

# **Engaging Religions/Building Community**

**Recommendation Report from the  
Multi-Faith Strategic Planning Committee  
Elon University**

**Submitted September 25, 2015**

## **Introduction**

The 2010 “Report of the Multi-faith Center and Religious Community Houses Committee” called on Elon to “fulfill our vision of encouraging spiritual formation and expression, promoting religious literacy and respect for diverse faith traditions and world views, examining the role of religion in society, and supporting research and scholarship on religion.” As components of this vision, it recommended the university expand and transform the Truitt Center to better meet the needs of a diverse body of faculty and staff and that it create a research and scholarship program to promote the interdisciplinary, academic study of religion.

Among leading universities invested in interreligious understanding and dialogue, Elon is distinctive for its commitment to the academic study of religion as a necessary complement to the experiential exploration of religion. This approach recognizes that the public good is served by an informed and educated electorate, that our campus is a healthier academic institution when differences are engaged and discussed rather than smoothed over, and that sophisticated and meaningful multi-faith engagement requires study and intellectual discovery as much as good intentions and tolerance.

Elon’s dedication to both multi-faith work and the rigorous and honest study of religion is evident in its promotion of dialogue and cooperation among different traditions, the highest quality scholarship on and education about religion, and the spiritual development of all of its community members. Furthermore, the university’s commitment to this multi-faith work reflects and honors the university’s historical roots in the United Church of Christ, which value openness, hospitality, freedom of thought, and interfaith dialogue.

## **Update on 2010 Committee**

The 2010 report produced a blueprint for the future that led to the construction of the Numen-Lumen Pavilion in the academic village, which houses the Truitt Center and the new Elon Center for the Study of Religion, Culture, and Society, both elements of the 2010 report. These accomplishments are forging new paths in constructing the identity of Elon University as a space of multi-faith engagement. The Numen Lumen Pavilion, dedicated in April of 2013, is open and fully functioning with a new staff configuration of chaplain/associate chaplains. The university recently hired Dr. Brian Pennington, a new full-time director to lead the work of the Center for the Study of Religion, Culture, and Society. Building on years of hard work and dedication, the recently hired personnel and Numen-Lumen facility are creating spaces for new conversations around multi-faith concerns. Aided in this task by a working relationship with Eboo Patel’s Interfaith Youth Core, we have become a leading voice in a national conversation about how to negotiate religious diversity.

Now is the time to develop a focused, strategic plan to serve as a blueprint for the next five years to build on the work already accomplished.

## **Affirming The Vision**

As part of the first phase of our work, the committee met and affirmed the initial framing of our mission and constructed definitions in order to more effectively communicate our institutional mission regarding multi-faith work to the university and outside constituencies.

The committee endorsed the vision statement of the 2010 committee that declared that multi-faith awareness at Elon is intended to affirm and promote:

- spiritual formation and expression
- religious literacy and respect for diverse faith traditions and world-views
- examination of the role of religion in society
- research and scholarship on religion
- global citizenship

We also endorsed our predecessors' work in developing the following companion mission statement for the multi-faith center:

The Elon multi-faith initiative aims to foster a diverse community of study, discourse and practice that promotes mutual understanding founded on sustained intellectual inquiry, respect across and within religious traditions and belief systems, and contributes to the development of global citizenship. The Truitt Center offers rich and varied resources to fulfill our vision of *encouraging spiritual formation and expression, promoting religious literacy and respect for diverse faith traditions and world views, examining the role of religion in society, and supporting research and scholarship on religion*. This initiative at Elon invites broad participation of community members into meaningful dialogue, regardless of personal professions of faith, or lack thereof, as a reflection of our commitment to modeling the respectful exchange of ideas and perspectives.

## **Definition of Key Terms and Concepts**

As part of our charge to define terms, and in order to make clear the above vision as it pertains to Elon, the 2014-15 committee developed the following definitions to elucidate our mission:

### **Multi-faith**

Elon refers to its efforts to promote education about a broad range of spiritual traditions and to promote dialogue and understanding among diverse communities by the term “multi-faith.”<sup>1</sup> Multi-faith work at Elon does not pursue an erasure of real difference or an affirmation of superficial commonalities, but rather the more profound understanding of one another that can lead to meaningful cooperation and honest dialogue.

### **Spiritual Formation and Expression**

Spiritual formation refers to the knowledge and wisdom that develop from exploration of and commitment to one's inherited or chosen tradition or perspective. This intentional process of maturing as a whole person in community includes acquiring the ability to articulate a set of values, commitments, and traditions and deepening one's sense of identity as a member of distinct but overlapping communities. “Spiritual” signals the humanistic contention that human fulfillment lies outside the realm of purely material concerns and, therefore, refers to both religious and non-religious ways of making meaning.

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<sup>1</sup> Because many worldviews do not foreground the concept of faith, Elon's use of the term “multi-faith” is undertaken with an awareness of its limitations. Ongoing development of our understanding of what it means to live in a diverse world may lead us to adopt new concepts and vocabulary.

**Religious literacy**

Rudimentary literacy implies a basic understanding of and ability to explain the beliefs and practices of various religious communities. A more developed and desirable level of literacy would include the ability to discuss the broad diversity that characterizes every religious tradition, the sectarian differences that divide them internally, and the histories that have generated these divisions.

**Respect**

Respect is neither a passive attitude towards another nor mere tolerance, but a stance of understanding and appreciation based on a prior awareness of the histories and values that have led an individual or tradition to adopt certain commitments.

**Faith traditions**

“Faith” is a concept that emerges from the early Christian church and only imperfectly suggests the tremendous range of attitudes and motivations cultivated among the world’s religious and spiritual traditions. Nevertheless, “faith traditions” has become a phrase commonly used to refer to religious traditions of various sorts. At Elon, “faith traditions” refers not only to religious communities that have developed and endured throughout history, but also to non-theistic traditions that aim to promote a moral vision of what it means to be human based on carefully considered values.

