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THE ILLINOIS INTERFAITH AND COMMUNITY SERVICE CHALLENGE AT THE UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS

INTERFAITH GLOSSARY:

A guide for clarification and introduction to the vocabulary of interfaith dialogue

Active Nonviolence: A way of personal life and as a means to achieving religious, racial, economic, and gender justice and reconciliation. The interfaith movement is an example of active nonviolence.

Bridge-builder: A leader in the interfaith movement who builds bridges among people of different faith backgrounds through their action and leadership.

Civic Engagement: Civic Engagement includes a set of actions and efforts, and also feelings of belonging, of investment and ownership in the local, regional or national communities to which citizens belong. Civic Engagement means working to make a difference in the civic life of communities and developing the combination of knowledge, skills, values and motivation to make that difference.

Common Action for the Common Good: Common Action for the Common Good is any project or endeavor taken on by a group of diverse individuals that seeks to benefit all people in a community. A project's success must be equally desired and beneficial to all members of a community, regardless of religion, philosophical perspective, race, gender, economic status, or other distinctions. Examples include interfaith service-learning projects and public advocacy around issues of common concern.

Community Organizing: Broad-based community organizing is multi-dimensional. It is designed to carry a community closer to the development of a genuine public life through the identification and training of leaders.

Communication Style: Communication occurs in a range of styles in all cultures but can be broadly defined as low context (individualistic) or high context (relationship-oriented). In low-context communication, meaning is explicitly expressed and indirectness is considered evasive and potentially dishonest. In high-context communication a listener will observe the nonverbal subtleties that enhance speech, and directness and confrontation are considered offensive and rude. It can be challenging for low-context individuals from countries like the United States to communicate effectively with individuals from countries like Japan, Egypt, or India who have more high-context styles of interaction.

Culture: The shared beliefs, traits, attitudes, behavior, products, and artifacts common to a particular social or ethnic group. The term cross-cultural refers to interactions across cultures and reflects the fact that different cultures may have different communication styles and negotiating behavior. The term multicultural refers to the acceptance of different ethnic cultures within a

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society. Cultural sensitivity means being aware of cultural differences, how they affect behavior, and moving beyond cultural biases and preconceptions to interact effectively.

Denomination: A subgroup of a religion. A religious denomination operates under with same common name and with the same traditions and identity as the larger religion. Examples include Hinduism's major denominations are Shaktism, Shaivism, Vaishnavism and Smartism, and Judaism's main denominations are Orthodox, Conservative, Reform and Reconstructionist.

Dialogue Facilitation: The goal of Dialogue Facilitation is to help dialogue participants discover shared values among different religious and moral perspectives, through text, storytelling and action. It should encourage participants to grow their own identities, as well as create a sense of community, cohesion and cooperation with other participants.

Diversity: Diversity is people from different religious, racial, ethnic, gender, geographic, etc., backgrounds living in close proximity to one another in their communities. It is a term that is used to honor all life and all those who seek peace through nonviolence. It should not be used interchangeably with pluralism.

Ecumenism: The promotion of unity between distinct religious groups. Ecumenical is an adjective meaning "universal," derived from the Greek word oikoumene, "the inhabited world" or "the whole world." This movement is often associated with Christianity and its movement towards the unity between Christian denominations. It should not be confused with interfaith pluralism.

Elativism: The concept that all religions are equal in their value but none give access to absolute truth. Rather there is no absolute truth as truth is always relative to culture, frame of reference, etc. This is an extreme form of inclusivism.

Faith Heroes: Faith Heroes are those people whose lives, work, and commitments embody the cause of religious pluralism in their time and space. Jane Addams, the Dalai Lama, Dorothy Day, Mahatma Mohandas Gandhi, Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel, Badshah Khan, and Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. are well-known faith heroes, but many people's faith hero is a teacher who first opened their eyes to new cultures, a youth advisor who empowered them into their first leadership position, or their mother who taught them through her example what it meant to treat others with compassion and dignity.

Faith Line: The Faith Line is not between Muslims and Christians, or secularists and religious people. It is between religious totalitarians who believe they have the truth and wish to impose it on others, and religious pluralists who believe that people from different faith and cultural backgrounds can live together in peace and have positive and proactive relationships.

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Inclusivism: This refers to the idea that one set of religious beliefs is true while others are partially true. Those who believe in religious inclusivism believe that those outside of their religion can still achieve truth and salvation. This is a form of religious pluralism.

