

**UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHERN MAINE**  
**Division of Student Affairs**

**Policy on Religious and Spiritual Life**

As a public institution, the University of Southern Maine affirms the Constitutional right to the free exercise of religion by all its members. The University may not abridge the rights of individuals to believe and worship as they choose, nor may it sanction particular forms of religious expression to the exclusion of others. The University has a responsibility to accommodate the needs of students, faculty and staff arising from their religious or spiritual practices and obligations, and an educational commitment to support students' co-curricular learning in areas of religious belief and practice, both their own and others'.

Religious and Spiritual Life at the University of Southern Maine is overseen by the Religious and Spiritual Life Council, with liaison to the Division of Student Affairs. The Religious and Spiritual Life Council is charged with support for student religious life and spiritual development, encouraging interfaith dialogue and appreciation for the USM community, and maintaining a self-governing, peer support group of Chaplains and Religious Advisors.

Programs sponsored by the Office of Religious and Spiritual Life are guided by co-curricular student learning outcomes adopted by the Division of Student Affairs. These learning outcomes are that by participating in our programs, students will learn:

- **to understand their own beliefs and values;**
- **to connect their beliefs and values to their choices and behaviors; and**
- **to understand and interact respectfully with others whose beliefs and values are different from their own.**

The University has an obligation to insure that any religious group using the facilities of the University is willing to abide by those standards and values that apply to all such groups. These values include the University's statement on non-discrimination and Student Senate policy of harmony with it, and are rooted in the University's commitment to free inquiry, diversity, inclusion, and freedom from coercion, and related to its primary mission of offering an educational environment in which the pursuit of knowledge is honored and affirmed.

Groups promoting particular religious traditions express their beliefs, serve students, faculty and staff, and have access to, and use of, University facilities and services at the discretion of the University. Groups wishing to function as student organizations may seek to be recognized by the Student Senate and/or Board of Student Organizations.

Chaplains and Advisors work with students at the University of Southern Maine at the invitation of recognized student organizations or by appointment of their denomination or other religious organization, and with the approval of the Religious and Spiritual Life Council in liaison with Student Affairs.

## Procedures for Religious and Spiritual Life Activities

### **Chaplains and Religions/Spiritual Life Advisors**

#### **Chaplains**

Religious professionals (meaning, this is their primary occupation/career)

Theological education (M. Div. or equivalent)

Ordained (or equivalent credential from sponsoring religious tradition)

Sponsored by and accountable to religious judicatory or organization

Also accountable to and meet annually with SA Liaison

Able to articulate and support the learning goals established to guide the work of USM Religious & Spiritual Life

May be full or part time at USM

May work with student group of their own religious tradition as Chaplain

Participate regularly in Religious & Spiritual Life staff meetings

Contribute to /participate in Religious & Spiritual Life shared programming, once per semester

Hold and publish regular days/hours on campus

Meet annually for Reappointment conference with SA Liaison

Participate annually in orientation/training for Religious & Spiritual Life staff

#### **Advisors**

Lay religious leaders/teachers/advisors

Some education/training from sponsoring judicatory or organization

Sponsored by and accountable to religious judicatory or organization

Also accountable to and meet annually with SA Liaison

Able to articulate and support the learning goals established to guide the work of USM Religious & Spiritual Life

May be full or part time at USM

May work with student group of their own religious tradition as Chaplain

Participate regularly in Religious & Spiritual Life staff meetings

Contribute to /participate in Religious & Spiritual Life shared programming, once per semester

Hold and publish regular days/hours on campus

Meet annually for Reappointment conference with SA Liaison

Participate annually in orientation/training for Religious & Spiritual Life staff

## **Student Groups**

- Encouraged to follow Student Senate guidelines to form a student organization and receive Senate recognition.
- Encouraged to join and participate in Board of Student Organizations.
- Member of Religious & Spiritual Life Council to meet with group once each academic year.
- May work with support of Chaplain or Advisor of group's religious tradition.

## **All Religious and Spiritual Life Activities**

- Open to and accessible by all students, faculty and staff at USM.
- Clear sponsorship and identity information available.
- Non-coercive, non-proselytizing, respectful behavior expected of all.