

## Call for Papers

### *Listening and Responding to the Signs of the Times: The Emerging and Evolving Roles of Chaplaincies in the Post-Secular Era*

#### Guest Editors

J. Cody Nielsen, Founder and Executive Director, Convergence on Campus  
(j.cody.nielsen@convergenceoncampus.org)

Annette M. McDermott, Dean of Religious and Spiritual Life, Mount Holyoke College,  
South Hadley, Massachusetts (ammcderm@mtholyoke.edu)

**Submission Deadline: January 31, 2020**

#### *Journal of Interreligious Studies (JIRS)*

The *Journal of Interreligious Studies*, published by Boston University School of Theology and Hebrew College, is a forum for academic, social, and timely issues affecting religious communities around the world. It is a peer-reviewed publication dedicated to innovative research on, and study of, the interactions that take place within and between religious communities. Published online, it is designed to increase both the quality and frequency of interchanges between religious groups and their leaders and scholars. By fostering conversation, the *JIRS* hopes to increase religious literacy, contribute to the field of interreligious hermeneutics, and address the issues surrounding interreligious relations, dialogue, theology, and pedagogy.

#### Special Issue: Abstract

The editors and editorial board of the *Journal of Interreligious Studies* invite article submissions for a special issue tentatively entitled “Listening and Responding to the Signs of the Times: The Emerging and Evolving Roles of Chaplaincies in the Post-Secular Era.” The editors are asking chaplains, scholars, students, and practitioners to convey and critically analyze what is unfolding on university campuses today regarding the new (non)religious landscape of North America.

The issue seeks manuscripts that explore and critically analyze the emerging and evolving religious, secular, and spiritual identities found on university campuses today, interacting in what is known as the post-secular era (defined below). Contributors will examine the impact of rising religious and spiritual pluralism, along with disaffiliation (“nones”), on current models of chaplaincies, which include various faith, interfaith, and secular professionals who serve in pastoral roles in higher education. What are the new paradigms of chaplaincies in higher education taking shape in the twenty-first century in response to the changing needs of students vis-à-vis the increased awareness of identities, positionalities, and intersectionality? How do priorities of diversity, equity, and inclusion fit into university chaplaincies? How have chaplaincies evolved from a predominantly Christian ministry into a multireligious and nonreligious office that supports the ethical, religious, and spiritual lives of students often attuned to issues of social justice, diversity, and “big questions” regarding meaning and purpose in life?

## Special Issue: Details

“Post-secular era” is a contested term whose meaning is debated (Beckford, 2012), but it is fertile ground on which to have a robust critical discussion regarding the place of university chaplaincies in our present moment. It points to a similar context of the postmodern, viz., that the project of secularity, like modernity, is failing and something new is ever emerging. In the post-secular era, the religious and the secular share power in the shaping of identities and in the construction of societies. This co-creation of identities, ideologies, imaginaries, and societies produces novel religious and spiritual sensibilities that interact with civic, political, and otherwise public ideas.

For the purposes of this CFP, the editors suggest that the empirical trends taking place on North American campuses and elsewhere (Possamai, Sriprakash, & Brackenreg, 2014) are indicative of this post-secular era. The shifting roles of religion in the lives of university students, not to mention the increasing presence of non-Christian religious traditions on university campuses, arguably point to something “new” emerging as these realities relate to religion, spirituality, and secularity. The quest for meaning and purpose outside traditional religious boundaries in the lives of university students may be described as a post-secular trend. Interreligious, trans-religious, and multiple religious belonging and identities are revealing of this post-secular trend.

Religion has demonstrated an impressive resiliency in American higher education (Schmalzbauer & Mahoney, 2018) and is “no longer invisible” in university life. (Jacobsen & Jacobsen, 2012). The incorporation of an “Interreligious and Interfaith Studies Unit” into the American Academy of Religion (AAR) is in itself indicative of these shifting winds within the academy. This CFP seeks to interrogate the forces that are transforming the role of religion on university campuses, necessitating new training of university chaplains, counselors, student leaders, and peer advisors, and pushing the programmatic purposes and methods of university chaplaincy beyond its traditional (predominantly Christian) role. The editors tentatively suggest that these new trends are all markers of a post-secular reality that affirms the relevancy of a new model of chaplaincy, and not its demise.

