THE PRESIDENT’S INTERFAITH AND COMMUNITY SERVICE CAMPUS CHALLENGE

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http://berkleycenter.georgetown.edu/projects/presidents-interfaith-challenge/
UNIVERSITY OFFICES & CENTERS:

- Berkley Center for Religion, Peace and World Affairs
- Catholic Studies Department
- Center for Contemporary Arab Studies
- Center for Minority Educational Affairs
- Center for Muslim-Christian Understanding
- Center for Social Justice Research, Teaching and Service
- Center for Student Programs
- Chaplains and Jesuits in Residence
- The College
- Faith in Action DC
- Faith Leaders for Community Change
- Film Studies Department
- The Gelardin New Media Center
- Government Department
- Georgetown Public Policy Institute
- GUWellness
- History Department
- Human Resources
- Kalmonavitz Initiative
- McDonough School of Business
- Mission and Ministry
- Mortara Center
- Office of Campus Ministry
- Office of Communications
- Office of the President
- Philosophy Department
- Program for Jewish Civilization
- Program in Education, Inquiry and Justice
- Program on Justice and Peace
- Psychology Department
- Residence Life
- School of Continuing Studies
- School of Foreign Service
- School of Nursing and Health Studies
- Theology Department
- Women’s Center
- Woodstock Theological Center

STUDENT PARTNERS:

- Alternative Spring Breaks
- Armenian Students Association
- ASK Coordinator
- Blanket New Orleans
- Catholic Daughters
- Catholic Graduate Student Fellowship
- Catholic Student Association
- Cristo Rey Tutoring
- DC Reads Coordinator
- DCSP Coordinator
- Education and Social Justice Project
- Georgetown First Book
- Georgetown Friends of Turning the Page
- Georgetown Israel Alliance (GIA)
- Georgetown Jewish Sisterhood
- Georgetown University Buddhist Meditation Sangha
- Georgetown University Catholic Student Association
- Georgetown University Young Scholars (GUYS)
- Girl Talk
- Graduate Student Council
- GU Brothers for Christ
- GU Sisters for Christ
- GU Students Association
- GU Urban Debate League Alliance
- Georgetown University Student Association (GUSA)
- Georgetown Habitat For Humanity
- Hindu Student Association
- Hoya Outreach Programs and Education (H.O.P.E)
- International Relations Club
- Jewish Student Association (JSA)
- JUHAN
- Justice and Diversity in Action Living-Learning Community
- Kino Border Immersion Student Leader
- “Knights of Columbus”
- Latter-day Saint Students Association (LDSSA)
- Magis Immersion
- Georgetown University Math and Science Hands-On Enrichment
- Georgetown University Native American Experience
- Muslim Interest Living Community
- Muslim Student Association
- Orthodox Christian Fellowship
- Patrick Healy Fellows
- Georgetown University Prison Outreach
- Project Hilltop
- Social Innovation and Public Service Project
- Bring on the Books Initiative
- Students of Georgetown, Inc.
- Student Interfaith Council
- Sursum Corda Literacy Program
- Thai Society
- The Corp
- The Hoya
- The Gathering
- The Protestant Student Forum
- The Voice
- UNICEF – Georgetown
- Georgetown University Urban Debate League
- Georgetown University Young Scholars

http://berkleycenter.georgetown.edu/projects/presidents-interfaith-challenge/
COMMUNITY PARTNERS:

- DC Public Schools (various)
- DC Court Social Services
- KIPP DC Charter Schools
- Thurgood Marshall Academy
- Boys and Girls Club of Greater Washington
- YMCA
- Kenilworth Community Center
- Cesar Chavez Public Charter School for Public Policy
- DC Promise Neighborhood Initiative
- National Coalition for the Homeless
- Office of DC Councilmember Yvette Alexander
- DC Central Kitchen
- Capital Area Food Bank
- Food and Friends
- Cristo Rey Don Bosco High School
- Capitol City Public Charter School
- Turning the Page
- Perry School
- Urban Debate League of Greater Washington
- Habitat for Humanity of Washington, DC
- Martha's Table
- Arlington County Detention Facility
- Alexandria County Detention Facility
- New Beginnings
- Tunnels to Towers Foundation
- St. Elizabeth Hospital
- Deanwood Recreation Center
- Paradise/Parkside Community Center
- Paul Public Charter School
- Ideal Public Charter School
- Mary Mcleod Public Charter School
- Rosemount Center
- Barbara Chambers Children's Center
- Best Buddies of Northern Virginia
- Boy Scouts of America
- Girl Scouts of America
- First Book
- DC Reviving Baseball in Inner-Cities
- Weatherize DC
- Sasha Bruce Youthwork
- Washington Parks and People
- Fishing School
- Eastland Gardens Community Center
- A Wider Circle
- Damien Ministries
- Spanish Education Center
- Fr. McKenna Center
- Kid Power DC
- Washington Animal Rescue League
- Arlington-Alexandria Coalition for the Homeless
- 826DC
- Washington Literacy Council
- Elder Buddies
- Downtown Cluster
- L'Arche
- A-SPAN
- Little Light Urban Ministries
- We Are Family
ADVANCING COMMUNITY IMPACT THROUGH INTERFAITH SERVICE

Through the Challenge, Georgetown University continues to build upon a long tradition and commitment to service and community impact. Several hundred students participated in regular and one-time service activities during the semester. Below are some of the highlighted activities during the fall:

• Georgetown’s Challenge is focused on education and poverty, and over 500 Georgetown students have participated in weekly tutoring and mentoring activities during the Challenge. These students have worked with underserved children and adults in schools, community centers, and homes throughout the greater metropolitan area.

