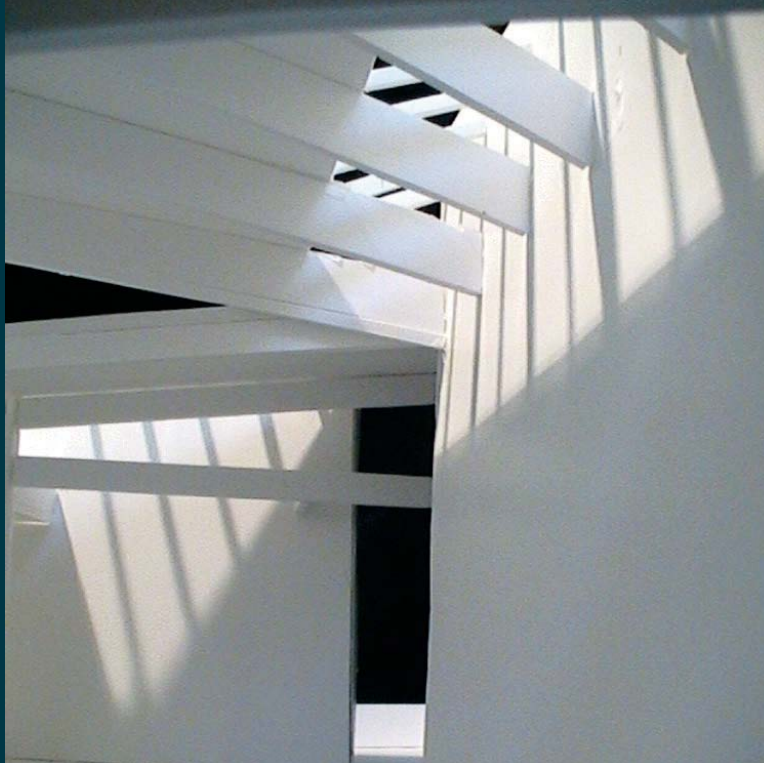


WHAT IF...



WHAT IF...

the University of Southern California created the
MULTI-FAITH CENTER
for research, reflection, and practice

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What if a major research university were to do something bold and innovative to encourage students in their search for life's meaning and purpose?

What if professors of religion regularly encountered swamis, priests, monks, rabbis and other religious advisors—and if students experienced the lively interaction between them?

What if students of any background could join with Muslim students breaking the fast in a banqueting room during Ramadan? Or with Christians observing Ash Wednesday, Hindus celebrating Diwali, Buddhists honoring Buddha's birthday, or Jews welcoming the Sabbath—or with students of other traditions observing the many holy days appreciated by those outside the fold?

What if all these things (*and more*) were to happen in a visible, exciting, synergistic way that appeals to students' natural hunger for the spiritual?

What if they all happened at the university and in the city best positioned to model world religion for the 21st century.

What if these things were to happen now, when the need for global and self understanding is so clear?

Please read the case for USC's Multi-Faith Center for Research, Reflection, and Practice. And then help me make it become a reality.

Rabbi Susan Laemmle, Ph.D.

Dean of Religious Life

University of Southern California



A hundred years ago, faced with rapid modernization, many leading scholars predicted religion's declining power and influence on society.

Clearly, these great thinkers were wrong. Religion has lost none of its vibrancy or significance. Today, the vast majority of Americans hold on to religious beliefs, define themselves in religious terms and seek to create a deeper spiritual life. And none would deny the huge impact religion continues to have on voting patterns, ideology, public policy and international diplomacy.

Whether related to last century's "secularization thesis" or not, many major research universities have neglected the study of religion. Not so with USC, where the study of religion remains a robust, cross-disciplinary enterprise of a subject that maintains a powerful role in shaping both private lives and public culture.

Aside from a deeper understanding of religious tradition, USC has augmented the field with scholarly research in anthropology, art history, classics, East Asian studies, economics, history, philosophy, and sociology. In addition, scholastic resources are provided by USC College's School of Religion, Center for Religion and Civic Culture, West Semitic Research Project, Shoah Foundation Institute for Visual History and Education, Casden Institute for the Study of the Jewish Role in American Life, and the universities partnerships with Hebrew Union College, Institute for Advanced Catholic Studies and Omar Ibn Al Khattab Foundation.

In the most recent strategic plan, USC set itself a goal to promote a learner-centered approach to education, which gives primacy to the needs of students. A true learner-centered education cannot be

achieved through the simple pursuit of knowledge. Instead, the experience must address the development of the entire person – and acknowledge the importance of the spiritual dimension of life. The USC Multi-Faith Center for Research, Reflection and Practice can fulfill this objective by giving students the opportunity to explore religious communities and practices during their journey.

Extracurricular religious interaction at USC adds to the overall educational experience, as well as enhanced personal growth. Religion spans departments and schools, and the Multi-Faith Center will allow students of disparate backgrounds and interests to engage in substantive dialogue. Their physical proximity will accelerate the frequency and quality of multi-cultural exchange. In addition, USC faculty will be able to experience religious practice as it occurs naturally, which will strengthen their scholarship, and perhaps even enrich their personal expression of religion.

With the USC Multi-Faith Center, students will be exposed to a tremendous wealth of scholarship that discusses the interaction between the spiritual and the socio-cultural aspects of life. By studying the impact of religious tradition and practice in our surrounding communities, our students will leave the university with a greater understanding of the world and their place in it.

Joseph Aoun

Dean of USC College, Anna H. Bing Dean's Chair

Executive Summary

Today's college students inhabit a world where the greatest libraries are available on their personal computers and cell phones; where news from the four corners of the earth arrives instantaneously and global communication is commonplace. Technology makes the world smaller all the time.

