



Association of Membership Professionals

Unitarian Universalist Association of Membership Professionals (UUAMP)

In eight pages or less, answer the following questions:

1. Please give a fifty word summary of the project.

The job of Membership Professionals is to grow and develop membership in congregations. The UUA Growth Office has cited Membership Professionals as essential for sustainable growth. It is imperative that membership staff be well prepared, trained leaders. We strive to design a program that is attainable, accessible, and applicable.

Briefly describe the inception of this project.

In June 2010, those assembled at the Pre-GA Membership Professional Day Business Meeting voted for a Steering Committee to be formed to work toward professional recognition for the Membership Staff group within the Unitarian Universalist Association (UUA). Susan Eckert, UU Church of Annapolis, who had served as the lead organizer for the informal Membership Professional Group as it was initially organized under the Association of Unitarian Universalist Administrators (AUUA), recruited and organized volunteers to serve on the steering committee for a one year term while this process was initiated. Lori Emison Clair, First Unitarian Church of Des Moines, Iowa, served as facilitator for this process and convened meetings as needed. The Steering Committee included: Marie Murton (Fox Valley UU Fellowship in Appleton, WI), Valerie Lynch (The Community Church of NY UU), Heidi Mastrud (First Universalist Church in Minneapolis), Mary Jones (First Unitarian Church of Rochester, NY), Judy Bennett (UU Church of Bloomington, IN), Suzette Marie Southfox (First UU Church of San Diego), Eileen Wiviott (Unitarian Church of Evanston) and Ben Bortin (UU Congregation of Shelter Rock). These membership staff provided a wide and diverse committee representing differing sizes of congregations and geography. These were great minds to pioneer this association.

The Steering Committee met via phone and video conference ten times between September 2010 and June 2011. They accomplished many great things, including:

- Selected a name: Unitarian Universalist Association of Membership Professionals (UUAMP)
- Created a founding Mission Statement and Goals
- Drafted founding bylaws

- Drafted a slate of officers for election at the first official UUAMP Business Meeting
- Designed an application and process for UUAMP membership
- Designed a logo
- Designed the first UUAMP website. A newly redesigned website will be available soon
- Negotiated a financial sponsorship with Tim Brennan, Treasurer and CFO of the UUA, which continues today
- Closed out our 5-year sub group affiliation with the Association of Unitarian Universalist Administrators
- Established a liaison relationship within the UUA Congregational Life Office to offer resources and assistance as needed in the early stages of our formation. Initially, our liaison was Susanna Whitman. It then transitioned to Dori Davenport Thexton, and finally to the current structure with Tandi Rogers and Dori Davenport Thexton both providing support as UUA Liaisons
- Discussed possibilities of updated membership resources (such as the Membership Journey) and creating new ones with Mary Bernard at Skinner House
- Presented our first professional program at The Large Church Conference in Minneapolis in March 2011
- Planned our first annual Pre-GA Professional Membership

In July of 2013 the Board met for their first annual retreat, where they discussed their Mission Statement and drafted a revised mission to be voted on at the annual business meeting in June of 2014.

Our Mission is to develop and support the ministry of membership through professional development and collaboration.

In addition, the UUAMP Board set their goals for the year as follows:

- Grow the UUAMP membership
- Grow active members within UUAMP
- Vision the creation of a certification program
- Increase UUAMP visibility within the UUA

Our organizational priorities include:

- Designing continuing education experiences (webinars, book discussion groups, in person gatherings and General Assembly workshops) to meet the evolving needs of our professional members.
- Providing updated resources for membership individuals at all levels.

- Assessing needs of the more than 600 professional and lay leaders with membership in their purview to guide the UUAMP board as we set our goals for the future.
- Advocating for the professionalization of the Membership Staff position within congregations, districts, regions and the UUA. Will be presenting our first General Assembly program in 2014 titled “Igniting Growth through Professional Membership Ministry”.
- Initiating collaborating relationships with the UUA (Growth Office, Congregational Life, Skinner House and Church Staff Finance), LREDA, EquUal Access and other UU groups.
- Increasing UUAMP visibility through articles in the *UU World*, *InterConnections*, an updated website, General Assembly booth and Facebook page.
- The entire board is also participating in an Innovative Learning Circle of the UUA Growth Strategies Office exploring the blessings and challenges of membership care and development in the 21st century.