• During Georgetown’s Community Service Day, over 450 student leaders and incoming freshmen participated in a day of service focused in Ward 7. The students served alongside community members at 25 different locations, including neighborhood cleanups, the Deanwood Recreation Center, and Carver 2000 Senior Center.

• During Georgetown’s “25 Days of Service” program, students focused their work on serving the homeless community and neighborhood clean-ups. This unique program aligns with the spirit and goals of the Challenge by connecting diverse student organizations who do not traditionally partner together around serving in the community. This program allows for meaningful impact and important dialogue among the nontraditional partner student organizations.

• New service projects implemented during the Challenge include a 9/11 5K benefiting the Tunnels to Towers Foundation where over 180 people participated and raised over $5,000.

• Georgetown has begun the planning for a new Day of Service in conjunction with celebrating Martin Luther King, Jr. Day. The new Day of Service will focus on Ward 7 and aim for over 300 students, staff, and faculty to participate in the program.

• Georgetown continued regular outreach programs to the homeless community in Washington, DC focusing on poverty issues.

Activities included:

• Each week, 10-15 Georgetown students distributed food in Dupont Circle and engaged in meaningful and humanizing conversations.

• Twice a month, 6-10 Georgetown students conducted a “mobile soup kitchen” to distribute meals to community members in parks at Franklin Square, the World Bank, and other locations.

• Twice a month, 5-12 Georgetown students participated in “Knit for the Needy” by knitting scarves, gloves, and other cold weather wear for distribution.

• Georgetown students collected over 200 dental care kits and information for distribution at DC General family homeless shelter.

• Georgetown students donated the dollar equivalent of remaining meals from their university meal plans to support Martha’s Table.

• Georgetown planned a Hunger and Homelessness Week in November to focus service, awareness, and advocacy on poverty issues. Events included a solidarity sleepout to raise funds and awareness to the Covenant House; participation in the Fannie Mae Walk for the Homeless; stocking canned and dry goods at Capital Area Food Bank; and hosting homeless advocacy speakers. Over 100 students participated in the week’s various events and activities.
ADVANCING INTERFAITH COOPERATION

Challenge Hub: Website and Outreach

The Challenge website has become a valuable tool for advancing interfaith cooperation on campus and the goals of the Challenge: reducing domestic poverty and advancing educational opportunity in DC. The site hosts a set of resources on poverty and education in Washington, DC to inspire service work; planning interfaith dialogue and service events; and mapping interfaith dialogue work on campus, in the community, and around the world.

- The Challenge Blog: Students, faculty, and staff have written 40 blog posts on numerous topics related to faith and service. These excellent essays demonstrate a high level of reflective thoughtfulness and awareness of Challenge goals. They have been cross-posted on other websites, including IFYC, received attention on Facebook and Twitter, and serve as a campus outlet for writing on faith and service.

- Interview Series: Students have interviewed leaders in the campus and DC communities who exemplify the values of faith and service, but whose stories are not often highlighted. Full interviews can be found on our Challenge website and will serve as a resource and inspiration for others to serve their community using their faith and values.

- Media: The Challenge website hosts 17 videos (with 3 more in production) from our fall semester endeavors. Our Facebook page is used daily with 115 likes and 250+ photos. We actively use Twitter with hashtags #GUbettertogether and #WHinterfaith, with many retweets from our followers. Challenge events have received considerable coverage from campus media outlets, including the Georgetown University homepage and student newspapers The Hoya and The Georgetown Voice.

Events & Community

Numerous programs this semester have encouraged growth within one’s own spirituality along with reflection on Georgetown’s interfaith environment. These events provided opportunities for the community to engage in meaningful dialogue across traditions. A few highlights include:

- Roundtables: At these monthly reflections, the university community joins together to contemplate a particular theme (9/11 Remembrance Through Service, 25 Days of Service, Thanksgiving) as it relates to their community service and interfaith experiences. Each Roundtable has hosted approximately 30 individuals, including White House representatives.

- Interfaith 9/11 Prayer Vigil: To honor the tenth anniversary of September 11th, our university community joined together in remembrance. Student representatives from different religious traditions presented prayers and reflections to mark the day and how far we have progressed since this tragedy.

