

To the Starr King Faculty and Board:

**Annual Statement of Educational Effectiveness, class of 2016
Submitted March, 2017**

Spring 2017 semester demographics

- Total enrollment this semester is 94 students
- 74 MDiv degree, 18 MASC degree, 2 MA degree students
- 47 (exactly half) of our students are high residence, 47 are low residence
- 22 students identify as people of color – 23 percent of our student body
- 56 percent of our students are Unitarian Universalists, most of them seeking UU ordination

ATS requires that we measure our program effectiveness

At Starr King School for the Ministry we evaluate our educational effectiveness by doing an annual review of our graduating class's academic and vocational competency, using students'

- overall academic assessments
- field-work and internship evaluations
- clinical Pastoral Education (CPE) evaluations
- ordination exam outcomes
- post-graduation employment

Starr King's faculty assessment team oversees data collection and tabulation, which is then discussed by the faculty, reported to the Board of Trustees, and posted on the school's website.

Graduating MDiv students' academic coursework performance

Starr King School for the Ministry has eight threshold areas for its Master of Divinity (MDiv) and Master of Arts for Social Change (MASC) degrees.

1. Life in Religious Community and Interfaith Engagement
2. Prophetic Witness and Work
3. Sacred Text and Interpretation
4. History of Dissenting Traditions and the Thea/ological Quest
5. Spiritual Practice and the Care of the Soul
6. Thea/ology in Culture and Context
7. Educating for Wholeness and Liberation
8. Embodied Wisdom and Beauty

We use direct measures to assess students' competency in each of these eight threshold areas by their competency in

- academic coursework
- contextual education (including internships, field-work, and CPE)
- independent, supervised academic study

We recognize that individual students' strengths are not uniform. Therefore, Starr King's target is that there is an aggregate rating of at least 80 percent competency shown in each of the threshold areas, indicated by scores of average (3.0) or above, using this rating scale: 5=exceptional, 4=good, 3=average, 2=below average, 0=not observed.

We began collecting annual data with our 2015 graduating class. This will give us the ability to look at trends over the years. Keep in mind that there is always going to be variation because of the breadth of our students' interests and aptitudes.

In 2016, 15 students graduated. Fourteen graduated with MDiv degrees, two graduated with MASC degrees (the numbers don't add up because one person graduated with dual MDiv/MASC degree).

2015 average score	Threshold area	2016 average score
4.1	Life in Religious Community	4.0
3.6	Prophetic Witness and Work	4.2
3.8	Sacred Text and Interpretation	3.4
3.9	History of Dissenting Traditions	3.7
3.8	Spiritual Practice and Care of the Soul	3.5
4.1	Thea/ology in Culture and Context	3.6
3.0	Educating for Wholeness and Liberation	3.6
3.5	Embodied Wisdom and Beauty	3.4

Graduating MASC students' academic coursework performance

In 2016 there were two MASC graduates, but one of these students was receiving a dual MDiv/MASC degree and was assessed as one of the MDiv students. The second student's record was not used because it would clearly be an identifiable individual and not an aggregate assessment.

2015 average score	Threshold area	2016 average score
4.1	Life in Religious Community	--
4.6	Prophetic Witness and Work	--
3.9	Sacred Text and Interpretation	--

3.9	History of Dissenting Traditions	--
3.4	Spiritual Practice and Care of the Soul	--
3.9	Thea/ology in Culture and Context	--
3.2	Educating for Wholeness and Liberation	--
4.1	Embodied Wisdom and Beauty	--

Ordination Exams

In order to be eligible for ordination, seminary students must pass competency exams/interviews conducted by a denominational/institutional ordaining body. For Unitarian Universalists it is the Ministerial Fellowship Committee (MFC) who conducts the interviews.

Between 2012 and 2015, there had been 30 MFC interviews with Starr King students.

- 80 percent passed immediately, without restrictions
- 20 percent were asked to do significant additional work but invited to return for a second interview when the work was completed

Now that we are collecting data every year, we can say that in the calendar year 2016, there were

- 5 MFC interviews with Starr King students.
- 100 percent passed immediately, without restrictions

In the calendar year 2016, there were also multi-faith Chaplaincy Institute Core Competencies Assessments (the CCA required for multi-faith ordination by the legally recognized ordaining body of the Chaplaincy Institute) with Starr King students

- 3 CCA ordination exams with Starr King students
- 100 percent passed without restrictions

Post Graduate Employment

2015	Post graduate activities (ATS categories)	2016
64%	Vocational placement	67%
9%	Non-vocational placement	13%
18%	Further study (includes internship/CPE)	20%
0%	Seeking placement	0%
0%	Other	0%
9%	Unknown	0%

Starr King's Contextual Education

Starr King's Educational Model advances Starr King as a school with "permeable walls." In addition to academic courses at Starr King and other GTU schools, students are encouraged to include contextual educational experiences such as individualized supervised field-work projects, multi-faith immersion intensives, and parish or community internships. By graduation, almost all of our students have experienced at least one, often several, off-site contextual field-work and/or internship experiences.