Yet despite the advances that have come with new technologies, we still grapple with problems that have plagued us for millennia. As news headlines constantly remind us, the phenomenon of religious differences is among the most prominent causes of human conflict. These differences have polarized the political process in the United States, caused continued strife in Northern Ireland and the Middle East, and assumed a dominant place in analysis of the September 11, 2001 attack. If we wish to create a more peaceful future, we simply must help our young people navigate religious differences.

Foundations of the Religious Life Program

USC's new strategic plan emphasizes the university's becoming a major force in addressing critical issues facing society. As a result, the Office of Religious Life is intensifying its efforts to guide students toward a future of greater understanding. We now have the foundation for a new model of campus religious life that can be replicated across the country and beyond, based upon the daily coming together of three elements:

Spiritual attachment: the steadily increasing involvement of students in particular spiritual communities that span the spectrum of world practice.

Religious literacy: active engagement of students in becoming world citizens who understand different beliefs and practices in experiential, cultural terms.

Learning that transcends boundaries: a unique environment in which practiced religion interacts with its scholarly study in a serious but also lively manner.

Religion as a Multidisciplinary Field

USC proposes to create a setting unparalleled in any other institution of higher education—a center dedicated to particular and interfaith practice side by side with the academic study of religion. Designated The Multi-Faith Center for Research, Reflection and Practice, this will be an educational entity as well as a physical place that will actualize the following possibilities:

Religion across the disciplines: enabling students to address topics like media coverage of religion, the immigrant experience of religion in the US, and religion and science (for each of which USC has world renowned experts on its faculty).

Religion and representation: drawing on USC's great strengths in the areas of visual culture, film and the arts, to deepen discussions about religion in the academy and the public square.

Religion and civil discourse: attracting students and faculty to structured forums on charged issues of religion in the political and cultural sphere, followed by receptions where everyone can exchange ideas and build networks informally.

Depth, Diversity, and Breadth

Students will be attracted by a rich array of such programs, offered in a well-situated and appealing setting, thus educating their minds and spirits through:

Depth of understanding: students engaging in sustained conversations about their spiritual life, the role of religion and morality, and the search for meaning and purpose in life

Diversity of experience: gaining a comparative perspective on faiths and philosophic approaches different from their own through zestful personal relationships with their peers

Breadth of perspective: looking at religion, spirituality, and meaning through a variety of lenses: intellectual, cultural, communal, theological, artistic, and personal.

USC strives to educate students towards academic “breadth with depth” and towards respecting the rights and dignity of all persons. The University’s central mission is “the development of human beings and society as a whole through the cultivation and enrichment of the human mind and spirit.” Religious life plays a vital role in these pursuits.

What more compelling a skill can a university offer its community of students, staff and faculty than

to maneuver with

Wisdom, Style, Grace and Joy

in the realms of

Faith , Belief, Certainty and Doubt

in a world where

modernity and technology

are daily challenging

Tradition, Structure, Stricture, Scripture and Ritual

—MICHAEL B. LEHRER, FAIA, *Lehrer Architects LA, Spring 2004 instructor for Architecture 605b, winner of Design Honor Award—2004 Interfaith Forum on Religious Architecture.*

For the past decade, the University of Southern California has been bringing together students of diverse faiths, and no particular faith, through its Office of Religious Life. The Office accredits more than 75 student religious organizations from 13 different religious traditions, encouraging each group in its own particular practice and, significantly, providing opportunities for multi-faith learning. It creates a strong collegial community of religious directors from the world's great religions who learn from one another and agree to disagree. This way of doing things has garnered national acclaim, placing USC religious life among the top five in the country.

Such an innovative approach requires a specially designed setting that supports conversation across religious and intellectual boundaries, both formally and informally. This would be the first new interfaith center of its kind at a major research university, and unique in its partnership between researched and practiced religion.

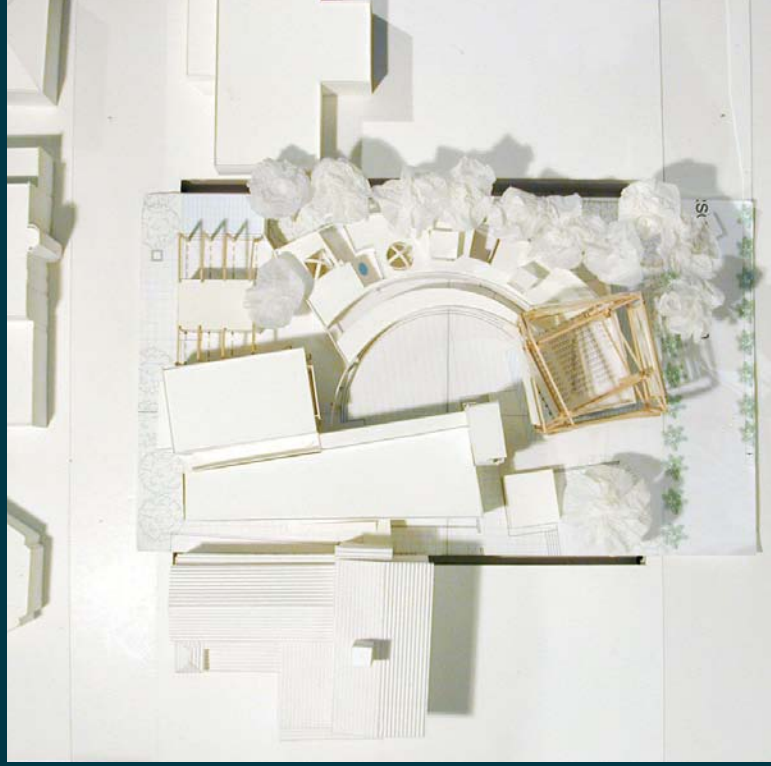
That partnership will help USC take even fuller advantage of its urban location in Southern California, which is a microcosm of the world's religions. Researchers will benefit from the opportunity to interact with students who practice or question the very ideas that these scholars examine with academic rigor. Students will benefit from the focus upon holistic development of spirit, emotion and intellect, enabling them to mature into rounded, capable, resilient human beings. And the larger society will benefit from new leadership towards a more just and peaceful world.