**Worldviews**

A worldview is a people’s/culture’s/society’s all-encompassing perception of the nature and arc of the cosmos, the fundamental understanding of reality they share that affects their perception of events, their motivations for acting in particular ways, and their valuation of what is good or true. A worldview involves much more than belief; it encompasses the conceptual framework for interpreting reality that may or may not be founded on religious bases.

**Examination of the role of religion in society**

Religions are products of human forces and have powerfully influenced the course of human civilization. Now and throughout history, religions have interacted with other facets of human social life, including politics, economics, technologies, and the environment. They have both liberated and oppressed. To examine the role of religion means to critically examine and honestly investigate the ways in which religion has ennobled and debased human culture.

**Research and scholarship on religion**

Research is the process of producing new knowledge within a field; scholarship is the process of acquainting oneself with knowledge that already exists. To conduct these acts of discovery with respect to religion includes coming to know and understand things *about* religion or religious traditions as well as working *within* particular religious traditions, employing their own texts and histories to make informed statements concerning those traditions.

**Global citizenship**

Global citizenship implies recognition of the values and responsibilities that emerge from knowledge of and ethical reflection on the changing nature of human communities in an era of deepening interconnectedness and global conflict. Global citizens embrace the personal and social responsibility to advocate for the dignity of all human communities and to collaborate in the creation of pluralistic and harmonious societies.

## **Roles and Responsibilities**

The multi-faith initiative that this plan promotes aims to engage the entire campus, and it will take on many partners. Three specific units, however, will be its major stakeholders and have primary responsibility for its implementation: the Truitt Center for Religious and Spiritual Life, the Center for the Study of Religion, Culture, and Society, and the Department of Religious Studies. Each possesses its own distinct character and mission, and each has a particular role to play in the implementation of this plan.

### **Truitt Center for Religious and Spiritual Life**

The Truitt Center is a safe place for spiritual growth and interfaith exploration. Its mission is to encourage students to honor the spiritual dimension of life, be vitally connected to a faith tradition, embrace the present responsibility and the future with hope, and live the principles they value. In that spirit the Center serves the university by offering the resources for spiritual growth, education, and practice among diverse religious communities. It creates spaces for students, faculty, and staff to gather, deepen, and observe their traditions and enables members of the Elon University community to learn more about their own faith and other faiths, and to live lives of reconciliation.

The Truitt Center fulfills its role through:

- Pastoral care.
- Opportunities for spiritual exploration across and within traditions, and spiritual formation in the practices of specific religious communities.
- Being a liaison with student organizations, and helping them relate to each other. The Truitt Center resources and supports many vibrant, pluralist student organizations, including Jewish, Muslim, Buddhist, Hindu, secular, multi-faith groups and associations, and fifteen varieties of Christian community and practice, as well as those practicing Mindfulness, Yoga, and Meditation.
- Attending to campus traditions and rituals.
- Facilitating learning and conversation, social justice action and reflection, and multi-faith dialogue among the different communities who orient around issues of faith/non-faith.
- Fostering relationships with diverse communities of faith on and off campus.
- Developing student leaders in multifaith engagement programs. (e.g., Multi-faith SAGES and Truitt Center Interns)
- Working with the service-learning community to develop and expand multi-faith opportunities and projects.

### **Religious Studies Department**

As an academic department within the College of Arts and Sciences, the Department of Religious Studies at Elon University 1) encourages an understanding of and respect for religious diversity as essential to the development of global citizenship; 2) educates students in the scholarly approaches to the study of the religion; 3) contributes to the discipline of religious studies through a commitment to scholarly inquiry, research, and dialogue; 4) promotes informed public dialogue about the role of religion in political, social, cultural and historic contexts.

The Department of Religious Studies fulfills its role through:

- Providing disciplinary expertise for understanding religion, as well as understanding particular religious traditions.
- Researching and publishing in religious studies and related fields.
- Devising and implementing curriculum.
- Contributing to Elon's Core curriculum.
- Connecting with colleagues in other disciplines on research, course development, and programming.
- Mentoring undergraduate research on religion.
- Providing academic expertise on religion to the campus and public.
- Developing an interreligious studies minor.

### **The Center for the Study of Religion, Culture, and Society**

The Elon Center for the Study of Religion, Culture, and Society (CSRCS) highlights and promotes the interdisciplinary study of religion. This faculty-led center draws scholars from disciplines across Elon's campus together with students, staff, community members, and experts from the region and beyond. Center initiatives foster teaching, scholarship, and dialogue that cultivate intellectual community and civic action. Pursuing fulfillment of Elon's commitment to multi-faith education and engagement, the CSRCS convenes and facilitates dialogue that advances the understanding of the role of religion in society with intellectual rigor and academic integrity.

The CSRCS fulfills its role through:

- Promoting and resourcing faculty development in the area of religion.
- Convening and planning events and programs to educate Elon and the public about religion.
- Highlighting and promoting interdisciplinarity in faculty research on religion.
- Hosting scholars from outside Elon and connecting them with Elon students, faculty, and staff.
- Promoting undergraduate research on religion.

In any shared enterprise such as this multi-faith initiative, collaboration and mutual investment and interest will necessarily produce patterns of overlapping responsibilities, but three broad themes emerge from the Numen Lumen initiative that indicate three distinct sets of tasks: The Truitt Center is concerned most with lived practice and relationships among different communities; the Religious Studies Department develops curriculum and provides disciplinary expertise within a liberal arts context; and the Center for the Study of Religion, Culture, and Society provides a center for research and education, drawing upon resources both within and beyond the university.

## **Engaging Religions/Building Community: A Plan for a Robust, Multi-faith Elon**

As we consider multi-faith engagement at Elon, we recognize that various populations will want to join these efforts in diverse ways. Although not every student will want to pursue all of the opportunities we offer, we should seek to transform the ethos at Elon to the extent that every student who graduates will be more religiously literate than when he or she arrived. Programming and events geared toward that general goal should be part of our yearly outreach to the campus. For those who desire to be a part of teaching and training of students, faculty, and staff, ample opportunities and training should be offered to equip them for this task.

To reach these goals, this committee recommends the following strategic objectives and actions, organized around four major goals and then further divided by significant sub-categories. Though numbered, we do not present these in order of primacy nor necessary action.