2. Describe more fully the project for which you are applying. What are the goals of the project? What are the specific outcomes you anticipate?

The UUAMP Board will spend the next year visioning and designing a professional certification process for Membership Staff. We envision this process involving the following elements, and we are also open to receiving feedback from the UU Funding Panel and future consultants on how to best proceed.

- 1.) Send a group of UUAMP Board members to the LREDA Renaissance Module on UU Identity in order to have a better understanding of the education and professionalization model they implemented.
- 2.) Research and hire a consultant to coach and assist us in our process and co – facilitate two board retreats related to certification.
- 3.) Review existing credentialing and certification programs used by the LREDA, Unitarian Universalist Musicians Network, AUUA, as well as any non-UU ministerial credentialing programs we are able to locate. We will also reach out to founding members of these programs to learn from their experiences.
- 4.) Design a Beta Program to be tested in 2014-2015 by the UUAMP Board and a sampling of UUAMP members.

Some of the issues we will be considering as we work through this visioning process include the following factors:

- Will our model be primarily evaluative or formative? (i.e., will the model primarily be setting clear standards and certifying that they are met, or more about meeting people where they are and helping them learn and grow?)

- Will our model be curriculum-based (i.e., requiring specific trainings/offerings that people need to complete), or will our model look for evidence of knowledge and skill, based on a variety of learning and work experiences that people might have done?
- How can we assure our focus remains on a philosophy of guidance and empowerment? Will our model have different developmental and/or professional levels?
- Will our model include a reading list, mentors, interviews, etc.?
- Will we be offering different media options for learning and online support?
- Who will hold the responsibility for validating someone has completed the certification program?
- How can we design a program that will be fiscally sustainable through the use of technology?

Give a timeline detailing how and when you plan to meet your goals.

May 15-17, 2014

Send a group of UUAMP Board members to the LREDA Ren Mod on UU Identity in order to have a better sense of the model LREDA has implemented.

July 2014

Research and hire a consultant to assist us in our process as well as to attend and co-facilitate our two board retreats related to certification.

December 2014

Review existing Credentialing/Certification Programs used by the Minister Association, LREDA, Musicians network, Community Ministers, as well as any non-UU ministerial credentialing programs we are able to locate, including reaching out to founding members of these programs to learn from their experiences.

April 2014

Design a Beta Program to be testing in 2014-2015 by the UUAMP Board and a sampling of UUAMP Members.

3. Please describe your specific plans for raising income in addition to the proposed UUPF grant. How do you plan to sustain the project?

The UUAMP Board will continue, as we have the past two years, providing our time and talents to this organization without pay and with our congregations' support.

In addition, we have committed to provide financial support from our annual budget for UUAMP Board members to attend the LREDA Renaissance Mod in May 2014.

We will also vote to increase yearly membership dues by \$5.00 per year for up to five years to sustain the costs of the program. Once our certification program is fully implemented, any additional expenses will be paid by those going through the program. One of our goals is to keep the costs of the program as minimal as possible.

It is our hope that we will be able to complete the majority of our work in the first year. It is possible we will seek a smaller grant for follow up evaluation and testing of the beta model designed in 2014-2015.

4. How will this project strengthen Unitarian Universalism and its ideas, influence, and/or organization? Explain how Unitarian Universalism will benefit from the successful completion of this project.

The role of the Membership Professionals is fairly new in UU congregations; however, the evolution of this position is critical in supporting our congregations and the greater movement. Membership Professionals' ministries vary greatly from part to full time. They range from a very specialized role in the area of membership to blended job responsibilities including a wide variety of ministries, such as stewardship, communications, Small Group Ministry coordination, and Caring Ministry. These professional staff can be found in many different sized congregations. However, at the core of all membership staff, you will find that they play a vital role in growing their congregations in both size and depth. These dedicated staff work to engage, connect, and equip members to transform not only their own communities but the world.

The UUA Growth Office has cited Membership Professionals as essential for sustainable growth. It is imperative that Membership Staff be professional, trained, supported, and systematically recognized members of the ministerial core team. We feel as though a certification process for professional Membership Staff, designed by those with years of experience in the ministries of membership, is a vital first step in creating the transformative leaders who can fully participate in the shared ministry of our congregations, as well as support the growth of the larger Unitarian Universalist movement.