Never in our country's history has the study of religion, morality and society been as vital as it is today. Along with global communication, worldwide business, and international politics come the intersection, and sometimes clash, of many cultures. USC's Multi-Faith Center will be the heart of understanding how these elements relate. The world's best thinkers will focus their energy on wrestling both with eternal questions of faith and with their application to humanity today.



REBEKAH SANDERS
*International Relations, class of
2008, active in Episcopal Campus
Ministry/Canterbury USC and the
Interfaith Council*

SEJAL SONANI, *M.Arch.*, 2004
*Model study: use of a central courtyard for gatherings
and interrelating the various elements of the new center*



INTRODUCTION

*Religion in the world
and on campus*

W

E STAND AT AN IMPORTANT
JUNCTURE in the history of world religions and their relationship to academic life. Since the latter part of the 20th century, thoughtful people have increasingly called for a new model of religion in the university setting—a model that refines analytic and comparative approaches while acknowledging religion’s impact at the personal, social, and global levels. Religion has decidedly not disappeared under the weight of secularization, as thinkers influenced by the Enlightenment once predicted. If anything, it has become a renewed, though sometimes polarizing, force—both in the United States and internationally. That force needs to be understood and given positive outlets for expression. Universities have the opportunity to forge bridges and educate future citizens of the world. They can do this by shaping the thinking of students who connect deeply with their own faith tradition so that they also have a well-informed awareness of other religions, and also through guiding students who reject religious identification towards understanding the range of world faiths.

The University of Southern California has a unique opportunity to define a new paradigm for the 21st century study and practice of religion in the academic setting. This paradigm will acknowledge advances made in response to Enlightenment values while promoting integrated, interdisciplinary understandings of religious, moral, and philosophical questions. Under the banner of USC’s recently adopted Strategic Plan for Increasing Academic Excellence—with its core commitments towards meeting societal needs, expanding global

USC's new strategic plan is designed to redefine how a university works with, and contributes to, society at large. The commitment to build such a unique and essential student resource would have a major impact on not only the student experience here at USC, but on USC's burgeoning reputation as a world-class institution.

— MARK EWALT, *Director, USC Trojan Bookstores*

presence, and promoting learner-centered education—there exists the institutional context in which the innovative work envisaged for The Multi-Faith Center for Research, Reflection and Practice can proceed.

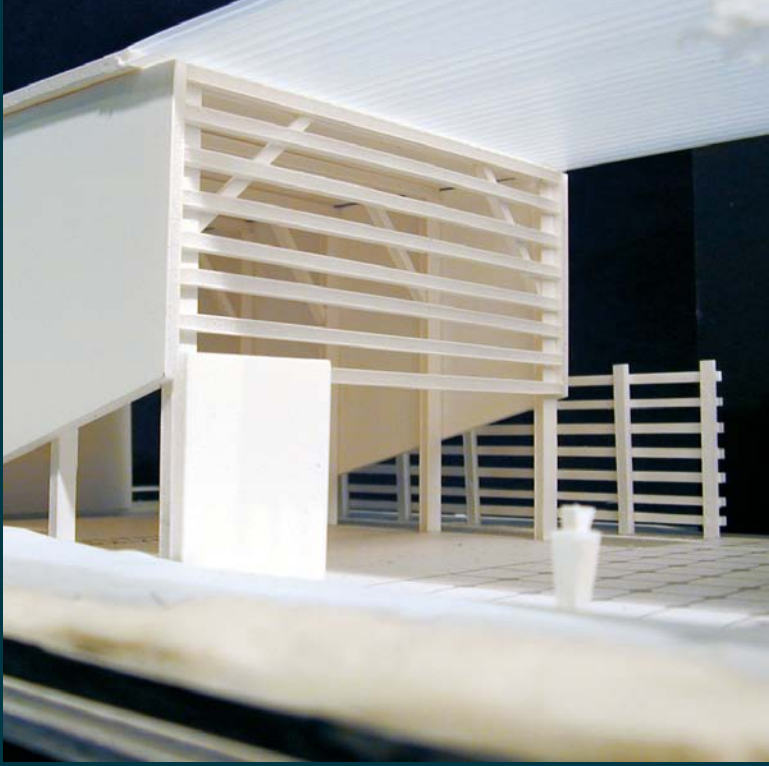
The holistic alternative to the compartmentalized religious approach of the past requires a specially designed architectural setting—an actual physical locale comprising a variety of spaces—as well as an educational entity that communicates a vision, brings people together, and plans programs. The intentionality of this integrative approach is a major rationale for creating The Multi-Faith Center for Research, Reflection and Practice.

Our contemporary world is highly polarized, with religion being a primary expression and cause. At USC, we have a unique opportunity to build bridges and forge connections. The rationale for the new Multi-Faith Center for Research, Reflection and Practice is twofold: USC needs a physical space and institutional setting in which conversation across religious traditions can occur. Then the over 100 faculty members who are involved in some type of research or teaching related to religion, along with leaders from the larger community, can join that conversation.



PROFESSOR DONALD E. MILLER
*Chair of the School of Religion, USC College;
and Director of the Center for Religion and
Civic Culture, USC College*

DONGWOO HYUN, *M.Arch.*, 2004
Entrance study: precinct of prayer spaces.