Included here is a small sample of supervisors' comments (from students' final evaluations) about individual students' contextual off-site work. (In these quotes selected from field-work and internship supervisors evaluations, all proper nouns have been altered and all pronouns have been changed to "she" and "her" because of confidentiality considerations.)

Community Internship Supervisors

- D embodies pastoral presence. She is confident and loving, eager to lead and equally eager to empower others... D walks that delicate pastoral line between authority and vulnerability perfectly. She comes with an open heart, but always with good boundaries and genuine pastoral care and warmth.
- S has been an amazing asset to [our facility] and the staff are sad to see her go. She has offered a calm non-anxious presence to both staff and residents, especially while we are going through one of our residents passing on.
- M's intellectual and spiritual depth combine to offer a journey through the preacher's word that is prophetic, engaging, and invitational in turns. M's religious perspective is astutely nuanced, and deeply grounded in the realities of trauma, injustice, suffering, responsibility, and resistance.

Parish Internship Supervisors

- B has had the opportunity to preach at least once a month. Her sermons have been well received, and speak to salient issues in members' lives... I was particularly impressed with her final sermon, in which she wanted to impart to the congregation her take on the Good News of liberal religion. It was so well done that people were visibly moved.
- K is articulate and agile when teaching. She is able to stay on script when needed and allow the group to go off topic when it is constructive. Her UU history class was enthusiastically celebrated by members—many of them wanted it to continue after it had come to an end.
- I have been impressed with L's ability to articulate our faith tradition... She has taught a class on UU history, which was well received. She is able to talk about overarching concepts in UU history with ease, and continues to

develop a deep reservoir of narrative that she can draw from to talk fluently about our tradition.

Fieldwork Supervisors

- R learned what it's like to be enthusiastic about [an educational] program that would be very beneficial for people—and to work very hard to get the program in place—and to find that it will take still more effort and patience to bring the program into fruition. R held up well under this pressure and frustration. She remained positive and hopeful that the program will, indeed, take place soon—even though it will not take place “right now.”
- V's persistence and attention to a superb publication have been noted. What has developed is a spiritual community of respect and developed individuals with important voices in addressing their experience, including recommendations for change. *The [Street Newsletter]* has been a place for homeless to connect... L continues to meet weekly with homeless individuals to develop the stories, art, and direction of *The [Street Newsletter]*. She has grown the Advisory Board, and skilled volunteers to work on the editions, resulting in a stable organization that is growing.

Clinical Pastoral Education (CPE)

In 2015 – 6 graduating students successfully completed a unit of CPE
in 2016 – 8 graduating students successfully completed a unit of CPE
(Each year, several graduates went on to CPE residencies.)

ACPE's scale is:

- total achievement of outcome
- partial achievement
- outcome not achieved

Threshold 1: Life in Religious Community/Interfaith Engagement

- Actively participates in group sessions/recognizes relational dynamics
- Reflects on and utilized feedback
- Offers appropriate critique
- Provides pastoral ministry to diverse people, considering differences

For the most part, there was “total achievement” by students. In both 2015 and in 2016, there was a single student who had difficulty with receiving and utilizing feedback, offering appropriate critique and therefore only partially met the ACPE outcome in this area.

Threshold 2: Prophetic Voice

- Is developing a sense of ministerial authority
- Demonstrates basic understanding of psychology

- Can see new experiences as opportunities
- Can use one's pastoral/prophetic perspectives

There was almost universal "total achievement" in each year. However, in 2015 and in 2016, there was a single student each year who did not fully meet the specific ACPE outcome: "Is developing a sense of ministerial authority"

Threshold 5: Spiritual Care

- Interacts constructively with patients/families
- Able to take risks by initiating new behaviors
- Reflects an awareness of the impact of history
- Has capacity to explore patients' concerns
- Has capacity to initiate spiritual care

There was almost entirely "total achievement." In 2015 and in 2016, again, there was a single student who did not fully meet one of the ACPE outcomes in this threshold. In 2015, one student struggled with praying with Christians. In 2016, one student only partially met the ACPE outcome: "Able to take risks by initiating new behaviors."