**I. Building Community:** Nurture the creation of a more religiously diverse and welcoming campus community

1. Developing a more religiously diverse campus community
2. Creating a more welcoming campus community

**II. Enhancing Breadth:** Develop the ability of the campus community to engage with colleagues and communities from diverse religious identities and worldviews

1. Infusing multi-faith within existing structures and programs
2. Establishing broader campus professional development and training
3. Developing new all-campus initiatives

**III. Deepening Engagement:** Provide opportunities for deepened and extended engagement with one another around multi-faith matters of substance

1. Constructing new curricular and pedagogical opportunities
2. Supporting scholarly engagement
3. Expanding and developing new opportunities for sustained learning

**IV. Enhancing Capacity:** Clarify the roles and responsibilities of University units and reformulate advisory committee structures

1. Establishing clearer and stronger units to support campus multi-faith work
2. Developing a more robust advisory committee structure

This plan and Elon's multi-faith effort, perhaps uniquely, assert that actively engaging one's own and others' religious traditions through deep and broad intellectual activity is crucial to the accomplishment of global citizenship and the goals Elon has adopted for its multi-faith community. As stated earlier in this plan, it is through engaging religions that "we build communities of intellectual engagement and personal discovery on Elon's campus and beyond, which will, in turn, enable a more informed and engaged citizenry." A diverse, multi-faith campus with the capacities necessary to recruit, support, and retain members of its

diverse multi-faith population does not, in and of itself, create an effective multi-faith community. Critical – indeed essential – to this effort is the active, deep, and broad academic and intellectual engagement with religion.

To reach these aspirational goals, we propose the following five-year objectives and action plans:

**I. Building Community:** Nurture the creation of a more religiously diverse and welcoming campus community

**1. Developing a more religiously diverse campus community**

- a. **Establish recruitment strategies and plans** that identify and draw to Elon students, faculty, and staff from under-represented religious traditions, including Hindu, Muslim, and Buddhist.
  - i. Work with admissions to **expand and focus recruiting territories** to better target schools with high religious diversity and enhance the identification of first year students well-suited for a Religious Diversity Living Learning Community, leadership positions in the residential campus plan to encourage student engagement in the global neighborhood, and a multi-faith scholars program.
  - ii. Train our **international recruiters** to identify and encourage students from under-represented religious populations to come to Elon.
  - iii. Examine ways Elon can recruit and hire **faculty and staff** from these traditions who would accept a role in recruiting and nurturing students as an expectation of their position. For example, the University might recruit and hire someone to serve as both a Hindu or Buddhist chaplain and point-person for other multi-faith initiatives represented in this document.
  - iv. Recruit – perhaps through a cluster hire effort – faculty who exhibit **teaching and scholarly expertise** associated with multi-faith studies. These positions should be dedicated to interdisciplinary and co-curricular engagement.
  - v. Create **promotional materials and establish a web presence** for Hindu, Buddhist, and Muslim student, faculty, and staff communities.
- b. Explore the potential to create bridges between **Alamance County** students from under-represented religious traditions and Elon University, identifying and recruiting those students to the university.
- c. Create and expand **community partnerships** that enhance the diversity in Elon events and allow the Numen Lumen Pavilion to be a resource for community member observances.

## 2. Creating a more welcoming campus community

- a. Create a **multi-faith calendar committee** to examine how to support and highlight non-majority religious holy days within the campus calendar to ensure that we are paying due attention to existing and emerging groups, and to publicize academic engagement with religion, values, and spirituality at Elon.
- b. Develop strategies to **further support Protestant, Catholic, and Jewish populations** on campus, and identify their roles in Elon's commitment to religious diversity and Multi-faith engagement.
- c. Actively recruit and encourage current faculty or staff to **share in leading religious observances** in their own traditions.
- d. Ensure that **major campus gatherings** signal awareness of the audience's religious diversity and represent the university's commitment to multi-faith.
- e. Develop **on-campus strategies to become a more welcoming community** for religious diversity, offering training to create community sensitivities related to religious difference.

**II. Enhancing Breadth:** Develop the ability of the campus community to engage with colleagues and communities from diverse religious identities and worldviews

### 1. Infusing multi-faith within existing structures and programs

- a. Ensure topic selections for **diversity roundtables** that include religious and worldview diversity.
- b. Work to include religious topics in **Core Forum** discussions.
- c. Develop, when appropriate, annual guides to religious and worldview themes in the **Common Reading**.
- d. Develop and offer **pre-departure modules** for Study USA and Study Abroad that focuses on religious and worldview diversity.
- e. In partnership with **ELR directors and the Student Professional Development Center**, create appropriate modules for exploring the cultural context for service, leadership, and internships, as well as **ELR** experiences and careers, thus ensuring that religious and worldview diversity is also addressed as part of the cultural lens.
- f. Work with the Directors of **Fraternity and Sorority Life, Athletics, and student organizations** to create programs, resources, and education to ensure religious and worldview diversity is infused in current and future diversity and inclusion efforts.

- g. Continue to expand the presence of religious and worldview diversity and multi-faith work at Elon on **social media and the internet**.

## 2. Establishing broader campus professional development and training

- a. Provide **ongoing staff training** opportunities about creating a welcoming work environment, serving religiously diverse students, and hosting campus visitors from religiously diverse backgrounds.
- b. Improve, scaffold, and connect the training for the **Multi-Faith SAGES, Truitt Center Interns, and related programs**.
- c. Explore the addition of a **summer institute** for multi-faith leadership, service trips, study abroad opportunities, or national conferences for networking and training.

