

THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO / SPIRITUAL LIFE OFFICE at Rockefeller Chapel

ETHICAL FRAMEWORK FOR RELIGIOUS AND SPIRITUAL LIFE
and information for prospective religious advisors

Adopted September 2, 2009

Revised March 13, 2015

Introduction

The Ethical Framework provides the basis for the conduct of religious business in relation to students at the University of Chicago, with the goal that such business be conducted ethically and with transparency of purpose.

Religious advisors and recognized student organizations with a religious or spiritual purpose (including RSOs which have an ethnic or cultural focus linked to a religious tradition) are expected to abide by the Ethical Framework, and to consult with the Spiritual Life Office at Rockefeller Chapel in the event of questions or concerns.

For more on the recognition and role of religious advisors, see the last section of this document.

Ethical Framework for Religious Advisors and religious and spiritual RSOs

1. We engage in our activities in a manner in keeping with the essential mission of the University of Chicago – enriching the world through the power of ideas. It is characteristic of the University that all that is done here is grounded in rigorous inquiry and fearless scholarship. We invite scrutiny of all ideas and beliefs, and welcome questions of every kind from those who choose to engage with us – including questions which may challenge particular religious tenets or behaviors. There are no questions which are considered ‘out of bounds.’
2. We affirm that all students are welcome at all events, while recognizing that certain religious requirements may apply with regard to qualifications for religious leadership and for participation in certain rituals.
3. We recognize that students freely choose to join or leave a group, without pressure or coercion of any kind. When they (or other members of the University community) request ‘no further contact,’ we respect their choice and remove them from mailing lists, electronic and otherwise. We do not expect students to engage in any activity or behavior which compromises their academic standing, removes them from campus without their full consent, places undue financial pressure upon them, or exploits any possible vulnerability (for example, providing services to international students with no previous experience of living in the US who are not already affiliated with the tradition providing the services).

4. We respect the University's regulations with regard to publicity and posting. We identify our religious affiliation or purpose clearly and with integrity on all written and electronic publicity. We honor the fact that residence halls and dining areas are students' private space. We do not canvass or randomly approach students, in person or with literature, in residence halls and dining areas. We understand that any religious activities or rituals which may take place in such areas are done only in space booked for private use for that purpose.
5. We acknowledge that certain student concerns are more appropriately addressed by professionals at the Student Health and Counseling Services (SHCS) than by religious leaders without formal qualifications or training in psychological counseling. We commit ourselves to referring students to SHCS for consultation in matters where religious strictures or norms may conflict with psychological standards of care as defined by the American Psychological Association (for example, with regard to sexual or gender identity).
6. We ensure that the Spiritual Life Office at Rockefeller Chapel has a current list of all representatives of our traditions who come into regular contact with students at our invitation or under our supervision. We understand that this applies to all representatives who are not currently employed at or enrolled in a degree program at the University of Chicago, but that it does not involve those who visit the campus on a one-off basis for an event or conference.

Religious Advisors

Religious leaders who work on campus with students of particular religious or spiritual traditions at the University of Chicago are required to be recognized as religious advisors by the Spiritual Life Office at Rockefeller Chapel. Religious advisors commit to abiding by the ethical framework (above) and also to following University policy on all matters related to their work with students.

Religious advisors generally fall into three categories:

- Professional clergy or lay representatives of faith traditions or non-profit religious organizations, who work at least part-time with University of Chicago students on behalf of their tradition.
- Faculty advisors who work with religious or spiritual groups where no professional advisor exists.
- Community advisors or senior graduate students who may work with professional or faculty advisors, or in the absence of the same.

The University expects that religious advisors will have appropriate training for

professional religious or spiritual work in their tradition (a Master's degree or equivalent), and prior experience of professional religious or spiritual work.

The University requires a background check for all who are recognized as religious advisors (other than those who are already University employees). This costs \$75, which is borne by the sponsoring agency, and it is undertaken through the University's Human Resources Office.

The University is a spiritually diverse environment, and those working directly with students are asked to affirm their willingness to work collaboratively with religious advisors of other traditions and faiths.

Religious advisors meet monthly for a program that often includes presentations by University administrators and/or faculty. Regular attendance at this monthly meeting is expected by the University.

The University's liability for the actions of religious advisors whom it does not employ is strictly limited.

Recognition of Religious Advisors

Those who are not already employees of the University of Chicago are asked to submit the following information to Jigna Shah, Assistant Dean of Rockefeller Chapel and Director of Spiritual Life, in order to be considered for recognition as religious advisors. A current CV or resume should also be included.

The Dean and/or Assistant Dean meet with prospective religious advisors after receiving this information. The background check is undertaken at this point. This process typically takes seven to ten days prior to recognition being offered.

1. Full legal name.
2. Any other names by which you have been known.
3. Title (e.g. Dr., Rabbi, Reverend).
4. Date of birth (required for University ID/email).
5. Social Security number (required for University ID/email, and not kept for any other purpose in any file). *Note: we strongly encourage the use of a University email rather than an organizational email for purposes of institutional recognition when dealing with University students, faculty, staff, and alumni.*
6. Address, phone number, and email (for Spiritual Life office use only).
7. Phone number and email which may be publicized to students.

8. Religious or spiritual tradition (including denomination in traditions where denominations or other sub-categories exist).
9. Employing agency, with address.
10. Any other agency to which employing agency is attached (e.g. a denomination to which a non-profit agency belongs).
11. Name of supervisor(s), with phone number and email.
12. Source of salary and program funding (for professional advisors).
13. Relevant qualifications for religious advisor status at the University of Chicago (may include ordination or other recognized status within religious tradition, relevant degrees or experience, and experience of working in multi-religious environments).
14. Brief description of work which you are expected to do on behalf of your tradition at the University of Chicago (a formal job description, if it exists, should be attached).
15. Training (if any) with regard to prevention of clergy misconduct, harassment, etc. Please give brief details and dates. If such training is required on a regular basis by your employing agency, please indicate.

Please also print the following (or save it as a .pdf), and return it signed and dated.

- I understand that religious advisor status confers upon me the privilege of working with students at the University of Chicago, of having my name listed on the website of the University of Chicago as a representative of my tradition, and of obtaining a University of Chicago email address for use related to the aims and purposes of the University. I understand that such status may be revoked at will and at any time by the University.
- I have received a copy of the Ethical Framework for Religious and Spiritual Life at the University of Chicago, and am willing to abide by it in my work with students.
- I recognize that a call to work as a religious advisor in higher education is a call to work in a multi-religious environment, and I expect to work collaboratively with members of religious traditions other than my own.
- I am aware that the University expects that I attend the monthly meetings of the Religious Advisors group.