Fall 2016

Proposal to Better Support Religious Groups at Binghamton University

Mengdai Sun
Binghamton University--SUNY, msun15@binghamton.edu

Follow this and additional works at: https://orb.binghamton.edu/mpa_capstone

Part of the Public Affairs, Public Policy and Public Administration Commons

Recommended Citation

This Book is brought to you for free and open access by the Public Administration at The Open Repository @ Binghamton (The ORB). It has been accepted for inclusion in Capstone Projects 2015-Present by an authorized administrator of The Open Repository @ Binghamton (The ORB). For more information, please contact ORB@binghamton.edu.
Proposal to Better Support Religious Groups at Binghamton University

Presented by: Mengdai Sun (2016’ MPA)
Faculty Advisor: Dr. Pamela Mischen
Site Supervisor: Tanyah Barnes

Introduction & Background

In Spring 2016, I finished my internship in Multicultural Resources Center (MRC) at Binghamton University. With the purpose of promoting diversity on campus, MRC offers various training programs and educational opportunities for university students and staff. Currently, MRC has served cultural groups, LGBTQ, religious groups. However, it is lack of meaningful activities to support the religious groups. Therefore, my project aims to help MRC to identify effective ways to better serve the religious community on campus.

In 2011, President Obama launched the Interfaith and Community Service Campus Challenge. It encourages people from different religious and non-religious backgrounds addressing community challenges together. Although Binghamton University is on the list of the Community Service Honor Roll, the university has not been recognized for Interfaith partnership.

My project will assist Binghamton University in actively responding to President Obama’s Interfaith and Community Service Campus Challenge. Also, it will contribute to meet one of Binghamton University’s Strategic Priorities — to unite to foster a diverse and inclusive campus culture.

Research Method

15 telephone interviews with the main staff in different universities across the country who are responsible for interfaith service offerings.
2 telephone interviews with a student leader of Hillel-Jewish Student Union and an E-board member of Newman Catholic Association at Binghamton University.
Positions including: chaplain, director of Religious Diversity, associate dean, campus minister, program manager and coordinator.

Interview Questions:
• Do you have interfaith council or similar organisation? How does it function?
• Are you satisfied with the interfaith council? Why or why not?
• Anything needs to be improved?
• What are the essential elements/requirements to create a successful interfaith council?
• How’s your relationship with other religious groups?
• Have you ever cooperated with other religious groups?
• Have you ever met any conflict with other religious groups?

In the stage of preparation to create interfaith council, MRC should pay attention to:
• potential imbalances between the resources/power of different religious groups, particularly the equal portion of representatives from different religious groups ("How to have some real diversity of folks on the council, if interfaith council is 10% of Jewish and Muslim, it isn't real diversity.")
• Identify the incentives that religious groups have to collaborate, e.g. resolving conflict, sharing limited funds.
• To ask for the institutional support to be part of university in a professional way, e.g. obtaining the approval from superior (level of school).

This form of governance helps MRC to choose an appropriate organizational structure when creating the interfaith council. MRC can play the role of the lead organization to coordinate all major network-level activities, key decisions, and administration work to achieve the council’s goals.

Recommendations

Since recognizing the importance of building Interfaith Councils on campus after interviews, I suggest MRC apply the network governance model as the guide to create the appropriate organizational structure of the interfaith council.

Conclusions

Level of Satisfaction of interfaith councils in 15 Universities

- very satisfied
- satisfied but needs Improvement
- Not Sure

- 7%
- 47%
- 46%

The Model of Collaborative Governance

Acknowledgments

Thank you to my Capstone advisor Dr. Pamela Mischen, site supervisor Tanyah Barnes, all my interviewees, the whole faculty of MPA program, my beloved family and friends!

Reference:

Conclusion

Goal Consensus
- Low density, highly centralized
- Trust
- Low density, highly centralized
- Need for Network-Level Competencies
- Moderate

Lead Organization (MRC)
- Goal Consensus
- Moderately Low
- Need for Network-Level Competencies
- Moderate

Network Governance Form

- Level of Interfaith councils in 15 Universities
- Satisfaction of interfaith councils
- Level of school

Proposal

Need for Network-Level Competencies: Interdependent task requirements are high, MRC will be more effective with specialty skills like grant wiring/conflict resolution than other groups.

Goal Consensus: different religious organizations have their different organizational goals +network-level goals (more similarities)

Interview Questions:
- Do you have interfaith council or similar organization? How does it function?
- Are you satisfied with the interfaith council? Why or why not?
- Anything needs to be improved?
- What are the essential elements/requirements to create a successful interfaith council?
- How’s your relationship with other religious groups?
- Have you ever cooperated with other religious groups?
- Have you ever met any conflict with other religious groups?

Conclusion

Level of Satisfaction of interfaith councils in 15 Universities

- very satisfied
- satisfied but needs Improvement
- Not Sure

- 7%
- 47%
- 46%

The Model of Collaborative Governance

Acknowledgments

Thank you to my Capstone advisor Dr. Pamela Mischen, site supervisor Tanyah Barnes, all my interviewees, the whole faculty of MPA program, my beloved family and friends!

Reference:

Conclusion

Goal Consensus
- Low density, highly centralized
- Trust
- Low density, highly centralized
- Need for Network-Level Competencies
- Moderate

Lead Organization (MRC)
- Goal Consensus
- Moderately Low
- Need for Network-Level Competencies
- Moderate

Network Governance Form

- Level of Interfaith councils in 15 Universities
- Satisfaction of interfaith councils
- Level of school

Proposal

Need for Network-Level Competencies: Interdependent task requirements are high, MRC will be more effective with specialty skills like grant wiring/conflict resolution than other groups.

Goal Consensus: different religious organizations have their different organizational goals +network-level goals (more similarities)