## 3. Developing new all-campus initiatives

- a. Pursue a revision of the weekly **Numen Lumen** gathering to foster broad intellectual discussion and spiritual community that engages large numbers of students, faculty, and staff through partnerships with units on campus (e.g. academic departments, student life divisions or campus neighborhoods).
- b. Explore connections between such major events as **convocation, the common reading, or other major speakers series**, to create a theme around the big questions in multi-faith work.
- c. Pursue **endowment funding** for a signature event that highlights multi-faith concerns.
- d. Explore the possibility of a **house or multi-faith cluster of housing** for religious diversity and other multi-faith communities to offer incentive to students to engage more deeply in learning from one another.
- e. Create **opportunities for religious identity reflection** based on exposure to diversity.
- f. Develop an **extra- or co-curricular multi-faith curriculum** that can be used in residential neighborhoods.
- g. **Participate in IDEALS** (Interfaith Diversity Experiences and Attitudes Longitudinal Survey), an instrument developed by Interfaith Youth Core, in order to better understand the nature and extent of our students' engagement with multi-faith issues and to assess our achievement of our long-term goals.
- h. Develop opportunities to **connect social justice action and religious commitment**.

**III. Deepening Engagement:** Provide opportunities for deepened and extended engagement with one another around multi-faith matters of substance

**1. Constructing new curricular and pedagogical opportunities**

- a. Develop an **inter-religious studies minor** that would combine theory and praxis, placing students in contact with local communities through their coursework by means of site visits, research projects, internships, and exposure to interreligious conversation.
- b. Establish a program of mini-grants through the CSRCS to support faculty from disparate disciplines in the **development of new courses or course modules** around topics related to religion and spirituality.

**2. Supporting scholarly engagement**

- a. Develop and sustain a **bi-annual colloquium** through the CSRCS for faculty to develop their own scholarly projects and engage in intellectual exchange with colleagues around academic matters related to religion and the interdisciplinary study of religion.
- b. Establish through the CSRCS and the Office of Undergraduate Research a program of grants and other non-material support for **advanced student interdisciplinary research** on questions related to religion and its role in society, branded distinctly but awarded through the SURE and SURF programs.
- c. Explore the feasibility and potential benefits of a **scholar-in-residence** program to bring new expertise to campus and enhance representation of underrepresented religious groups.

**3. Expanding and developing new opportunities for sustained learning**

- a. Through the CSRCS, establish practices and patterns of collaborations between faculty and students in the School of Communications and those in other areas of campus to produce high-quality multi-media pieces that feature and examine the role of religion and religious communities in society and make available through **public and/or cable television programming** that supports multi-faith engagement across communities.
- b. Explore the development of a **multi-faith scholars** program.
- c. **Deepen the engagement of Multi-faith SAGES and Truitt Center Interns** across the campus and community.
- d. Develop and sustain the ongoing, informal series “Religion Trending” that will provide opportunities for faculty and staff to hold **informal conversations with local and regional experts** on topics of current interest.

- e. Provide opportunities for various segments of the campus and external community to engage with the speakers and/or themes throughout the year. Such opportunities might include:
  - i. **Reading circles** to engage with an author’s work before he/she speaks on campus.
  - ii. **Classroom modules** and materials prepared for instructors by appropriate faculty experts.
  - iii. **Facilitating collaborations** between the School of Communications and other faculty and students to produce video or video shorts to introduce speakers/themes in a given year.

**IV. Enhancing Capacity:** Clarify the roles and responsibilities of University units and reformulate advisory committee structures

**1. Establishing clearer and stronger units to support campus multi-faith work**

- a. **Establish clear responsibilities** for each of the primary actors for this plan – the Truitt Center and Chaplain, the Center for the Study of Religion, Culture, and Society and Director, and the Religious Studies Department – communicating not only discrete areas of responsibilities but areas of overlap and necessary collaboration.
- b. Create and share across units a **strategic plan for CSRCS**.
- c. Create and share across units a **strategic plan for Truitt Center**.
- d. Examine and creatively resolve the need for **additional support staffing** to support this robust plan and, primarily, the expanded Truitt Center and new Center for the Study of Religion, Culture, and Society.

**2. Developing a more robust advisory committee structure**

- a. Establish a **Numen Lumen leadership committee** that assumes an advisory role for the whole of multi-faith at Elon and a broad assessment function for the continuity and effectiveness of this plan.
- b. In consultation with the present Religious and Spiritual Life Committee, **explore the creation of an Advisory Committee for the Truitt Center** that would oversee the objectives of the Truitt Center written into this five year plan and consider other suggestions for multi faith work at Elon.
- c. Create a **national advisory board** to assist in putting together a national model.

These recommendations will require the cooperative work and leadership of many (see Appendix A for a list organized by areas of responsibility) and will span a period of five years. (see Appendix B for a list organized by year of action, including budget projections where appropriate) The recommendations of this committee, as mentioned earlier, also reaffirm the five main themes of Elon’s multi-faith initiative, as developed by the 2010

committee. These five themes are built into the very fabric of plan, though not utilized as organizing categories. (see Appendix C for a list organized by these five themes)

## **Conclusion**

This report signifies a commitment by Elon University to address one of the recurring social dynamics that will affect our world for decades to come. By the time five years is up, we will discover that we have only begun the work of interpreting religion in a diverse, but tragically divided world. This represents only another step in responding to the global need for understanding religious communities; however, we believe that if these recommendations are enacted, we will find a far more religiously literate and engaged campus in the future.

### **Respectfully submitted by the members of the Committee:**

Jeffrey C. Pugh, Chair  
Brooke Barnett  
Danielle Biggs  
Bryan Cross  
Jan Fuller  
Lynn R. Huber  
Tim Peeples  
Brian Pennington  
Jeff Stein