USC'S OFFICE
OF RELIGIOUS LIFE

*A decade of proven
accomplishment*

THE UNIVERSITY ENTITY primarily responsible for the new Multi-Faith Center is the Office of Religious Life. For the past decade, the Office of Religious Life has been infusing spiritual and ethical concerns into the interchange of ideas on campus, and exploring ways in which religion broadly construed can contribute to the overall life of the university. Led by its Dean, Rabbi Susan Laemmlé Ph.D., the Office of Religious Life offers students and other members of the USC community a substantial range of extra-curricular opportunities—opportunities of the kind that attract students (and their parents) to USC and enable them to flourish once enrolled.

Recent studies point to students' desire to discuss spiritual and moral issues with their professors or other mentors, and the high degree to which they see spirituality playing a significant role in their lives. Often more than their parents, today's students grasp the extent to which multi-faith understanding stands as an imperative of our times as well as the fact that religion intersects with ethnicity and nationality in important regards. Moreover, they are eager for guidance on constructing their lives in meaningful ways. By facilitating exploration of the spiritual dimensions of life and learning, the Office of Religious Life contributes to student well-being, links classroom education with experiential learning in a manner that respects and values academic freedom, and helps create a supportive academic environment. It offers rich and varied resources to all while imposing religiosity on none.

Spirituality is no longer excluded from the academic world. It plays a vital role in the personal development of our next generation of leaders.

—IRA DOTSON, *religious director for ReJOYce in Jesus Campus Ministries*

Some students arrive on campus firmly attached to a religious tradition, looking for a way to continue and even broaden that commitment. A strong proportion of USC's large international student population falls into this category. Other students come with no religious background, but have a vague sense that something is missing from their lives—a hunger for meaning. Yet others think of themselves as spiritual but not religious, or as ethical but godless. For each of these groups, it is vital that USC offer an easily accessible, well-publicized and professionally supervised array of religious and spiritual activities within particular religious traditions as well as interfaith and reflective activities spanning traditions—with both sorts complementing USC's extensive array of courses on or including religion.

Programs such as those organized by the Office of Religious Life are more important than ever because they form part of the tool kit that equips today's students to be global citizens and professionals. Thus, USC's annual Multi-Faith Celebration brings together students, faculty and staff from many traditions to share varied expressions of religious culture and faith in a way that leaves a lasting impression. At the spring Religious Exploration Fair, members of the campus community are invited to meditate with a Buddhist monk, discuss karma with a swami, learn to write the divine (or their own) name in Arabic calligraphy, try their hand at swinging incense, or move to the rhythms of a gospel choir, thus broadening their range of direct experience with the range of world religions. On the eve of each May's Commencement, the Office of Religious Life invites graduating students and their families to the festive interfaith Baccalaureate Ceremony, where they experience USC as a multi-faith community and feel blessed in the process.

And looking beyond the specifically religious arena, the highly successful faculty speaker series *What Matters to Me & Why* entered

Despite already having a center where Catholic Trojans can gather and participate in ministry, a new Multi-Faith Center is necessary to fulfill the Christian need for ecumenical interaction. And it is not with other Christian groups that Catholics most greatly need to enter into interfaith dialogue. A modern and innovative Multi-Faith Center will establish an environment and atmosphere where people of all religious and spiritual backgrounds can feel comfortable to interact and learn from one another.

— JONATHAN MARK STEIN '07, *Cinema-Television: Critical Studies and Visual Anthropology*, Chair of the Interfaith Council and active with the Catholic Student Association

its fifth year in Fall 2005. This series exemplifies Office of Religious Life programming that encourages awareness of motivations and commitments, helping students to shape their own lives. This and other programs—including The Abrahamic Faiths, The Genesis Conversations, and The Decalogue Film Series—have been highly successful in bringing together students, faculty and religious directors to exchange ideas in a manner that complements classroom learning.

At USC, students who want to join or create a particular religious community have the opportunity to do so. Those same students are typically, but not exclusively, the ones who experience the transformative power of interfaith involvement. Thus, a leader of the Interfaith Council who belongs to the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints recently commented, “Interfaith work is one of the best opportunities we have as children to teach our parents by our example. In general, it seems like something the younger generation seems to grasp onto more.” Like her peers on the council, this student loves her own tradition—and she also hungrily reaches out for a broader understanding of spiritual issues and friendship with students from other traditions.

A similar hunger animates members of the What Matters to Me & Why student committee, one of whom wrote tellingly to a potential new member: “What ties us together as a committee is that we are all searching for, attempting to define, and hopefully solidifying the things that make our lives worth living. The WMMW program and committee helps us students put our lives into perspective through the lives and experience of others whom we respect, admire and look up to—our very own USC faculty.” The quest for meaning is the common denominator among specifically religious, interfaith, and broadly humanistic programs sponsored by the Office of Religious Life—the quest for meaning that significantly

The Multi-Faith Center will provide a safe gathering place for students, faculty, and staff to explore and reflect on the complexity of our lives. This center will provide a solid foundation for experimenting and learning about our own and other religious traditions.

— DR. JUDI BIGGS GARBUO, *Associate Dean of Student Affairs*

USC is committed to having students interact and develop relationships with peers different from themselves. It happens in residence halls, classes and student organizations. What is lacking is a natural way for students of differing religious traditions to encounter, interact and be comfortable with groups of peers whose practices and beliefs, even attire, differ from their own.

— REVEREND DIANE KENNEY, *religious director for United Ministry at USC*

contributes to USC's fulfilling its central mission: "the development of human beings and society as a whole through the cultivation and enrichment of the human mind and spirit."