- Interfaith Thanksgiving Prayer Service: An annual GU tradition, with over 50 participants, student representatives from nine different spiritual backgrounds provided reflections on how their faith tradition calls them to be grateful.

- Religious Services Open House: A unique opportunity to learn about faith traditions through direct participation, members of the Georgetown community opened their hearts and minds to the university’s diverse spirituality by visiting eight worship services.

- Faith in Conversation Series: Rooted in sharing personal experiences, appreciating differences, and asking the tough questions, this program sustained inter-religious dialogue among 28 students in 9 discussion groups.

- Campus Partner Events: Over 100 events related to the Challenge themes have been hosted by campus partners. The list is available here:

http://berkleycenter.georgetown.edu/projects/presidents-interfaith-challenge/events
IMPLEMENTATION, DOCUMENTATION, EVALUATION AND SUSTAINABILITY

Documentation of the Challenge’s events is characterized by active tracking and surveying from participating organizations on campus. At the end of each month, the Challenge events for the next month (along with contact information and an event summary) are posted on the Interfaith Challenge website. This provides additional publicity for a wide variety of events, and facilitates greater communication among Challenge partner organizations.

After each scheduled event, the sponsoring campus organization(s) are asked to complete an “Event Report Form” (https://www4.georgetown.edu/uis/keybridge/keyform/form.cfm?FormID=4288). The form tracks dates, number of attendees, event locations, event descriptions, personal reflections, and other details. The data obtained from the “Event Report Form” is then transferred to a chronological spreadsheet with each event’s respective information. All four institutional lead staff on the Challenge are involved in the tracking efforts with shared access to this data.

In addition, social media and monthly Roundtable meetings have been instrumental in evaluating events and establishing sustainability. The White House Challenge blog on the Interfaith Challenge webpage serves as a communication template for members of the university community to evaluate, reflect, and update others involved in the Challenge. The video entries have also allowed community members to express their opinions and input on Challenge events and overall personal experience gained from their participation. The monthly Roundtables have hosted open dialogue between a broad cross-section of university members on topics concerning to the Challenge. The Roundtable meetings have helped establish a sense of support and investment to students, which in turn helps to secure the ongoing success of the program throughout our campus. The blog on the Interfaith Challenge website and the monthly Roundtable meetings will continue even after the official Challenge concludes, as institutionalized tools to sustain the benefits from the dialogue begun through the Challenge’s events.

Several student groups have approached the Challenge Taskforce to support new ideas that are strong contenders to become a regular part of Georgetown’s service work. One example is the new Georgetown University Social Innovation & Public Service (SIPS) Fund, an independent endowment whose mission is to make strategic investments in Georgetown students and ideas that further our community’s Jesuit ideal of service to others.

Grassroot, student-directed efforts are one of the strongest methods for ensuring the sustainability of interfaith collaboration. The GU Student Interfaith Council pioneered one such initiative known as “Faith in Con-
REFLECTING ON THIS FALL’S WORK

The Challenge has provided an opportunity to consciously deepen, and capture, the connections that our community forms through service to others. Our goal to capture the often unrecorded, yet meaningful and instructive, conversations and reflections that happen when our community participates in interfaith dialogue and service work has been realized through the Challenge blog.

We did not anticipate the level of interest the blog would attract - rather than having to solicit posts, blogs are now regularly contributed by many community members, including students who never participated in interfaith activities before. The opportunity to connect over shared values of spirituality and service motivates our community to go beyond theology and has resulted in many new students and community members taking part in the Challenge as regular participants.

The reflections are thoughtful and meaningful, providing a window into the diverse world of faiths, cultures, and ethical commitments that motivates students to serve others and reflect on the purpose of their work and time at Georgetown. One student wrote how his experience as a Mormon at Georgetown motivates him to work for justice and the common good. A non-believer wrote of how she feels at home at a Catholic university that nurtures her work in educating underserved students and provides her with an interfaith circle of friends. Our essay contest winner described how his suffering over the death of his father, a firefighter on 9/11, caused him not to react with anger, but motivates him to serve those who suffer in the world today. A student who had never attended an interfaith event before wrote of the Thanksgiving Roundtable he attended in November as an experience of “enlightenment” that opened his eyes to the diverse experiences of so many people of different backgrounds in the room and made him grateful to be at Georgetown.

Three roommates, Hindu, Muslim, and Christian, wrote a reflection for 9/11 on how their faiths connect rather than divide them and how they use this connection to assess who they are, who they want to be, and how they can improve the world around them. Dozens of students wrote about the service work they did in the community, from sleeping out in solidarity with the homeless, to preparing and serving food to the hungry around the city to tutoring and mentoring underserved students. These are stories that may have been told even if the Challenge was not occurring this semester, but to have them gathered in one place, accessible by the whole community, and to have the chance to share them at our monthly Roundtables, gives these reflections a power they would not have on their own. Our campus and community life is enriched by the ability to engage in interfaith dialogue, to serve others, and then to consciously and actively reflect on the meaning of this work, as "men and women for others" being the change we want to see in the world.