## Appendix A: Recommendations Organized by Officer in Charge of Leading Action-item

### Chaplain

- Create **promotional materials and establish a web presence** for Hindu, Buddhist, and Muslim student, faculty, and staff communities.
- Train our **international recruiters** to identify and encourage students from under-represented religious populations to come to Elon.
- Create a **multi-faith calendar committee** to examine how to support and highlight non-majority religious holy days within the campus calendar to ensure that we are paying due attention to existing and emerging groups, and to publicize academic engagement with religion, values, and spirituality at Elon.
- Develop **on-campus strategies to become a more welcoming community** for religious diversity, offering training to create community sensitivities related to religious difference.
- Create and expand **community partnerships** that enhance the diversity in Elon events and allow the Numen Lumen Pavilion to be a resource for community member observances.
- Actively recruit and encourage current faculty or staff to share **in leading religious observances** in their own traditions.
- Develop strategies to **further support Protestant, Catholic, and Jewish populations** on campus, and identify their roles in Elon's commitment to religious diversity and Multi-faith engagement.
- Ensure that **major campus gatherings** signal awareness of the audience's religious diversity and represent the university's commitment to multi-faith.
- Pursue a revision of the weekly **Numen Lumen** gathering to foster broad intellectual discussion and spiritual community that engages large numbers of students, faculty, and staff through partnerships with units on campus (e.g. academic departments, student life divisions or campus neighborhoods).
- Pursue endowment funding for a signature event that highlights multi-faith concerns.
- Improve, scaffold and connect the offering and training for the **Multi-Faith SAGES, Truitt Center Interns, and related programs.**
- **Deepen the engagement of Multi-faith SAGES and Truitt Center Interns** across the campus and community.
- Explore the addition of a **summer institute** for multi-faith leadership, service trips, study abroad opportunities, or national conferences for networking and training.
- **Participate in IDEALS** (Interfaith Diversity Experiences and Attitudes Longitudinal Survey), an instrument developed by Interfaith Youth Core, in order to better understand the nature and extent of our students' engagement with multi-faith issues and to assess our achievement of our long-term goals. (with Institutional Research Office)
- Create a **strategic plan for Truitt Center.**
- Create **opportunities for religious identity reflection** based on exposure to diversity.
- Develop opportunities to **connect social justice action and religious commitment.**

## Director, Center for the Study of Religion, Culture, and Society

- Through the CSRCS, establish practices and patterns of collaborations between faculty and students in the School of Communications and those in other areas of campus to produce high-quality multi-media pieces that feature and examine the role of religion and religious communities in society and make available through **public and/or cable television programming** that supports multi-faith engagement across communities.
- Develop and sustain the ongoing, informal series “Religion Trending” that will provide opportunities for faculty and staff to hold **informal conversations with local and regional experts** on topics of current interest.
- Develop and sustain a **bi-annual colloquium** through the CSRCS for faculty to develop their own scholarly projects and engage in intellectual exchange with colleagues around academic matters related to religion and the interdisciplinary study of religion.
- Establish through the CSRCS and the Office of Undergraduate Research a program of grants and other non-material support for **advanced student interdisciplinary research** on questions related to religion and its role in society, branded distinctly but awarded through the SURE and SURF programs.
- Establish a program of mini-grants through the CSRCS to support faculty from disparate disciplines in the **development of new courses or course modules** around topics related to religion and spirituality.
- Explore the feasibility and potential benefits of a **scholar-in-residence** program to bring new expertise to campus and enhance representation of underrepresented religious groups.
- Provide opportunities for various segments of the campus and external community to engage with the speakers and/or themes throughout the year. Such opportunities might include:
  - **Reading circles** to engage with an author’s work before he/she speaks on campus.
  - **Classroom modules** and materials prepared for instructors by appropriate faculty experts
  - **Facilitating collaborations** between the School of Communications and other faculty and students to produce video or video shorts to introduce speakers/themes in a given year.
- Create a **strategic plan for CSRCS**.

## Chair, Religious Studies

- Develop an **inter-religious studies minor** that would combine theory and praxis, placing students in contact with local communities through their coursework by means of site visits, research projects, internships and exposure to interreligious conversation.
- Explore the development of a **multi-faith scholars** program. (with the Director for the CSRCS)
- Ensure topic selections for **diversity roundtables** that include religious and worldview diversity. (with the Director for the CSRCS and other partners)
- Work to include religious topics in **Core Forum** discussions. (with the Director for the CSRCS and other partners)
- Develop when appropriate annual guides to religious and worldview themes in the **Common Reading**. (with the Director for the CSRCS and other partners)
- Develop and offer **pre-departure modules** for Study USA and Study Abroad that focuses on religious and worldview diversity. (with the Director for the CSRCS and other partners)

## Provost

- **Establish recruitment strategies and plans** that identify and draw to Elon students, faculty and staff from under-represented religious traditions, including Hindu, Muslim, and Buddhist. (with Vice President for Admissions)
  - Work with admissions to **expand and focus recruiting territories** to better target schools with high religious diversity and enhance the identification of first year students well suited for a Religious Diversity Living Learning Community, leadership positions in the residential campus plan to encourage student engagement in the global neighborhood, and a multi-faith scholars program.
  - Examine ways Elon can **recruit and hire faculty and staff** from these traditions who would accept a role in recruiting and nurturing students as an expectation of their position. For example, the University might recruit and hire someone to serve as both a Muslim chaplain and point person for other multi-faith initiatives represented in this document.
- Establish a **Numen Lumen leadership committee** that assumes an advisory role for the whole of multi-faith at Elon and a broad assessment function for the continuity and effectiveness of this plan.
- Examine and creatively resolve the need for **additional support staffing** to support this robust plan and, primarily, the expanded Truitt Center and new Center for the Study of Religion, Culture, and Society. (with Vice President for Student Life and Associate Provost for Faculty Affairs)

## Vice President for Student Life

- In consultation with the present Religious and Spiritual Life Committee, **explore the creation of an Advisory Committee for the Truitt Center** that would oversee the objectives of the Truitt Center written into this five year plan and consider other suggestions for multi faith work at Elon. (with Provost)
- Explore the possibility of a **house or multi-faith cluster of housing** for religious diversity and other multi-faith communities to offer incentive to students to engage more deeply in learning from one another.
- Work with the Directors of **Fraternity and Sorority Life, Athletics, and student organizations** to create programs, resources and education to ensure religious and worldview diversity is infused in current and future diversity and inclusion efforts.
- Develop an **extra- or co-curricular multi-faith curriculum** that can be used in residential neighborhoods. (with Academic Director of Residential Neighborhoods)

## Associate Provost for Inclusive Community

- In partnership with **ELR directors and the Student Professional Development Center**, create appropriate modules for exploring the cultural context for service, leadership and internships, as well as **ELR** experiences and careers, thus ensuring that religious and worldview diversity is also addressed as part of the cultural lens.
- Explore connections between such major events as **convocation, the common reading, or other major speakers series**, to create a theme around the big questions in multi-faith work. (with Chaplain)

- Provide **ongoing staff training** opportunities about creating a welcoming work environment, serving religiously diverse students, and hosting campus visitors from religiously diverse backgrounds.

