoted to the exploration of strategies and methods for negotiating religious diversity in a pluralistic society. The aim of the symposium was to serve as a forum wherein a variety of methodologies and perspectives are brought into meaningful dialogue.

“At Crossroads Again: Mormon & Protestant Encounters” | February 24-25, 2012
This conference facilitated dialogue between religious traditions with a shared history of misunderstanding and conflict: Methodism and Mormonism. This groundbreaking collaboration between the Foundation for Religious Diplomacy and Wesley Theological Seminary provided a unique forum for dialogue and social interaction.

“Spiritual, But Not Religious?” | December 8, 2011
A recent Pew Survey found that an increasing number of people identify themselves as “spiritual, but not religious,” which indicates a move toward a more pluralistic approach in response to traditional beliefs and practices. The conference examined these categories and related trends in religious activity in the United States.

Cultural and Religious Pluralism Today | City Library, September 8-11, 2011
This collaborative conference was designed to explore and compare traditions and cultures, acknowledge commonalities between faiths, foster a respectful and peaceful society, and explore opportunities for cooperation between members of different cultures and faiths.
For more information please contact Brian Birch at brian.birch@uvu.edu or visit uvu.edu/ir