

SMU Religious Life Partners Program Policy Statement

CONTENTS

1. Overview.....1	4. Requesting New Sponsored Staff Members.....5
2. Partnership Details.....2	5. Yearly Renewal Process.....6
3. New Partner Process.....4	

1. OVERVIEW

1.1 Office of the chaplain & religious life mission statement

Southern Methodist University’s Office of the Chaplain and Religious Life seeks to create an inclusive community that celebrates intellectual curiosity about religion and spirituality, nourishes ethical decision-making, cultivates deep spiritual exploration and supports faithful living. We promote moral and ethical leadership development and provide pastoral care and welcome for SMU’s religiously diverse community. Grounded in the University’s Methodist heritage, the Office of the Chaplain and Religious Life enhances the educational mission of the university through religious and spiritual programming and services for all students, staff, faculty, and administration.

As part of this work, the Office of the Chaplain & Religious Life establishes relationships with off-campus religious life organizations with an active presence at SMU called Religious Life Partners. Religious Life Partners receive staff sponsorship and meet regularly with the Office of the Chaplain & Religious Life to receive support, guidance, and assistance. All Religious Life Partners receive official recognition at the University from the OCRL along with additional benefits to aid in their work with SMU students listed in this document. As such, each Religious Life Partner serves as an extension of the OCRL and must adhere to all policies and procedures as outlined by the OCRL.

1.2. Religious Life Partners Program Mission Statement

The Religious Life Partners Program is comprised of the off-campus religious organizations that have an active presence at SMU. Each organization and their associated professional staff members and volunteers receive official staff sponsorship and support from the OCRL. Whereas each organization has its own core mission, each Religious Life Partner assists the vision of the OCRL and communicates the vision of faith as a central and integral component of humanity. The Religious Life Partners Program exists to: (1) promote the development of faith communities at SMU, (2) collaborate with the OCRL in a spirit of good will on addressing issues of mutual concern, (3) ensure religious life organizations adhere to all university policies, and (4) provide professional development opportunities for growth and education of the sponsored staff members who serve SMU students.

1.3. Professional Outcomes

As a Religious Life Partner, each organization will:

- a. Receive administrative access and support at SMU (i.e. communication, advocacy, etc.).
- b. Participate in required and optional trainings offered by the OCRL.
- c. Ensure all religious organizations treat one another with goodwill and a non-competitive spirit.
- d. Get to know and engage with other religious organizations on-campus.
- e. Provide feedback to the OCRL and participate in OCRL Assessment Projects.
- f. Assist in the recognition process of new religious organizations.

2. PARTNERSHIP DETAILS

2.1 Partnership Criteria

Status as a Religious Life Partner is at the discretion of the OCRL as outlined in this document and is subject to revision and updates as needed. In order to be considered as a Religious Life Partner, each religious organization must meet the following criteria:

- a. Complete the New Religious Life Partner Process for new applying religious organizations OR complete the yearly Renewal Process for returning religious organizations.
- b. Be associated with an established organization, denomination, or religious group and provide formal recognition from their sending agency.
- c. Identify a Primary Representative who serves as the primary point of contact between the OCRL and the Religious Life Partner. This Primary Representative must hold a Bachelor's Degree or demonstrate appropriate alternative credentials.
- d. Demonstrate that a significant constituency exists on-campus for the services of their organization (at least 10 students). New Religious Life Partners are exempt from this requirement. See Section 3. *New Partnership Process* for more details.
- e. Follows all outlined procedures and expectations.

2.2 Accountability and Oversight

Each Religious Life Partner and their associated staff members and volunteers are to be accountable to (1) their sending organization, denomination, or religious group and (2) Southern Methodist University through the Office of the Chaplain & Religious Life.

All Religious Life Partners must complete all outlined procedures and expectations to remain in good standing with the OCRL. While the OCRL does not hold direct oversight over any Religious Life Partner, the OCRL serves as an administrative support and representative of SMU to each organization.

2.3 Expectations

Each Religious Life Partner will be expected to meet the following expectations during the academic year of their status. Religious Life Partners who do not complete these expectations may not receive an invitation to return for the next academic year. Religious Life Partners who have received status as Chartered organizations may lose their charter through the Student Senate.