#### **Numen Lumen Leadership Committee**

- **Establish clear responsibilities** for each of the primary actors for this plan – the Truitt Center and Chaplain, the Center for the Study of Religion, Culture, and Society and Director, and the Religious Studies Department – communicating not only discrete areas of responsibilities but areas of overlap and necessary collaboration.
- Create a **national advisory board** to assist in putting together a national model.

#### **Dean, Elon College**

- Pursue – perhaps through a cluster hire effort – **faculty** who exhibit teaching and scholarly expertise associated with multi-faith studies. These positions should be dedicated to interdisciplinary and co-curricular engagement.

#### **Director, Center for Access and Success**

- Explore the potential to create bridges between **Alamance County** students from under-represented religious traditions and Elon University, identifying and recruiting those students to the university.

#### **University Relations**

- Continue to expand the presence of religious and worldview diversity and multi-faith work at Elon on **social media and the internet**.

**Appendix B:**  
**Recommendations Organized by Year of Action \***  
(with budget projects where appropriate)

**2015-16**

- Work with admissions to **expand and focus recruiting territories** to better target schools with high religious diversity and enhance the identification of first year students well suited for a Religious Diversity Living Learning Community, leadership positions in the residential campus plan to encourage student engagement in the global neighborhood, and a multi-faith scholars program.
- Train our **international recruiters** to identify and encourage students from under-represented religious populations to come to Elon.
- Develop and offer **pre-departure modules** for Study USA and Study Abroad that focuses on religious and worldview diversity.
- Improve, scaffold and connect the offering and training for the **Multi-Faith SAGES, Truitt Center Interns, and related programs.**
- **Participate in IDEALS** (Interfaith Diversity Experiences and Attitudes Longitudinal Survey), an instrument developed by Interfaith Youth Core, in order to better understand the nature and extent of our students' engagement with multi-faith issues and to assess our achievement of our long-term goals.
- Develop and sustain the ongoing, informal series "Religion Trending" that will provide opportunities for faculty and staff to hold **informal conversations with local and regional experts** on topics of current interest.
- Establish a **Numen Lumen leadership committee** that assumes an advisory role for the whole of multi-faith at Elon and a broad assessment function for the continuity and effectiveness of this plan.
- **Establish clear responsibilities** for each of the primary actors for this plan – the Truitt Center and Chaplain, the Center for the Study of Religion, Culture, and Society and Director, and the Religious Studies Department – communicating not only discrete areas of responsibilities but areas of overlap and necessary collaboration.
- Create and share across units a **strategic plan for CSRCS.**
- Create and share across units a **strategic plan for Truitt Center.**

**2016-17**

- Develop strategies to further **support Protestant, Catholic, and Jewish populations** on campus, and identify their roles in Elon's commitment to religious diversity and Multi-faith engagement.
- **Deepen the engagement of Multi-faith SAGES and Truitt Center Interns** across the campus and community.
- Work with admissions to **expand and focus recruiting territories** to better target schools with high religious diversity and enhance the identification of first year students well suited for a Religious Diversity Living Learning Community, leadership positions in the residential campus plan to encourage student engagement in the global neighborhood, and a multi-faith scholars program. (*Repeating item*)

- Develop **on-campus strategies to become a more welcoming community** for religious diversity, offering training to create community sensitivities related to religious difference. (*Budget items are likely but unknown until strategies are developed*)
- Create **promotional materials and establish a web presence** for Hindu, Buddhist, and Muslim student, faculty, and staff communities.
- Explore the potential to create bridges between **Alamance County** students from under-represented religious traditions and Elon University, identifying and recruiting those students to the university.
- Create a **multi-faith calendar committee** to examine how to support and highlight non-majority religious holy days within the campus calendar to ensure that we are paying due attention to existing and emerging groups, and to publicize academic engagement with religion, values, and spirituality at Elon.
- Ensure that **major campus gatherings** signal awareness of the audience's religious diversity and represent the university's commitment to multi-faith.
- Ensure topic selections for **diversity roundtables** that include religious and worldview diversity.
- Work to include religious topics in **Core Forum** discussions.
- Develop when appropriate annual guides to religious and worldview themes in the **Common Reading**.
- Provide **ongoing staff training** opportunities about creating a welcoming work environment, serving religiously diverse students, and hosting campus visitors from religiously diverse background
- Explore the possibility of a **house or multi-faith cluster of housing** for religious diversity and other multi-faith communities to offer incentive to students to engage more deeply in learning from one another. (*Budget items are likely but unknown until strategies are developed*)
- Work with the Directors of **Fraternity and Sorority Life, Athletics, and student organizations** to create programs, resources and education to ensure religious and worldview diversity is infused in current and future diversity and inclusion efforts.
- Continue to expand the presence of religious and worldview diversity and multi-faith work at Elon on **social media and the internet**.
- **Participate in IDEALS** (Interfaith Diversity Experiences and Attitudes Longitudinal Survey), an instrument developed by Interfaith Youth Core, in order to better understand the nature and extent of our students' engagement with multi-faith issues and to assess our achievement of our long-term goals. (*Repeating item*)
- Develop an **inter-religious studies minor** that would combine theory and praxis, placing students in contact with local communities through their coursework by means of site visits, research projects, internships and exposure to interreligious conversation.
- Establish through the CSRCS and the Office of Undergraduate Research a program of grants and other non-material support for **advanced student interdisciplinary research** on questions related to religion and its role in society, branded distinctly but awarded through the SURE and SURF programs. (*\$15 - \$30K*)
- **Reading circles** to engage with an author's work before he/she speaks on campus.
- Examine and creatively resolve the need for **additional support staffing** to support this robust plan and, primarily, the expanded Truitt Center and new Center for the Study of Religion, Culture, and Society. (*\$25 - \$50K*)
- In consultation with the present Religious and Spiritual Life Committee, **explore the creation of an Advisory Committee for the Truitt Center** that would oversee the objectives of the Truitt Center written into this five year plan and consider other suggestions for multi faith work at Elon.

