IFYC

Building Interfaith Cooperation on Campus

Mapping Your Campus' Assets

As religious diversity plays a growing role in events and discourse at the local, global, and national levels, American colleges and universities are poised to engage it in a way that fosters student development and shapes truly global citizens. Interfaith Youth Core (IFYC) partners with colleges and universities to take a holistic, "ecological" approach to religious diversity, working with stakeholders across campus to foster sustainable commitment and measurable outcomes. Our partnerships also empower student leaders to be interfaith organizers and to ask how religious diversity should be understood and engaged by the entire student body. The result is a **campus climate of interfaith cooperation**, characterized by respect for individual religious and non-religious identities, mutually inspiring relationships across lines of difference, and a commitment to working together for the common good.

How to Use This Tool

When IFYC partners with campuses, one of the first things we do is **take stock of the existing assets and resources that can contribute to campus-wide impact**. This asset mapping tool is meant to help you do exactly that. It should also help you to think beyond the "usual suspects" on campus to gain support and momentum for your work. Interfaith work can often be relegated to a single staff person (maybe you!) or a single line item in a budget, but research from the broader diversity and multiculturalism movements suggests that such an approach rarely drives sustainable impact.[1]

As you read through the tool below, use it first to prompt your own planning and visioning and then to think about others you can bring into the conversation, both to increase the scope of your assets and to build wider support. These activities included can be used to create an agenda for an asset mapping meeting with various campus stakeholders to kick off a campus-wide commitment to interfaith cooperation or to amplify your existing work.

Overview

Needs-based vs. Asset-based Organizing

Our asset-based approach to building interfaith cooperation on campus builds off of the work of Jody Kretzmann and John McKnight, policy and sociology professors at Northwestern University. When researching approaches to community development, Kretzmann and McKnight noticed that organizers tended to describe communities in terms of what was missing: jobs, strong educational institutions, grocery stores, etc. Strategies to rebuild the community were primarily driven by filling those needs and patching up problems. Community members often saw their local areas through the lens of deficit, thus feeling disempowered and unlikely to take action on their own.

Kretzmann and McKnight sought to develop a strategy that would empower local residents to take leadership in strengthening their own communities. Thus, their approach starts from a place of capacity, with community members asking: what resources do exist in our community? What skills do we have? Understanding that each local area has a unique set of assets (no matter how large or small), Kretzmann and McKnight re-imagined community development as a participatory process grounded in and building off of the unique talents, features and culture of each area.[2]

IFYC has found an **asset-based approach** to be fundamental to effective program planning. When taking on a new initiative, it is easy to feel overwhelmed and only see the challenges you may face - i.e, "we don't have an interfaith staff person on campus" or "our campus doesn't prioritize this with funding resources." However, every community has a unique set of assets at its disposal that provide the foundation for relevant, locally-rooted growth. Identifying these assets and creative ways to utilize them is the key to successful and innovative programming on campus. An asset-based approach also helps to frame programming in terms of collaboration and collective vision, helping to ensure interest, commitment, and sustainability from a wide spread of campus stakeholders.

❯ Step One
Preliminary Brainstorming

To kick off your asset-mapping, **begin by thinking as broadly as possible:** which programs have the biggest splash on campus? How might programs focused on diversity or civic engagement intersect with your goals? Whose stamp of approval will make sure any initiative goes through? Use the following questions as a starting point, and do not limit yourself when answering them. Once you have done some initial asset mapping on your own, think about who you might bring into the conversation to brainstorm assets collectively. Consider the students, faculty, staff, and administrators on your campus who are already your allies and those whose expertise or support will be essential to your programming's success.

Questions for Brainstorming

1 *Impactful Programs and Courses:*

   (a) What are the programs, courses, or initiatives that all students are required to attend or participate in?
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   (b) What are the most popular programs on campus run by a campus office? Run by students?
   ≫

   (c) What are the most popular or highly registered courses?
   ≫

   (d) What is the highest-impact program or course that your office offers?
   ≫

2 *Existing Relevant Programs and Courses:*

   (a) What diversity programs, student groups, or trainings already exist on campus?
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   (b) What existing programs, student groups, or courses address social justice, service-learning, or civic engagement?
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   (c) What programs, student groups, or courses already address religious/spiritual life?
   ≫

   (d) What offices or academic departments address diversity, service learning, religious/spiritual life, or social action on campus?
   ≫

3 *Institutional Commitment:*

   (a) What are your institution's four most important values?
      »

   (b) How does the institution support and promote these values?
      »

       What are some of the President's top priorities for the campus?
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4 *Resources:*

   (a) What are the best funded programs on campus?
      »

   (b) What cross-departmental and resource-sharing partnerships already exist?
      »

   (c) What resources do you already have access to that could be leveraged for interfaith cooperation?
      »