- a. Primary Representative meets regularly each semester with the OCRL. Christian Religious Life Partners will meet together in the Campus Ministry Cohort. Please see *Section 2.5 Campus Ministry Cohort* for more information. All other Religious Life Partners will set up a meeting at least once per month with an OCRL Staff member.
- b. Attend and complete all required yearly trainings including but not limited to Religious Life Partner Fall Kick-off, Online Mandatory Organization Meetings (MOM), Title IX Training, FERPA Training, Minors on Campus Training, and Data Security Training. All recognized staff members must attend and complete these yearly trainings.
- c. Maintain a group online presence through the SMU Connect System, including listing up to date staff, contact, and meeting time information.
- d. Maintain an active, visible presence on-campus through student interaction and programming efforts.
- e. Provide the OCRL with all staff contact information and notify OCRL when staff changes occur.
- f. Completing all required assessment surveys and informational forms requested by the OCRL.

- g. Uphold Conduct Agreement as outlined for all Religious Life Partners. See Section 2.3.1 *Conduct Agreement* for further information.
- h. Ensure all recognized staff members adhere to all expectations, policies, and procedures.

2.3.1 Conduct Agreement

Each recognized staff member, volunteers, student leadership and sending organization, denomination or religious group agrees to the following conduct as part of the ethos of respect and goodwill established by the OCRL.

- a. Recognize the religious diversity represented and respect the integrity of all.
- b. Refrain from targeting other campus religious groups for the purpose of proselytizing.
- c. Refrain from recruiting members from other religious groups.
- d. Adhere to “truth in advertising.” Any programming by a religious life group shall reflect the name of the group on the materials.
- e. Exhibit proper use of University provided resources (i.e. Staff ID, Email Account, student Contact information) for job related responsibilities only.
- f. Support the common goals of the Religious Life Partners Program, the OCRL and the University and comply with all rules, policies, and procedures.

2.4 Benefits

In order to aid in care for and work with students, the OCRL will provide the following benefits to all Religious Life Partners in good standing each academic year*:

- a. Up to 5 Sponsored Staff members at the University. Sponsored staff members are non-SMU employees representing and serving the sending organization, denomination, or religious group. Sponsored staff members receive all benefits listed here and in the Volunteer Agreement form. It is understood that the University may limit the total number of approved, sponsored staff members per organization based on (a) available resources, (b) the University’s determination of whether a significant constituency exists for a particular religious group’s services, or (c) any approved, sponsored staff member’s failure to comply with University policy. Exceptions to this when the existence of a significant constituency on campus exists for the additional sponsor staff member services will be considered on a case-by-case basis at the discretion of the OCRL.
- b. University-designated identification cards and an active SMU email address for each sponsored staff member. With this identification card, sponsored staff members receive access to:
 - i. reservable university rooms and spaces on campus, including payment of applicable fee or costs associated with use of the facility, space, or room.
 - ii. Staff rates for parking passes, SMU Athletic Events, and the Dedman Center for Lifetime Sports.
 - iii. SMU Libraries.
 - iv. Use of SMU Brand guidelines and standards.
- c. Access to University organization software, “Connect.smu”
- d. Access to contact information for students who have identified a part of a member’s religious tradition.

*New Religious Life Partners on Probationary Period do not receive some benefits. Please see Section 3.3 *Probationary Period* for more information.

2.5 Campus Ministry Cohort

The Campus Ministry Cohort (CMC) is comprised of the off-campus Christian Religious Life Partners—often referred to as campus ministries. Due to the plurality of Christian Religious Life Partners and their shared theological traditions and practices, the OCRL meets with all the Campus Ministries monthly in place of single meetings with each organization. The CMC falls under the Religious Life Partners Program and adheres to all policies and procedures listed in this document.

The only adjustment for the Campus Ministry Cohort is in regards to the expectation outlined in *Section 2.3.a*. Christian Religious Life Partners will meet monthly as the CMC under the direction of the OCRL.

2.5.1 Purpose Statement

As the collection of Christian Religious Life Partners, the CMC exists to (1) promote Christian unity and the development of Christian faith communities, (2) provide the regularly scheduled meeting time between Christian Religious Life Partners and the OCRL, (3) create opportunities for collegial support and mentorship among Campus Ministers, and (4) provide opportunities for collaboration.