## 2017-18

- Work with admissions to **expand and focus recruiting territories** to better target schools with high religious diversity and enhance the identification of first year students well suited for a Religious Diversity Living Learning Community, leadership positions in the residential campus plan to encourage student engagement in the global neighborhood, and a multi-faith scholars program. (*Repeating item*)
- Examine ways Elon can recruit and hire **faculty and staff** from these traditions who would accept a role in recruiting and nurturing students as an expectation of their position. For example, the University might recruit and hire someone to serve as both a Muslim chaplain and point person for other multi-faith initiatives represented in this document.
- Recruit – perhaps through a cluster hire effort – faculty who exhibit **teaching and scholarly expertise** associated with multi-faith studies. These positions should be dedicated to interdisciplinary and co-curricular engagement. (*Initiative will be folded into the annual faculty needs analysis based on growth and part-time percentages*)
- Create and expand **community partnerships** that enhance the diversity in Elon events and allow the Numen Lumen Pavilion to be a resource for community member observances.
- Create **opportunities for religious identity reflection** based on exposure to diversity.
- In partnership with **ELR directors and the Student Professional Development Center**, create appropriate modules for exploring the cultural context for service, leadership and internships, as well as **ELR** experiences and careers, thus ensuring that religious and worldview diversity is also addressed as part of the cultural lens.
- Pursue a revision of the weekly **Numen Lumen** gathering to foster broad intellectual discussion and spiritual community that engages large numbers of students, faculty, and staff through partnerships with units on campus (e.g. academic departments, student life divisions or campus neighborhoods).
- Explore connections between such major events as **convocation, the common reading, or other major speakers series**, to create a theme around the big questions in multi-faith work. (*\$10K*)
- Explore the addition of a **summer institute** for multi-faith leadership, service trips, study abroad opportunities, or national conferences for networking and training. (*\$15K*)
- Develop an **extra- or co-curricular multi-faith curriculum** that can be used in residential neighborhoods.
- **Participate in IDEALS** (Interfaith Diversity Experiences and Attitudes Longitudinal Survey), an instrument developed by Interfaith Youth Core, in order to better understand the nature and extent of our students' engagement with multi-faith issues and to assess our achievement of our long-term goals. (*Repeating item*)
- Develop and sustain a **bi-annual colloquium** through the CSRCS for faculty to develop their own scholarly projects and engage in intellectual exchange with colleagues around academic matters related to religion and the interdisciplinary study of religion. (*\$20K*)
- Establish a program of mini-grants through the CSRCS to support faculty from disparate disciplines in the **development of new courses or course modules** around topics related to religion and spirituality. (*\$8K*)
- **Classroom modules** and materials prepared for instructors by appropriate faculty experts.
- Explore the development of a **multi-faith scholars** program. (*Budget items are likely but unknown until strategies are developed*)

## 2018-19

- Actively recruit and encourage current faculty or staff to share **in leading religious observances** in their own traditions.
- Develop opportunities to **connect social justice action and religious commitment**.
- **Participate in IDEALS** (Interfaith Diversity Experiences and Attitudes Longitudinal Survey), an instrument developed by Interfaith Youth Core, in order to better understand the nature and extent of our students' engagement with multi-faith issues and to assess our achievement of our long-term goals. (*Repeating item*)
- Explore the feasibility and potential benefits of a **scholar-in-residence** program to bring new expertise to campus and enhance representation of underrepresented religious groups. (*\$15K*)
- **Facilitating collaborations** between the School of Communications and other faculty and students to produce video or video shorts to introduce speakers/themes in a given year. (*\$10K*)

## 2019-2020

- Pursue **endowment funding** for a signature event that highlights multi-faith concerns.
- **Participate in IDEALS** (Interfaith Diversity Experiences and Attitudes Longitudinal Survey), an instrument developed by Interfaith Youth Core, in order to better understand the nature and extent of our students' engagement with multi-faith issues and to assess our achievement of our long-term goals. (*Repeating item*)
- Through the CSRCS, establish practices and patterns of collaborations between faculty and students in the School of Communications and those in other areas of campus to produce high-quality multi-media pieces that feature and examine the role of religion and religious communities in society and make available through **public and/or cable television programming** that supports multi-faith engagement across communities. (*Will seek external funding for this goal*)
- Create a **national advisory board** to assist in putting together a national model. (*\$5K*)

**NOTE:** *Several items are multi-year actions and, therefore, are listed under more than one year.*

## **Appendix C: Recommendations Organized by the Five Reaffirmed Multi-faith Themes**

### **I. Spiritual formation and expression**

- Examine ways Elon can recruit and hire **faculty and staff** from these traditions who would accept a role in recruiting and nurturing students as an expectation of their position. For example, the University might recruit and hire someone to serve as both a Muslim chaplain and point person for other multi-faith initiatives represented in this document.
- Create and expand **community partnerships** that enhance the diversity in Elon events and allow the Numen Lumen Pavilion to be a resource for community member observances.
- Actively recruit and encourage current faculty or staff to share **in leading religious observances** in their own traditions.
- Provide **ongoing staff training** opportunities about creating a welcoming work environment, serving religiously diverse students, and hosting campus visitors from religiously diverse backgrounds.
- Improve, scaffold and connect the offering and training for the **Multi-Faith SAGES, Truitt Center Interns, and related programs.**
- Explore the addition of a **summer institute** for multi-faith leadership, service trips, study abroad opportunities, or national conferences for networking and training.
- Pursue a revision of the weekly **Numen Lumen** gathering to foster broad intellectual discussion and spiritual community that engages large numbers of students, faculty, and staff through partnerships with units on campus (e.g. academic departments, student life divisions or campus neighborhoods).
- Develop strategies to **further support Protestant, Catholic, and Jewish populations** on campus, and identify their roles in Elon's commitment to religious diversity and Multi-faith engagement.
- Develop opportunities to **connect social justice action and religious commitment.**
- Create **opportunities for religious identity reflection** based on exposure to diversity.