Cooperative relationships between the Office of Religious Life and USC's many campus religious professionals and student organizations support that quest and enable a wide range of programming. Currently, some 35 religious directors are assigned to USC as representatives of their faith traditions—including four rabbis and a Muslim imam, two Hindu swamis and two Buddhist monks, priests of the Catholic and Episcopal churches as well as pastors of various other Christian denominations. The Office of Religious Life credentials and guides some 75 student religious organizations (up from 30 a decade ago), all of them operating under the pioneering Ethical Framework for Religious Life.

Of course, students are not the only constituents of colleges and universities, even if they are the chief focus. The lives and values of faculty, staff, alumni, and community members are increasingly influenced by what happens on campus—whether through direct experience, as refracted through media of communication, or by encountering university-sponsored research and outreach.

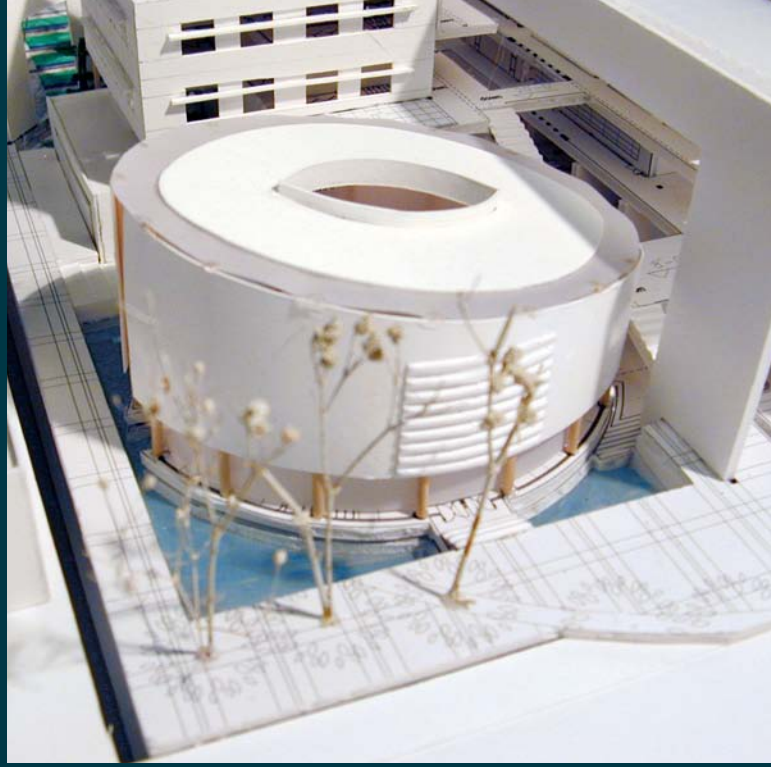
Moreover, the Office of Religious Life has become the nodal point around which the university comes together at times of crisis. Soon after 9/11, as well as at the one and two-year anniversaries of that searing day, the Dean of Religious Life took the lead in organizing meaningful university-wide convocations in which hundreds of people participated, and also in creating the institutional structure entitled One USC, which remains in place for future eventualities. It turns out that the university community benefits from and appreciates moral and spiritual leadership, and that—along with the President and senior administration—the Office and Deans of Religious Life provide that leadership.

USC's academic and extracurricular commitment to religious diversity puts it in the front rank of American universities that are conscientiously preparing students for the 21st century. The Multi-Faith Center, a visionary plan for study, reflection and practice, will be widely emulated as a place where theory and praxis come together.



PROFESSOR DIANE WINSTON
*Knight Chair in Media and Religion
at the USC Annenberg School for
Communication*

LIU YI, *M.Arch.*, 2004
*Model study: exploration regarding the form of
a multi-faith prayer space*



UNIVERSITY OF
SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA

*A leader in the
sphere of religion*

AMONG AMERICAN AND WORLD UNIVERSITIES, USC has developed extraordinary strength in religious studies and continues to expand its range of religious scholarship. The School of Religion within the College of Letters, Arts and Sciences boasts scholars specializing in the fields of religion and media, religion and culture, theology and ethics, ancient religion and archaeology, biblical studies, Islamic studies, and East Asian religions. Beyond the specific Religion faculty, more than one hundred USC professors across various disciplines and programs engage in investigations directly related to religion and spirituality. Most are affiliated with the innovative Center for Religion and Civic Culture, which engages in groundbreaking research on the impact of religion in Southern California and around the world. An organized research unit of the College, the Center for Religion and Civic Culture promotes scholarship related to the involvement of religious institutions in civic culture. It communicates research findings that address societal challenges not only to scholars but also to legislators, administrators of public agencies, faith-based and other community leaders, the media, and public and private funding sources.

The Center for Religion and Civic Culture achieves much of this by drawing together a wide range of researchers whose academic interests overlap with contemporary practice. Thus Professor of History Lisa Bitel studies prominent religious figures, including medieval saints, with an eye to qualities that generate such prominence today as in ages past. Professor of Sociology Paul Lichterman focuses on how religion affects people's communal participation; that

The establishment of a Multi-Faith Center would serve as a magnifying lens that would take my interests and the interests of my academic colleagues and focus them in a manner unmatched by any other academic institution. The prospect of taking so much creative energy and concentrating it in such a dramatic manner could only lead to remarkable and ground-breaking scholarship in the study of religion. I find this prospect exciting and endorse the concept of the Multi-Faith Center with the greatest of enthusiasm.