2.5.2 Amendments for the CMC

In general, there are no significant changes to the expectations, policies, or procedures for Christian Religious Life Partners unless noted here. As a Christian organization at SMU the following amendments apply to their status as a Religious Life Partner:

- a. All Christian Religious Life Partners are automatically a member of the CMC.
- b. A monthly CMC meeting fulfills the expectation for the regular meeting with the OCRL outlined in *Section 2.3.a* for more information.
- c. The Primary Representative for each member of the CMC is expected to attend all CMC meetings and must communicate with the OCRL if they are unable to attend in order for the absence to be excused. Organizations may send additional staff members to these meetings if desired.

3. NEW RELIGIOUS PARTNER PROCESS

The OCRL will coordinate and advise the approval of any new Religious Organizations that seek to become active Religious Life Partners. New organizations seeking this status must complete all outlined steps in order to be approved for membership regardless of religious affiliation. All Christian Religious Life Partners will be added to the Campus Ministry Cohort.

3.1 Criteria for Applying Organizations

The following criteria govern the consideration for receiving Religious Life Partnership.

- a. The applying group must be associated with a historically identifiable religious group.
- b. Preference will be shown to the applying group who is distinct in its organizational identity and non-duplicative of other organizations already serving students at SMU. The OCRL has discretion for consideration of duplicative organizations.
- c. The applying group must show that a significant constituency exists for their services or demonstrate a reasonable desire to have active work on campus, and recognition from a sending organization, denomination, or religious group.
- d. The applying group must complete the application process with the OCRL, including interviewing with a panel of current Religious Life Partners.

3.2 Application Process

All new organizations will apply for status as a Religious Life Partner by completing these steps:

- a. The sending organization, denomination, or religious group completes New Member Application Form (Located on Website). The supervisor and/or board of the sending organization, denomination, or religious group must also submit written communication recognizing the authority of the applicant to be their representative on campus.
- b. Interview with the OCRL with respect to (a) existence of a significant constituency on campus for applicant's service and (b) the willingness of the applicant to comply with applicable policies and procedures.
- c. Upon approval from the OCRL, complete New Member Questions and submit to OCRL.
- d. Interview with a panel of current Religious Life Partners.

In consultation with current Religious Life Partners, the OCRL will determine the application status for the applicant and notify applicant of the final decision. Approval is determined at the discretion of the OCRL with consideration of the criteria listed above. Approved organizations will begin an initial probationary period. See *Section 3.3 Probationary Period* for more information.

3.3 Probationary Period

New Religious Life Partners will be approved for at least 1 full semester probationary period to allow the organization to establish their presence on-campus, learn about the organizational processes and culture of SMU, and establish relationships with students and the OCRL. The probationary length will be at the discretion of the OCRL. This period is meant to provide new groups a starting point of getting involved on campus and receive assistance from the OCRL.

During this probationary period, the New Religious Life Partner will receive all of the benefits listed above except for the following amendments for their probationary period:

- a. Up to 3 Sponsor Staff Members at the University instead of 5.
- b. New Religious Life Partners will not have access to University organization software, "Connect.smu" until probationary period is complete
- c. The OCRL will provide sponsorship for any community programs, including the reservation of rooms, facilities, and spaces.
- d. New Religious Life Partners will not have access to use of SMU Branding until the probationary period is complete.

New Religious Life Partners will be expected to meet all outlined expectations during their probationary period. Upon completion of this period, the New Religious Life Partner will participate in the Yearly Renewal Process. If the OCRL Renews the status of Religious Life Partner, then the probationary period will end.

4. REQUESTING NEW SPONSORED STAFF MEMBERS

As outlined above, each Religious Life Partner is permitted up to 5 sponsored staff members (except for New Religious Life Partners on probationary period). Each primary representative must notify the OCRL of any new staff members and must complete the following application process for new sponsored staff.