### **II. Religious literacy and respect for diverse faith traditions and world-views**

- Work with admissions to **expand and focus recruiting territories** to better target schools with high religious diversity and enhance the identification of first year students well suited for a Religious Diversity Living Learning Community, leadership positions in the residential campus plan to encourage student engagement in the global neighborhood, and a multi-faith scholars program.
- Train our **international recruiters** to identify and encourage students from under-represented religious populations to come to Elon.
- Create **promotional materials and establish a web presence** for Hindu, Buddhist, and Muslim student, faculty, and staff communities.
- Explore the potential to create bridges between **Alamance County** students from under-represented religious traditions and Elon University, identifying and recruiting those students to the university.
- Create a **multi-faith calendar committee** to examine how to support and highlight non-majority religious holy days within the campus calendar to ensure that we are paying due

attention to existing and emerging groups, and to publicize academic engagement with religion, values, and spirituality at Elon.

- Ensure that **major campus gatherings** signal awareness of the audience's religious diversity and represent the university's commitment to multi-faith.
- Explore the development of a **multi-faith scholars** program.
- Ensure topic selections for **diversity roundtables** that include religious and worldview diversity.
- In partnership with **ELR directors and the Student Professional Development Center**, create appropriate modules for exploring the cultural context for service, leadership and internships, as well as **ELR** experiences and careers, thus ensuring that religious and worldview diversity is also addressed as part of the cultural lens.
- Work with the Directors of **Fraternity and Sorority Life, Athletics, and student organizations** to create programs, resources and education to ensure religious and worldview diversity is infused in current and future diversity and inclusion efforts.
- Continue to expand the presence of religious and worldview diversity and multi-faith work at Elon on **social media and the internet**.
- Provide **ongoing staff training** opportunities about creating a welcoming work environment, serving religiously diverse students, and hosting campus visitors from religiously diverse backgrounds.
- Improve, scaffold and connect the offering and training for the **Multi-Faith Engagement Program, Truitt Center Interns, and related programs**.
- **Deepen the engagement of Multi-faith SAGES and Truitt Center Interns** across the campus and community.
- Explore the addition of a **summer institute** for multi-faith leadership, service trips, study abroad opportunities, or national conferences for networking and training.
- Explore the possibility of a **house or multi-faith cluster of housing** for religious diversity and other multi-faith communities to offer incentive to students to engage more deeply in learning from one another.
- **Participate in IDEALS** (Interfaith Diversity Experiences and Attitudes Longitudinal Survey), an instrument developed by Interfaith Youth Core, in order to better understand the nature and extent of our students' engagement with multi-faith issues and to assess our achievement of our long-term goals.
- Provide opportunities for various segments of the campus and external community to engage with the speakers and/or themes throughout the year. Such opportunities might include:
  - **Reading circles** to engage with an author's work before he/she speaks on campus.
  - **Classroom modules** and materials prepared for instructors by appropriate faculty experts
  - **Facilitating collaborations** between the School of Communications and other faculty and students to produce video or video shorts to introduce speakers/themes in a given year.
- Develop and sustain the ongoing, informal series "Religion Trending" that will provide opportunities for faculty and staff to hold **informal conversations with local and regional experts** on topics of current interest.

### III. Examination of the role of religion in society

- Work to include religious topics in **Core Forum** discussions.
- Develop when appropriate annual guides to religious and worldview themes in the **Common Reading**.

- Develop and offer **pre-departure modules** for Study USA and Study Abroad that focuses on religious and worldview diversity.
- Explore connections between such major events as **convocation, the common reading, or other major speakers series**, to create a theme around the big questions in multi-faith work.
- Develop an **extra- or co-curricular multi-faith curriculum** that can be used in residential neighborhoods.
- Develop an **inter-religious studies minor** that would combine theory and praxis, placing students in contact with local communities through their coursework by means of site visits, research projects, internships and exposure to interreligious conversation.
- Establish a program of mini-grants through the CSRCS to support faculty from disparate disciplines in the **development of new courses or course modules** around topics related to religion and spirituality.
- Develop and sustain a **bi-annual colloquium** through the CSRCS for faculty to develop their own scholarly projects and engage in intellectual exchange with colleagues around academic matters related to religion and the interdisciplinary study of religion.
- Pursue **endowment funding** for a signature event that highlights multi-faith concerns.

#### IV. Research and scholarship on religion

- Recruit – perhaps through a cluster hire effort – faculty who exhibit **teaching and scholarly expertise** associated with multi-faith studies. These positions should be dedicated to interdisciplinary and co-curricular engagement.
- Provide opportunities for various segments of the campus and external community to engage with the speakers and/or themes throughout the year. Such opportunities might include:
  - **Reading circles** to engage with an author’s work before he/she speaks on campus.
  - **Classroom modules** and materials prepared for instructors by appropriate faculty experts
  - **Facilitating collaborations** between the School of Communications and other faculty and students to produce video or video shorts to introduce speakers/themes in a given year.
- Establish through the CSRCS and the Office of Undergraduate Research a program of grants and other non-material support for **advanced student interdisciplinary research** on questions related to religion and its role in society, branded distinctly but awarded through the SURE and SURF programs.
- Explore the feasibility and potential benefits of a **scholar-in-residence** program to bring new expertise to campus and enhance representation of underrepresented religious groups.
- Through the CSRCS, establish practices and patterns of collaborations between faculty and students in the School of Communications and those in other areas of campus to produce high-quality multi-media pieces that feature and examine the role of religion and religious communities in society and make available through **public and/or cable television programming** that supports multi-faith engagement across communities.

**NOTE:** *A list of goals and action items has not been constructed for the overarching and reaffirmed goal of “global citizenship” because every goal and action item either aims to help with the development of global citizenship or is a reflection of the University’s commitment to the development of global citizenship. We see this cross-goal similarity as being appropriate to the core mission of the University and, thus, not a failure of the plan but a strength of this plan.*