One of the key factors of this emerging post-secular reality in the United States is attributed to the rapidly changing identities of younger generations with respect to religious affiliation. The increasing number of the religiously disaffiliated, or “nones,” further complicates the post-secular university campus. The rise of the “nones” and the increased presence of non-Christian religious minorities (Pew Research Center, 2015) of this generational cohort of students seems to be shifting the attention of chaplaincies away from programming that supports denominational beliefs and practices and toward programming that creates open spaces for conversations and gatherings. This new programming seeks to support students’ quests for meaning and purpose and to facilitate their wrestling with “big questions.” The increased pluralism represented on campuses, especially of religious minorities, raises many questions:

- How do activities geared toward interfaith cooperation (Patel, 2016) and religious literacy across campuses affirm or deny this post-secular era? How should chaplaincies be involved in these efforts without the risk of normalizing certain values and excluding others?
- How are chaplaincies engaging the religious pluralism on campuses, finding common ground, and maintaining differences among varied identities?
- Chaplaincies endeavor to uphold and advocate for diversity, equity, and inclusion; they are also advancing social justice education and coming to terms with intersectional oppression. How are they able to do this on predominantly white Christian campuses? How are chaplaincies responding to non-Christian students in ways that differ from the traditional Christian chaplaincy?

- How do chaplaincies draw from scriptural traditions and denominational practices and beliefs without excluding those for whom such traditions, practices, and beliefs are not meaningful? Has a secular scripture emerged?

Chaplaincy associations such as the National Association of College and University Chaplains (NACUC) and the Association of College and University Religious Affairs (ACURA), as well as the Spirituality and Religion in Higher Education Knowledge Community of Student Affairs Administrators in Higher Education (NASPA), have all responded to the request by religious, spiritual, and secular life staffs for new ways to respond to the changing landscape on campuses today. New languages and models appear to be taking shape, ones that provide the framework for these emerging experiences and identities (Forster-Smith, 2013). The editors are asking chaplains, scholars, students, and practitioners to convey and critically analyze what is unfolding on university campuses today.

### Special Issue: Prospective Topics

The guest editors encourage contributors to consider pedagogical, methodological, theoretical, and practical research papers related to topics that focus on the post-secular institutional capacity of higher education to create and incorporate an inclusive campus climate for a religiously pluralistic student body. Topics that intersect with such institutional outcomes as retention, graduation rates, student experience, and mental health are welcomed and encouraged. The topic suggestions include, but are not limited to:

- *The role of chaplaincy in advancing strategic plans pertaining to diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) related to religious, secular, and spiritual identities and their intersections with race, ethnicity, gender, and sexuality.* How are religious, secular, and spiritual identities represented in the DEI experience in higher education today? What are the models of chaplaincies or religious and spiritual life institutional support, e.g., programming, that seek effectively to build bridges for those religiously marginalized on campus?
- *The changing role of chaplaincy in advancing social justice education and its integration into student life programming, especially as it relates to leadership development and orientation training for student leaders and organizations.* For example, what is the role of chaplains in addressing social justice issues that acknowledge white privilege and Christian dominance? What is the emerging role of restorative justice and chaplaincy? What is the public role for religion on campuses today?
- *The role of chaplaincy in a post-secular era of increasing religious, spiritual, and secular identities of the “nones” and/or the “spiritual but not religious.”* What are the new frameworks that best meet the needs of students today as they explore new ways that nurture their sense of meaning and purpose?
- *Role of chaplaincies in an era of political, economic, racial, ethnic, and religious division and polarization.* Is there a “prophetic role” for chaplains to create sacred space for courageous dialogue and community storytelling; and to link to, and engage students in, civic engagement projects across differences?

### Submission Instructions

1. Each submitted article must be the original, previously unpublished work of the author(s).
2. Each submitted article should be between 2,500 and 8,000 words and adhere to the *Seventeenth Edition of the Chicago Manual of Style*. Authors should utilize footnotes for citations and discursive elaboration.
3. Each submitted article must have an abstract of 150 to 200 words and a list of five to eight keywords.
4. Submit the article following the instructions at [www.irstudies.org](http://www.irstudies.org), where you can also learn more about the *JIRS*. **During the online submission process, please indicate in “Comments to the Editor” that this submission is for the special CFP regarding chaplaincy.**

For questions regarding this CFP, please contact the guest editors. For questions regarding the *Journal of Interreligious Studies*, please contact the Managing Editor, Axel M. Oaks Takacs ([jirs.editor@hebrewcollege.edu](mailto:jirs.editor@hebrewcollege.edu)).