— PROFESSOR BRUCE ZUCKERMAN, *Director, USC College's Casden Institute for the Study of the Jewish Role in American Life, Archaeological Research Collection, West Semitic Research and InscriptiFact Projects; Professor in the USC College's School of Religion*

is, on the connection between spirituality and social action. Diane Winston, who holds the newly established Knight Chair in Media and Religion within the Annenberg School for Communication, turns her educated gaze toward campus media and religious groups as much as toward regional, national and international constellations. Professor of Policy, Planning and Development Martin Krieger maps the physical environment within which storefront churches and neighborhood synagogues—or multi-faith centers—arise. And Professor of Anthropology Nancy Lutkehaus researches the missionary legacy within South Pacific cultures in a manner that elucidates contemporary practice by evangelical individuals and groups.

USC's Office of Religious Life works closely with the Center for Religion and Civic Culture, as well as with partner institutions, which include the USC Casden Institute for the Study of the Jewish Role in American Life, Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion, Omar Ibn Al Khattab Foundation and Mosque, and Institute for Advanced Catholic Studies. The resulting collaborations among scholars and students from across the university, country and world produce conferences and programs that are, in turn, co-sponsored with academic units, community organizations, and student groups.

Taken together, USC's extra-curricular, pastoral and practiced religious life on the one hand and its scholarly study of religion on the other present an usually strong combination—a combination in which people and institutional units cooperate rather than compete, but also a combination where promising partnerships are currently stymied by a lack of resources, space, and proximity.

The current University Religious Center is a building that has served us well; however it was built in a former and very different time. Today the USC campus is extremely diverse, and the religious needs have completely altered, having moved from the realm of mere acceptance to the need for deeper comprehension. The new Multi-Faith Center should celebrate this diversity by providing an environment that promotes mutual learning between faiths while maintaining individualized religious practice.



TED DIEHL
*Cinema-Television, class of 2006,
President of the Latter-day Saints Student
Association*

MICHAEL HYUNGWOO PARK, *M.Arch.*, 2004

*Model study: the Center as a single larger building or
alternatively, as an assembly of several buildings to allow
greater distinction of functions*



THE ARGUMENT
FOR GROWTH

Moving past current limitations

CURRENTLY, the Office of Religious Life and the Center for Religion and Civic Culture are both housed in cramped quarters within USC's University Religious Center. Built by the university in 1964 in partnership with several Christian denominations, this facility was designed for a far less diverse religious demographic. Today's campus features multiple evangelical Christian groups, many reflecting different immigrant populations, challenging the hegemony of mainline Protestantism even as ordained clergy continue to minister to students of Episcopal, Lutheran, American Baptist, Presbyterian, Methodist and other Protestant backgrounds and commitments. There are Hindu, Jain, Sikh, Quaker and Unitarian groups; also four Muslim, three Buddhist and several Jewish groups; one for Atheists, Humanists and Freethinkers (that refers to itself as "the loyal opposition") and another for Pagans and Wiccans. While USC's considerable Catholic student population continues to grow, some Catholic students attend both Mass and non-denominational Bible study and prayer sessions. In all probability, Native American, Shinto, and Zoroastrian/Parsi groups will coalesce in the future. USC, like Los Angeles as a whole, is truly a microcosm of the world's religions.

And yet, the University Religious Center has no space that can be allocated to Muslim students for their daily prayer needs, which shift with the seasons. It lacks a room suited to meditation by Buddhists and others, a place where Hindus can create a shrine, and worship settings for evangelical Christians, whose praise music fits uneasily into classroom environments. Religious directors from

After serving on the executive board of the Muslim Student Union for almost three years, I can attest that the need for a Multi-Faith Center comes up constantly. While the Office of Religious Life has made tremendous strides in addressing our needs and assisting student organizations, the glaring lack of a suitable facility inhibits their sincere, dedicated efforts.

— AHMED DARWISH, *class of 2006, Industrial and Systems Engineering, active with the Muslim Student Union*

Christian and other groups need offices and counseling rooms, and their student organizations need variously sized and outfitted rooms for group activities. Both the Office of Religious Life and the Center for Religion and Civic Culture require appropriate spaces for small meetings and large conferences, as well as for communal meals and informal hospitality. The religious communities that have their own buildings north of the core USC campus—the Hillel and Chabad Jewish Centers, the Catholic Center, and the Latter-day Saints Institute—miss chances to initiate, or just take part in, significant interfaith programs until the new Multi-Faith Center is created.

Too often, physical limitations curtail cooperative effort, atomizing groups and programs that could be impacting one another. Thus, the Multi-Faith Celebration currently takes place in the neutral but uninspiring locale of a dining hall; *What Matters to Me & Why* settles upon an adequate but poorly located coffee house; and an interfaith academic conference, *Fear, Faith & Indifference: Constructing Religious Identity in the Next Generation* utilizes conference rooms at yet another corner of campus. Meanwhile, student religious groups find themselves booking space for worship, scripture study, and fellowship in any location available, losing the opportunity to encounter one another in imaginative ways that would enlarge mind and spirit. Without proximity and easy interaction, creativity and informal friendships are impeded.

The Multi-Faith Center at USC will say with the voice of prophecy: We move from the concept of *unity*, the melting pot concept that has kept the world at war for the last 4,000 years, the vast majority of these being religious wars—to the concept of *community*, the salad bowl concept where each component is respected within its own right, where each contributes beyond itself. Gifts of prayer are as the lettuce in the salad bowl, the lettuce teaching us to say, “Let us.”