UUAMP has always supported not only paid Membership Professionals, but have also made our resources and continuing education programs available to all serving in the area of membership. We will continue to provide a structure for current and future staff to grow and develop to be the excellent examples and support for smaller congregations who are unable to afford paid membership staff. We feel by continuing

to do this we will not only serve our Professional Membership Staff home congregations, but we will also grow our movement.

It is our hope to design a certification program that is attainable, accessible, and applicable to the Ministry of Membership. We want to support our professional staff as they strive to be the best that they can be through realistic programming expectations.

Congregations of various sizes and the Regional Congregational Life Staff cannot prepare the Membership Professional to fill this vital role alone. Over the years, UUAMP has stepped up to the challenge of supporting staff and lay leaders as they seek to professionalize the service they provide to their congregations. Now, UUAMP seeks your support as we visualize a true path to professionalization for paid Membership Staff with the creation of a certification process.

- 5. Name the individuals who will carry out the project's plan. Please provide 2-3 sentences about each person's skills and experiences related to the project. If your program involves children or young adults, include resumes of the adults in charge and detail the quality of the adult supervision provided.**

Marie Blohowiak is the Congregational Life Coordinator at the Fox Valley Unitarian Universalist Fellowship in Appleton, WI and has been a Membership Professional since July of 2005. Marie was part of the planning group that started up UUAMP and has served as President for almost three years.

Lori Emison Clair is currently the Director of Congregational Life at the First Unitarian Church of Des Moines, a growing congregation of over 500 members. Lori has worked with Membership for the past ten years. Lori served as the facilitator for the Steering Committee that chartered UUAMP in 2010-2011, served as Secretary in 2011-12, and is now serving as Vice President in 2012-2013. Lori has a Master's Degree in Social Work and a Bachelor of Arts in Social Work.

Jeanne Sears is the Coordinator of Member Programs at First Unitarian Society in Madison, WI. She is a Member at Large on the UUAMP Board and has more than twenty years of experience working with nonprofits.

Rev. Tandi Rogers serves the Unitarian Universalist Association as our Growth Strategies Specialist, and UUA liaison to UUAMP. Prior to that, she served the UUA in the Pacific NW as a program specialist. She is also a Credentialed Religious Educator, master level.

Dori Davenport Thexton works for the MidAmerica Region and has served two congregations before joining the UUA field staff in 1998. Growing Unitarian Universalism

has long been one of her passions. She is especially interested in the ministry of hospitality.

List the key individuals, committees, or organizations that have contributed to this project through money, time, or other forms of support. What UUA resources/departments have been consulted about this project?

We have received much support from UUA and Regional Staff, for which we are grateful. Key support has come from Susanna Whitman, Dori Davenport Thexton, Tandi Rogers, Stefan Jonasson and Jan Gartner. We have also received suggestions and ideas from the UU Ministers Association, LREDA, UU Musician's Network, Harlan Limpert, Scott Taylor, Ian Evison and Terasa Cooley.

6. Please describe your evaluation plan and give the criteria for evaluating the success of your project. See a Sample Evaluation Plan.

- **Goals:** To create a certification program that helps Membership Professionals take their work to the next level of ministry.
- **Program Strategies:**
 1. Send a group of UUAMP Board members to the LREDA Renaissance Module on UU Identity in order to have a better sense of the model they implemented.
 2. Research and hire a consultant to assist us in our process, as well as to attend and co-facilitate our two board retreats related to certification.
 3. Review existing credentialing and certification Programs used by the Minister Association, LREDA, Musicians network, Community Ministers, as well as any non-UU ministerial credentialing programs we are able to locate. We will also reach out to founding members of these programs to learn from their experiences.
 4. Design a Beta Program to be tested in 2014-2015 by the UUAMP Board and a sampling of UUAMP members.
- **Objectives:** After our Beta Program is tested, we will make necessary changes and roll out the program to the rest of the UUAMP membership. We will carefully evaluate the program through written and verbal evaluation from those participating, as well as an independent evaluator not connected to the creation of the program.