

Lehigh Multi-faith Initiative

Constitution and Bylaws

ARTICLE I. Mission and Scope

1.1 Name

The name of this group is the Lehigh Multi-faith Initiative (MFI).

1.2 Mission Statement

The mission of the Multi-Faith Initiative is to bring people of different religious backgrounds together in order to promote open and respectful dialogue on campus.

1.3 Rationale

The Multi-Faith Initiative invites members of the Lehigh family together believing that spiritual questions merit attention and discussion. Answers to these questions will be varied, but honest witness to each individual's faith experience is worthy of respectful listening and civil discussion. The group is pledged to affirming an attitude of respectful engagement and offering dialogue as a model for engaging across faith traditions, religious divisions, and denominational lines.

1.4 Scope

The Multi-Faith Initiative exists to encourage friendship and respect across faith identities. It does not privilege any one particular perspective on spiritual matters. The group offers safe space to discuss faith and the questions for which faith is an important component.

ARTICLE II. Officers and Membership

2.1 Membership

Membership is open to all members of the Lehigh family – students, alumni, faculty, and staff. Membership is open regardless of religious background, current religious affiliation or non-affiliation, race, gender identity, or sexual orientation. One may be a member of any religion or no religion to join this group.

Voting membership is open to any current student (undergraduate or graduate, full or part-time). To be considered a voting member, a student must

- be on the MFI roster
- attend at least two MFI functions during the year
- Members unable to attend two MFI functions may specifically petition the leadership team for voting privileges

- participate in officer elections and bylaw change voting when held.
- subscribe to the ideals and policies of the club and the University.

2.2 Officers

A. Officer Eligibility

To be an officer, a person must

- be enrolled as a full or part-time student at the university
- be in good academic standing with the university
- not be subject to disciplinary action by the university during their term
- hold a spiritual or faith identity (in order to ensure ballast representation as in subsection (b))

B. Student Leadership Team Composition

Collectively, the officers may be known as the student leadership team. The student leadership team must

- represent at least two spiritual or faith identities. If a situation arises where only one faith or spiritual identity is represented in the student leadership team, the team must appoint a member-at-large of another faith identity to join the student leadership team as ballast representation.
- not be identical between years. While officers may run for re-election or for a different office, at least one officer (the secretary, unless otherwise designated) must be in charge of the election and therefore be ineligible to run.

C. Positions

1. President

The president shall conduct the general meetings and the leadership meetings. The president shall be primarily responsible for developing (or delegating) the agenda for leadership meetings and the program for general meetings.

2. Vice-President

The vice-president shall act as a lookout for any university or external events which might interest the MFI membership including but not limited to religion studies or philosophy department seminars, visiting speakers, and on-campus or community religious/spiritual celebrations. If the president is unable to perform the specified duties, the vice-president shall act as president for such time as is necessary.

3. Treasurer

The treasurer shall handle and keep accurate records of all financial matters. The Treasurer shall also seek to reserve space for general meetings in compliance with Religious Life policies.

4. Secretary

The secretary shall take notes at each leadership meeting and publish them to a club website. The secretary shall also be in charge of keeping the membership roster, updating the club website, and sending out reminder emails regarding upcoming events, although these duties may be delegated to any member of the leadership team or club willing to discharge them. The secretary shall also be in charge of conducting any election or bylaw change vote, although the leadership team may designate another officer to discharge the duty.

5. Member-At-Large

If required in order to represent multiple faith identities within the student leadership team, the member-at-large shall attend all leadership meetings and assume any duties necessary to balance the burden among the student leadership team.

6. Faculty Advisor

A faculty member will be secured to advise the club. As able, the faculty advisor shall attend leadership meetings as a nonvoting advisory member, authorize reimbursements when necessary, and perform any other duties required of an advisor.

7. Leadership Meeting Protocol Regarding Announcements

Non-officers are welcome to attend leadership meetings and share information about events from faith-based clubs.

2.3 Officer Election

Elections shall be conducted annually in March or April of the academic year in order to offer an opportunity to train the new leaders and leadership continuity between academic years. Elections shall be conducted by the secretary (or his/her designee) and subject to review by the faculty advisor. Officers shall be elected by a simple majority of votes cast requiring at least 2/3 of the active membership to cast votes.