REVEREND DR. CECIL “CHIP”
MURRAY *Tanzy Professor of Christian
Ethics in USC College and Senior
Pastor within the Religious Directors
Association at USC; Pastor Emeritus of
First AME Church, Los Angeles*

PHILIP SMITH, *M.Arch.*, 2004
*Model study: form and light intended to focus on
arrival to the place of prayer*



THE FUTURE

*The Multi-Faith
Center for Research,
Reflection and Practice*

T

HE UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA takes a major step forward with its ambitious drive to expand services and facilities for religious life. The cornerstone of this drive is the construction and endowment of The Multi-faith Center for Research, Reflection and Practice. The Center will provide a physical and programmatic environment where students, faculty and staff explore the “meaning connection” between their professional lives and their personal commitments. The Center for Religion and Civic Culture will anchor the academic research focus, while the Office of Religious Life will be the catalyst for bridging the divide between practice and theory. Faculty members who teach and write about religion from home departments in many of USC’s nineteen schools will have opportunities to interact with student religious practitioners in ways that are both meaningfully human and intellectually stimulating.

USC’s Multi-Faith Center for Research, Reflection and Practice will enable existing collaborative religious study and practice to be fully actualized within a new structure designed for that very purpose. Its layout will facilitate the involvement of particular faith communities while also encouraging multi-faith interaction and reasoned reflection. It will pay heed to flexibility, in order to be adaptable to changes in religious interests and demographics that will inevitably emerge over time, and it will be a laboratory for developing programs that impact not just the USC campus but the world. Architecturally, the new Center will be hospitable to people

of all faith traditions, as well as to those who see themselves as spiritual but not religious. A place that physically invites reflection and conversation, it will feature:

With globalization, knowledge of other cultures and religions is becoming increasingly important in today's world. The Multi-Faith Center would help USC students become more familiar with other religions while giving them a chance to study their own in a beautiful and comfortable environment.

— MARISA INGRUM, *Neuroscience, class of 2008,*
active with the Hillel Jewish Center

> PARTITIONED **offices** FOR RELIGIOUS DIRECTORS, AS WELL AS A SUITE OF OFFICES FOR THE OFFICE OF RELIGIOUS LIFE AND THE CENTER FOR RELIGION AND CIVIC CULTURE;

> A *library* FOR LITERATURE CONDUCIVE TO APPRECIATING MANY FAITHS AND PERSPECTIVES;

> **COUNSELING ROOMS** FOR PRIVATE CONVERSATION, ADJACENT TO AND ACCESSIBLE FROM THE CENTRAL AREAS AND SHARED OFFICE SPACES;

> AN INSPIRING **interfaith space** DESIGNED FOR A VARIETY OF PRAYER DIRECTIONS, APPROPRIATE FOR LARGE GATHERINGS, INCLUDING WEDDINGS AND MEMORIAL SERVICES;

> A *dining space* AND MULTI-PURPOSE ASSEMBLY ROOM FOR LARGE GATHERINGS, INCLUDING THOSE WHERE PEOPLE ARE SEATED AT TABLES, ADJACENT TO KITCHEN FACILITIES, WITH THE POSSIBILITY OF SPECIAL HALAL AND KOSHER MEAL PREPARATION;

The Multi-Faith Center would allow members of the Hindu Student Organization to hold their weekly *aarthī* prayers in a right-ful, sacred place of its own. And it would prove to be the perfect sanctuary for those wanting to explore traditions other than their own. For me, the two have gone together.

—TEJA PADMA, *International Relations (Global Business)*, class of 2007, leader in the Hindu Student Organization & Interfaith Council

- > A MUSLIM PRAYER SPACE, WITH SITES FOR CEREMONIAL WASHING;
- > A meditation space FOR BUDDHISTS AND OTHERS OF SIMILAR SPIRITUAL PRACTICES;
- > A *Hindu prayer space* INCLUDING AN ALTAR;
- > GARDEN AND OUTDOOR SPACES FOR PRAYER AND REFLECTION;
- > A *coffee/tea lounge* WHERE STUDENTS AND OTHERS CAN COMFORTABLY “HANG OUT”;
- > STORAGE AREAS IN THE INTERFAITH SPACE AND MANY ROOMS TO ALLOW FOR THE EXCHANGE OF RELIGIOUS ICONOGRAPHY AND TO CONTAIN SPIRITUAL SUPPORT MATERIALS APPROPRIATE TO DIFFERENT TRADITIONS; AND
- > SEVERAL OTHER SPACES OF VARIED SIZE, DESIGNED TO INVITE PRAYER, ENCOURAGE SPIRITUAL SHARING, AND ENABLE PROGRAM PLANNING AND INTELLECTUAL EXCHANGE.

In the Multi-Faith Center, we shall observe and feel how other faiths perform their prayers; hence, we will see their most sincere moments and understand the humanness of the other. We will attain unity in our student community on a small scale, which contributes to large-scale unity all over the globe.

— ONDER OZ, *international Ph.D. student in Electrical Engineering, active in Muslim Students for Dialogue and Rapport Interfaith Dialogue Group*

Within these purpose-built spaces, a kaleidoscope of activities will take place over the course of a typical day. Buddhists meet for early morning meditation while Muslims assemble for the first of their five daily prayers in the next room. Members of one of many Christian groups gather for breakfast Bible study, noticing the Muslims' shoes outside an adjoining space. During the morning, students of any or no particular religious orientation meet with one of the deans, or with a religious director, to seek advice on developing their spiritual lives, relating to a parent or roommate or date, or figuring out what kind of work they eventually want to do. At lunchtime, the dining hall plays host to an Interfaith Council meeting; and at dinner the same hall is used by a Christian or Jewish-based sorority holding an organizational meeting, Hindu students planning a festive Diwali event, or Episcopalians holding a midweek Eucharist. Meanwhile, Rabbi Laemmle completes her day by meeting in a conference room with a student committee planning the upcoming Religion on Campus Week, or joins Associate Dean of Religious Life Elizabeth Davenport in facilitating the Rapport Interfaith Group as it discusses a recent field trip to a Christian, Jewish, Muslim or Baha'i place of worship. When both deans go home, the building remains open for those who need an evening venue in which to study, pray or just feel comfortable.