Interfaith: Interfaith refers to the cooperative and positive interaction among people of different faith traditions and moral perspectives (religious and secular) at both the individual and institutional level. The goal is to derive a common belief about similarities between faiths, shared values, leading to tolerance and commitment among the world religions and to the world. It promotes understanding between different religions to increase understanding of others rather than creating or synthesizing new beliefs.

Interfaith Dialogue: Interfaith Dialogue is a conversation between people of distinct religious or philosophical perspectives with the intention of a common basis of spiritual experiences and faith among all people through the exchange of stories. Interfaith Dialogue can be a one-time event or a series of conversations; it might span hours, months, years, or a lifetime; it might be structured or unstructured; facilitated by a third party or unfacilitated; preplanned or organic. What characterizes Interfaith Dialogue is the intention on the part of its participants to better understand conversation partners who hold different religious or philosophical perspectives rather than convincing one another of a particular viewpoint.

Interfaith Education: Facilitating interfaith dialogue to enhance mutual understanding and respect for religious differences.

Intermonastic Dialogue: Discussion among monastic representatives of various traditions (e.g. Christian and Buddhist monks) that is specifically concerned with the dialogue of spiritual experience and spiritual practice. It emphasizes that the journey of dialogue is a spiritual path.

Inter-religious Pluralism: The views held within one religion or faith tradition about the validity or truth in other religions or faith traditions.

Interspirituality: A term created by Wayne Teasdale to express the assimilation of insights, values, and spiritual practices from the various religions and their application to one's own inner life and development. It also addresses the degree of commonality in the world's religions that can be approached through mystical experience.

Intrareligious Dialogue: Developed by Raimon Panikkar to express that dialogue among traditions and the challenges of understanding a different religious worldview take place not only between traditions, but first and foremost within oneself.

Intra-religious Pluralism: Views held by specific schools or denominations within a major religion or faith tradition about the validity or truth of other denominations within it.

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Proselytizing: The act of attempting to convert individuals to another opinion or point of view; often referred to conversion to another religion. This often has a negative connotation.

Public Square: The public square is an area in social life where people can get together and freely discuss and identify societal problems, and through that discussion influence action.

Religious Literacy: Religious Literacy does not mean being completely fluent in religion. Instead, a religiously literate person is someone who is aware that there are differences among religions on issues such as gender interaction, dietary restrictions, religious holidays, etc.

Religious Pluralism: Religious Pluralism describes a community where different individuals or groups respect each other's distinct religious and philosophical identities and perspectives, seek mutually enriching relationships across lines of difference based on their shared values, and establish active partnerships oriented toward common action for the common good of all. Religious Pluralism is the view where all major religions are equally valid and that no one religion is better than another. Religious Pluralists don't have to be particularly religious; secular, agnostic and atheist people can all be religious pluralists.

Religious Syncretism: The attempted blending or combination of different religions or religious traditions of beliefs into a new system. This is not to be confused with interfaith.

Religious Totalitarians: Religious Totalitarians believe they have "the truth" and wish to impose it on others. They do not believe in the notion that people possessing different belief systems can live together in harmony and come together for the common good.

Research Actions Leaders: Organize research actions to explore the possible policy options that address their concerns. Volunteer leaders meet with public officials, the leaders of local institutions, bureaucrats, university professors and anyone else knowledgeable about the particular issue. Research actions teach people about the complexities of public issues, and also about the power structure which will have to be addressed as they shape and implement solutions. Leaders are forced to identify not only what they want but also why, and what will be necessary for their proposal to become a reality.

Shared Values: Shared Values are deeply held, widely shared principles that exist within and across all of the world's religious and philosophical perspectives. Compassion, justice, and service, as well as more tangible values such as hospitality, protection of the environment, and care for the poor and elderly are among some of the shared values that interfaith youth movement that participants share.

Skills Set: This refers to the skills needed to accomplish a specified task or perform a given function. In interfaith service-learning, some of these skills are: dialogue facilitation, deep listening

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or an awareness of the political and cultural context in which the participant is working, and building safe space.

Universalist: A community that identifies as Universalist accepts other religions in an inclusive manner, and may emphasize the universal principles of most religions. They believe in a universal reconciliation between the divine and humanity and in one common truth.