Threshold 6: Theology

- Articulates central themes of one's own faith
- Articulates faith position in context of pastoral situation
- Explores theological themes/differences

In 2015 there was a single student who had difficulty articulating what they called the "complex theology" of their own faith and only partially met this ACPE outcome.

Our 2016 graduating students' voices

As assessment evaluators/readers examine students' artifacts we often come across lovely, stirring writing "hidden" in students' course assignments, seen only by course instructors, and then stored in students' laptops. We have gathered a small sample to share (disguised to conceal students' identities). The narratives are sorted into the Thresholds they fit best.

Threshold 1. Life in Religious Community

- I am learning that leadership is not always about leading. A key aspect of leadership is awareness of where I belong and what that means in any given circumstance... In order to meet the needs of the community, we must be willing to be with the community and to grow with the community... I cannot fully do this work if I do not know why I am doing it and I cannot know why I am doing this work if I do not understand myself... Religious leadership is a delicate balance, a calling, a necessity, and a duty.

- I think the truest testament to the effectiveness of my education and experience at SKSM is that I fully feel ready to be a minister. In fact Starr King has shown me that I *am* a minister.
- I appreciate what James Luther Adams refers to as “power of” instead of “power over.” I believe I approach my work with the attitude of empowering those I come in contact with, while looking for the “fun” in the work.
- Ministry implies caring for individuals and community, and that means that, just as a contractor’s job in community is to build houses, a minister’s job—my job—is to love. Love, to me, is not a feeling—it is an action. The action of love moves toward justice.

Threshold 2: Prophetic Witness and Work

- I understand the way the world has come to be, the colonizers and the colonized, the religions that have taken over or brought peace, changed the world for good and bad, I can work with people where they are at, listen better, and share what I have learned to help offer change... These skills of intuitive listening and presence will be crucial in honoring those from varying backgrounds that I work with.
- What has been most powerful is learning what it is to stand with your community. No amount of classwork around these issues could have given me the sort of lessons I learned attending protests with fellow students, faculty, and staff. Working together to produce medical kits, watching out for one another in the streets, providing jail support, and praying together.
- As I strive to be an anti-oppressive, multi-religious, social justice leader, I know that countering oppressions and working for just and sustainable change is the core of my call to ministry... I know... that those of us at the margins can hold and lead the center
- Starr King’s commitment to *being in the world* gave so many of us who were moved to action the space to do our work, to live in line with our convictions. I learned that we can move together, work together, change together.
- I see a world with a multiplicity of powers and systems at play, a polytheistic world with layers of meaning and a close interweaving of the beautiful and the brutal. I...reconcile questions of agency and injustice with plural divinities that are not all-powerful...and with our human duty to serve the communities, names, and powers to whom we belong.

Threshold 3: Sacred Texts

- The first time I had the opportunity to preach I found myself suddenly and unexpectedly filled with Spirit. I was brimming with joy and immediately

thought, “I can’t wait to do this again! ...My preaching will draw from the sacred texts that I am in a relationship with, from the multiple religious traditions at work in me.

- Preaching and interpreting sacred texts has long been used to lead people and to either reinforce oppression and discrimination, or speak out against it. It is important to find ways to speak for the rights of those who are oppressed using the sacred texts that are most relevant to the faith communities who are being mobilized.
- Exegetical and Scriptural work continue to be passionate interests of mine... It is tempting for me to stay holed up with texts and research, so I have been trying to focus my studies...in areas I have not studied quite so much already... I continue to have great love and fascination for the textual part of our field, and maintain a voracious delight in finding new material to study and understand.
- As I believe that strict conservative religious theologies the world over are a big part of what separate us and cause war, greed, oppression, I imagine that the role of the theologian is to offer new interpretations of a just and loving Divine presence using old tools, writings and language.

Threshold 4: History

- History is context, the context of my faith is a history of dissent and our journey into these histories is only just beginning.
- ...from studying UU history and Process Theology to expanding my understanding of Womanist theology to extensive studies of the work of Howard Thurman Clarence Jordan, Dorothy Day, Mohandas Gandhi, Martin Luther King Jr., Farid Esack, and many others... from Rebecca Parker’s “A Course on God” to Jay Johnson’s courses on queer and incarnational Christianity...
- The work of understanding our religious history promotes the creation of just and sustainable communities that counter oppression by illuminating how we’ve arrived at the present moment so that we can move forward honestly and authentically. I believe that at its best the theological quest nurtures and empowers us to emphasize and embody a discourse of resistance that can be deeply healing and transformative.
- I have focused on decentering whiteness and western/colonial perspectives, seeking out queer histories, women’s histories, trans histories, the histories of poor people, the histories of people with disabilities, and other marginal histories. This intentional shift in priorities has helped me to see the world more clearly and to be more able to articulate the what and from where elements of modern structures of hegemonic power.