Members may cast votes in person or electronically. Both physical and electronic ballot collection shall be conducted in such a manner that the secretary or designee may establish a list of who voted (and when) without viewing the vote itself. Votes shall not be viewed/opened until voting closes.

2.4 Charter Clubs

If approved by the faculty advisor and 2/3 of the leadership team, the MFI may accept other faith-based clubs as charter clubs. Charter clubs agree to take a particular Interest in sustaining the MFI by sharing news of MFI events to their members. (Charter clubs may also make standing offers of event hosting, co-sponsorship, or other assistance, as they are able to provide it, if they choose.)

2.5 Charter Club Liaison

Each semester, a charter club must designate one liaison to attend MFI leadership meetings and to disseminate any relevant information to its own leadership. A liaison may not make binding commitments on behalf of his/her club without the express consent of the club leadership.

Liaisons shall attend the leadership meetings in a non-voting advisory role.

Article III - Meetings

3.1 A regularly scheduled general meeting will be held at least twice a semester. Additional meetings will be held if need arises. Meetings and other club-sponsored activities will be scheduled through the chaplain's office.

3.02 A quorum will consist of 50% of the regular members.

Article IV - Committees

Committees may be formed by members of the MFI to address particular issues and interests relevant to the spiritual lives of the members. Each committee must have at least three members who are active members of the MFI, one of whom must be selected as committee chair and appointed by the student leadership team at the following leadership meeting. Committee chairs shall participate in the student leadership team in a non-voting advisory role (unless the committee chair is also an officer). As with charter club liaisons, however, chairs may vote on matters pertaining to their committee.

Except as described above, committee membership is not limited to members of the MFI.

Appended to this document are examples of the kinds of committees that may be formed.

Article V - Amendment

Once adopted, amendment to these bylaws requires 2/3 majority votes from each of the leadership committee, the voting membership, and the leaderships of all charter clubs. A simple majority (>50%) of the faith identities represented in each of the subsets above must be represented in the amending votes of each subset.

Article VI - Religious Groups

As a religious group recognized by Student Senate through endorsement by the Chaplain's Office, the Multi-faith Initiative is subject to policies and rules for Religious Life posted on the Chaplain's web page and agrees to abide by them.

Article VII - Parliamentary Authority

The Parliamentary Authority shall be the revised edition of *Robert's Rules of Order, Newly Revised*.

Appendix: Ideas for Committees

Civility

He who raises his voice in anger has already lost the argument.

A civility committee could be dedicated to the respectful discussion of interfaith and spiritually relevant issues on campus and outside the activity of the MFI. This committee shall be available to work with any Lehigh organization wishing to invite speaker/s with topics or positions which are controversial and faith-related. When asked, the committee shall consult with the speaker regarding potential audience reactions. If the speaker, the sponsoring club, and the civility committee chair unanimously consent and desire, a civility club delegation shall be present to moderate the event and encourage respectful dialogue on the part of the students.

Service

A service committee could be dedicated to working with faith-based clubs who wish to participate in joint service projects. This committee shall be available to coordinate communication between such clubs, especially if the requesting club requires additional participants to engage in the service project or intends that the joint effort should be symbolic.

Intersect (type)

An Intersect committee could be formed in order to facilitate discussion of spiritual questions within the context of a single faith identity. Participation in these committees is by no means exclusive to the faith identity of focus. However, the discussions may assume or require familiarity with the basic tenets of the faith identity, and participants outside that faith identity would do well to conduct their own research beforehand.

Summit (type)

A Summit committee could be formed in order to review and discuss current events relevant to interfaith and intersect relations. Participation in these committees is not limited to those of faith identities or sects involved in the events; however, prior research is once again encouraged.

Seminar (type)

A Seminar committee could be formed in order to review and discuss practices of faith identities and sects for the benefit of those outside the identity/tradition or sect in question. For example, a seminar committee might focus on dietary restrictions of various sects and traditions for the education of students and community intending to entertain or cater to members of the sects and traditions in question. The seminar committee leadership is particularly responsible for identifying and presenting authoritative sources for each topic