5 *People:*

   (a) Who are the faculty, staff, students, and administrators who might be interested in interfaith cooperation or religious diversity issues?
      »

   (b) Who are faculty, staff, student, and administrators on campus that you know bring political capital to make a successful initiative?
      »

› Step Two
Making the Connection

Having generated a list of programs, people, courses, and offices that are your "assets" for developing interfaith programming on campus, you can now begin to identify specifically how these programs or courses will help you broaden the scope of interfaith work on campus. The next step is to map out the relationships between these programs and your goals for interfaith cooperation. For each of the assets, you should ask: In what ways do these programs overlap with interfaith cooperation? How can you concretely build on this relationship to foster further interfaith cooperation into this program area or course? You are both mapping out the connections between programs or courses and interfaith cooperation and also starting to flesh out program possibilities in these contexts.

Work with your group to start making these connections. Don't get caught up on what you need to do to make this connection a reality – save that for later. For now, just keep brainstorming:

ASSEST	OVERLAP WITH INTERFAITH COOPERATION	PROGRAM POSSIBILTY
Ex. Freshmen orientation is a high-impact, required program	Students get diversity programming at orientation	Students should receive religious diversity programming at orientation as well
Ex. President has Civic Engagementinitiative	Conversations about religion are a component of civic engagement; religion inspires civic engagement	Students should receive religious diversity programming at orientation as well
Ex. Dance Marathon is the largest student program on campus	Students involved care about taking action for the good of the community	Dance Marathon should incorporate interfaith reflection into programming

› Step Three
Impact and Implementation

After this brainstorming session, you and your team should have a comprehensive set of programmatic and partnership possibilities. How do you decide which direction to go? You may already have a good sense of what your strongest leads are, but it can be helpful to take some time together to think through a balance of impact and implementation. Some programs take more work to implement than others and some programs will have greater impact. Working through these questions collectively can help ensure that you have

support and resources from your team as you hone in on your particular programmatic initiatives and begin to plan the next steps.

First, examine the impact of your potential programmatic initiatives. Impact can include reach and scale, but also include effect on broader learning outcomes, institutional goals and campus climate. You should consider both how you reach students across the institution as well as how you are cultivating strong interfaith leadership in a select group of students. Individually, begin to rate the initiatives – which three programs will have the **largest and most sustainable** impact on campus? Which three may be really compelling, but will make it more difficult to measure impact?

Example	Programmatic Impact	Rationale
Dance Marathon should incorporate interfaith reflection into programming.	High	Lots of students participate and would actively engage the religious diversity on campus.
Alternative spring break program should have an interfaith alternative spring break.	Medium	Very few students would get to attend the program, though they would have the possibility of serving many others outside the campus community, and it would be a leadership development opportunity for those students

Secondly, start to think about the work it will take to implement each of these programs. Some programs are simple to put in action – particularly if they are housed within your own department. Others, however, may be decided by a committee or may take much more time to implement. Rank your programs in terms of **ease of implementation,** keeping in mind the timeline for your programming and resources already on the table

Example	Programmatic Impact	Rationale
Campus should have a freshman book read on a book about interfaith cooperation.	Difficult	Book is decided over a year in advance by a faculty committee. Many books are up for consideration and it takes a long time to select..
Religious diversity sessions should be incorporated into freshman orientation.	Easy	Diversity is already a part of the orientation program and we just need to get space on the orientation agenda & design a short program.

After you have had a chance to think through this individually, bring the group together to name their top three programs in each category. Is there general agreement and overlap? Have people seen benefits to programs that you did not consider? Use this conversation both as a place to gain consensus around the best program opportunities and to begin to collectively identify the work necessary to make these programs a reality.

❯ *Next Steps /*

As your mapping work wraps up, don't forget to take time to name next steps and make sure it is clear who is moving the project forward. You should also look back on your asset map and chart out which of the many resources you highlighted can help you build your programs out. Think back to the conversations about "Making the Connection." What other programs or students, faculty, staff, and administrators can you bring in to work on this? How can you leverage the connections between programs to strengthen your new initiative? Continue to build on the idea that this project is truly meant to draw from the strengths of the institution in order to make interfaith cooperation a reality.

As you think about the next steps of your work, check out the IFYC website for more resources for building interfaith cooperation on campus (*ifyc.org/resources*) and remember that IFYC is available to partner with you in asset mapping, program planning, surveying, training, and other initiatives. To bring IFYC out to campus visit *ifyc.org/content/faculty-staff.*

1. See Alma R. Clayton-Pedersen, et al., *Making a Real Difference with Diversity: A Guide to Institutional Change* (Washington, DC: Association of American Colleges and Universities, 2007).

2. See John P. Kretzmann and John L. McKnight, *Building Communities from the Inside Out: A Path Toward Finding and Mobilizing a Community's Assets* (Evanston, IL: Institute for Policy Research, 1993), pp. 1-11.