4.1 Application Process

All new applicants will complete these steps to apply for official staff sponsorship prior to the beginning of each Fall and Spring Semester:

- a. Fill out the form for “Campus Ministry Council Membership” from Connect.smu (found here: <https://connect.smu.edu/forms>).
- b. Applicant’s supervisor and/or board must also provide written communication recognizing the authority of the applicant to be a representative of the religious organization on campus.
- c. OCRL Staff will review Connect Form and approve when ready to move onto next step. May involve reaching out to supervisor.
- d. Upon submitting of first two steps, OCRL staff will host an informal Meet & Greet meeting with applicant in order to:
 - i. Introduce the applicant to OCRL staff and facilities
 - ii. Assess the existence of a significant constituency on campus for the applicant’s service
 - iii. Assess the willingness of the applicant to comply with applicable policies and procedures
 - iv. Answer any questions or concerns regarding presence on-campus
- e. The OCRL will determine the approval status of the applicant and notify them of final decision. Approval is determined by the criteria listed below. Upon approval of the applicant, the OCRL will contact applicant with the Volunteer Agreement. The Applicant must sign and return this agreement before they can receive their SMU identification and benefits.

4.2 Approval Criteria for New Sponsored Staff

The following criteria govern the consideration of sponsorship for new Campus Ministers of an existing Campus Ministry:

- a. Applicant completes all steps of application
- b. Applicant demonstrates evidence of experience in campus ministry and plans for ongoing trainings (those without appropriate experience will be paired with a staff member from the OCRL for mentoring/training)
- c. Applicant agrees and signs Volunteer Letter of Agreement.
- d. Applicant completes all assigned trainings including but not limited to Data Security Training, Working with Minors Training, and FERPA Training.

Two important notes for the approval of applicants:

- a. The University has sole authority to determine whether there is a significant need for applicant’s services, based on demonstrated student, staff and faculty need, and to decide on whether to accept or reject the applicant, based on such reasons as the University determines are in the best interest of its community and mission.
- b. It is understood if approved, only the named applicant may exercise related privileges and may not transfer those privileges to any other individual.

5. YEARLY RENEWAL PROCESS

In order to help the OCRL to prepare for the following academic year, each member of the Religious Life Partner will need to complete a renewal process. This process will confirm each member’s plans for the next year as well as provide important information for the OCRL. The OCRL will provide a timeline for the process before the end of the Spring Semester each year.

5.1 Renewal Criteria

Religious Life Partners who are in good standing with the OCRL will be eligible for return to campus. The following conditions could result in a member not being renewed for the following academic year:

- a. Consistent failure to fulfill outlined expectations including but not limited to missing scheduled meetings, professional staff members not completing required trainings, and not maintaining up to date information with the OCRL.
- b. Consistent failure of staff members, volunteers, or student leaders to uphold the Conduct Agreement.
- c. Inappropriate use of benefits by sponsored staff members, including failure to uphold FERPA standards.
- d. Inactivity on-campus or not maintaining an active, visible presence for work on campus.
- e. Failure to complete all steps of the Yearly Renewal Process.

Religious Life Partners who fall under one of the above listed criteria will be subject to a Review Meeting with the OCRL to discuss their status on-campus over the Summer. Organizations who are not renewed may be subject to completing the New Religious Life Partner Process again.

5.2 Renewal Process

The Yearly Renewal Process consists of the following steps:

- a. Complete Yearly Assessment survey provided by the OCRL.
- b. Complete End of Year Survey provided by the OCRL. This survey will include questions about intentions for next year.
- c. Review of renewal status by OCRL. OCRL will notify of initial outcomes of renewal status.
- d. Provide a complete, updated list of all professional staff member information by July 10th.*
- e. Provide a complete, updated list of student leaders and their positions by July 10th.**
- f. Update all appropriate organizational and contact information on Connect by July 10th.
- g. Plan to attend Religious Life Partner Kickoff in August, including all sponsored staff members.
- h. OCRL finalizes Religious Life Partner Roster by July 15th.

*If a particular member has late additions or subtractions to their roster after July 10th, they should notify the OCRL immediately. Additions may be made up until the first day of school.

**The OCRL will collect a list of student leaders again prior to the CMC Kick-off in case there are any updates or edits to these lists.

5.3 Check-In Meetings

In addition to the yearly Renewal process, each Religious Life Partner will complete a Check-In Meeting with the OCRL staff every three years as part of the on-going renewal process. These meetings are meant to be an opportunity for each religious organization to provide evaluative feedback to the OCRL. In these meetings, the OCRL and organization will review campus involvement and organizational needs. The Check-In Meetings will provide the OCRL with valuable feedback in order to continue to support the organization and religious life on-campus.

The OCRL will be responsible for keeping track the frequency for each organizations Check-In Meetings, and will facilitate these meetings as scheduled.