The Multi-Faith Center for Research, Reflection and Practice will serve as a central gathering place where USC students and others can form social, cultural and intellectual connections. By fostering human interaction, the Center will encourage meaningful relationships among students, averting the isolation that sometimes occurs for lack of spiritual space and providing a physical home for experiences that deepen lessons learned in classrooms, laboratories, and lecture halls. Such gathering places are a crucial factor in alumni identification with their alma mater, and the extent to which people use their university education through a lifetime.

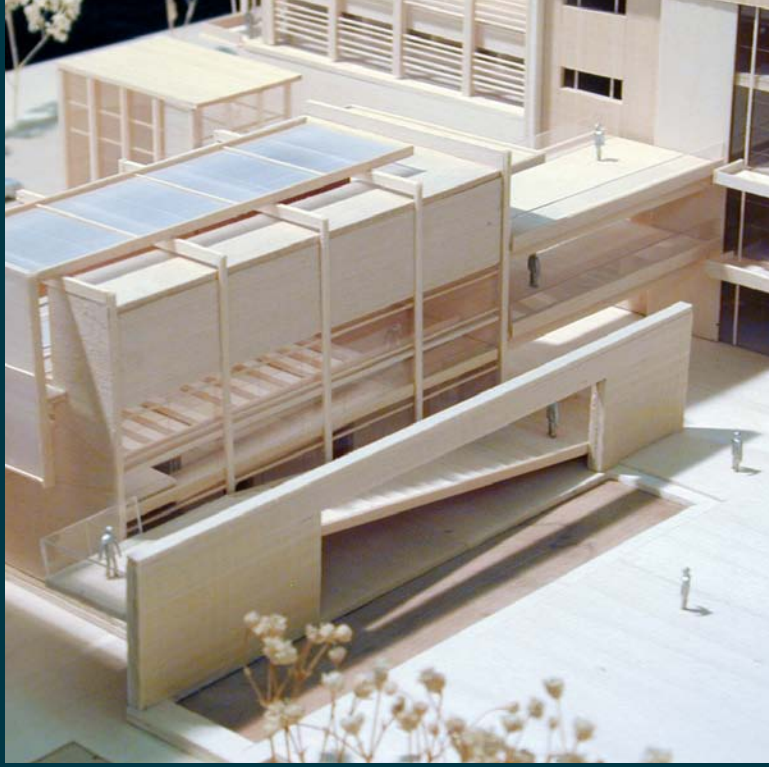
A Multi-Faith Center will afford all traditions and faiths the opportunity to worship and study in their own unique way and in the process, expose everyone to the dynamics of religious and ideological diversity. It will also be the ideal spiritual and academic forum to explore the panoply of belief at USC.

A state-of-the-art, striking and comfortable Multi-Faith Center is integral to USC's mission of being the university of the twenty-first century in that it addresses needs that are becoming ever more relevant and critical in a world that is radically shifting in terms of the movement of people and ideas.



RIAZ J. DINI
*School of International Relations,
class of 2007, active in the Baha'i Club
and Interfaith Council*

MICHAEL HYUNGWOO PARK, *M.Arch.*, 2004
*Model study: the meaning of procession, and going up
to prayer*



CONCLUSION

Religion at the University of the 21st century

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HE UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA is called upon to fulfill its educational mission and take advantage of its status as a major research university located in the multicultural capital of the world. To answer this call, USC must provide a robust, variegated and coordinated program of religious and spiritual engagement—a program that builds upon, but is not limited to, the formal classroom.

The Multi-Faith Center for Research, Reflection and Practice thus stands forth as a necessity. This Center will offer an ambience conducive to spiritual exploration and welcoming to all members of the university community, whatever their religious or spiritual background. It will stand as a symbolic and literal meeting place for students, researchers and religious leaders from across campus, the wider city, and the world.

Today, such a facility is more essential than ever. A peaceful future depends upon our understanding the common values held by various religious faiths and accepting their differences. The maturation of students into rounded, capable, resilient human beings requires holistic development of their spiritual, emotional and intellectual resources in tandem. Only then can they help shape a peaceful and just world.

The University of Southern California has a unique leadership opportunity through constructing its new Multi-Faith Center. There is a vast need for scholars and students to communicate across cultural and ideological divides as well as an imperative to counter the fragmentation characteristic of Western civilization. USC

The presence of such a facility sends a powerful message, to the entire university community and beyond, that different religious traditions can go beyond mere co-existence and tolerance to embrace cooperation and mutual respect.

— SWAMI ATMAVIDYANANDA, *religious director for the Hindu Student Organization*

requires a physical and institutional arena in which academic research can encounter the dynamics of religious practice, and vice versa—a structure that will not only meet current needs but also look forward to future possibilities, emblemizing the kind of religious cooperation for which our world cries out, hopes and prays. The Multi-Faith Center for Research, Reflection and Practice will meet those needs and provide that arena.

It is envisaged that the combined structures will be approximately 27,000 square feet, not including outdoor spaces. The University of Southern California seeks donor support for the construction and furnishing of these structures, in addition to endowments to support senior staff and a diversity of programming.

For more information, please contact

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213-740-6110
Laemmle@usc.edu

Or consult the Office of Religious Life webpage at

www.usc.edu/religiouslife

*What a concept—
putting the world's great
religions in proximity, to
live and work together.
If we could only do the
same all over the world!*



*RUTH ZIEGLER, philanthropist/
community leader and USC alumna*



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