Threshold 5: Spiritual Practice

- I have been noticing recently that I have a thread of calm that is present throughout each day and emotion, a little okay spot in me that is clear and loving, the loving voice of the universe extending kindness even in a dark moment, the internal critic is quieter even when I make mistakes. I attribute...most of it to the simple act of showing up each day to my life.
- Our world is in dire need of more spiritual practice. I believe this is the very heart of empowerment and that empowerment is our best weapon for creating just and sustainable communities that counter oppression. It is in spiritual practice that we develop awareness, humility, forgiveness, compassion, and our ability to give and receive Divine Love... This is how we practice our full peacemaking potential.
- I can't say that I'm enlightened.
I can't say that I have practiced a practice consistently for an entire year.
I can't say that I have turned in every assignment on time.
I can't say that I have always responded as quickly and deeply as possible.
I can't say that I have mastered sitting meditation.
What I can say, is that I have begun.
- Where self-esteem has let me down, self-compassion has helped me lift myself up.
- To connect to God I have to nurture myself. To make space for the Divine, space to breathe, feel, and be open to wonder. To live my life as a prayer, not the prayer pictured in my youth of kneeling against the bed prior to going to sleep, this is the prayer of living a compassionate life where I love myself and give to myself as much as I give to others.
- I have realized center, focus, balance, practice – these cannot be options in my life. I need these to be as present and as loving as possible for those I seek to serve and minister with. I will not be perfect at these ideas. I will love myself as best as possible, because I need to. I have begun. And I will always be beginning.

Threshold 6: Thea/ologies

- If we are called by the tradition of Dr. Farajaje's work – not to mention the work of other boundary breakers, in and out of the academy – a move from "the@logy" to "thexology" is not only theoretically interesting, but necessary.
- I found myself often exploring classical/Western ideals about God, the self, and the person, in order to engage with the theology of the oppressed –

understanding that my knowledge of one could not exist without the other, and to be fully conscious and present, I needed to fully embrace the truth of both normative and margins-to-center pedagogy.

- On my first day at Starr King, I sat in a sacred circle and awaited my turn, anxiously... I took a breath and that one true thing I had hoped would find me leapt from my heart, out of my mouth, and into the middle of the room. "I am here because I love God." ... I am not the same [person] who began this Divine work three years ago and yet I am more myself than I have ever been...I want to offer you, with a heart full of gratitude, the number one most important thing that I've come to know in my time here at Starr King—God loves me too.
- I believe in divine spirit that exists within and beyond everything, is constantly moving and creating, with which we are divine co-creators. I believe we have the power to create, through prayer, ritual, thoughts, and actions, the world we want to live in. I acknowledge and want to be in contact with the divinity within each of us.
- Were I to identify the core of my calling, understanding thea/ologies in culture and context would rest very near to the center... Here I have explored our understandings of Divinity in the context of intersecting social locations, historical situations, cultural moments, and embodiments.
- I am blessed to have the foundations and frameworks of liberal religion to build a theology of justice and love that can sustain a lifetime of countering oppression.
- What I *do* know is what we all do with and for and to each other creates vibrations that will move through the interconnected web of life long after any of us are here on this beautiful broken planet, and those vibrations sing into being the very wisdom that guides us toward changing our world – together.

Threshold 7: Educating for Wholeness

- As an affiliated community minister I hope to bring a different perspective to religious education for adults, youth, and children to the congregation, based in my chaplaincy work and in my passion for pastoral care and personal development.
- Though I took classes in religious education... I am clear that nothing has been more formative for me in my role as educator as the time I spent working with youth and children at two Universalist congregations... All of the theory in the world can't prepare you for the reality of sitting down with young people who have questions. No exam in the history of the universe will

ask you more surprising questions than regular life with children, youth, and their parents.

Threshold 8: Embodied Wisdom

- The simplest gesture, altar, flower, or song can create such sacred space... I bring the gift of intuitive awareness, of song and a strong singing voice, of creating rituals with others into a beautiful tapestry, of writing stories and poetry encapsulating the lives remembered, and of creating sacred sanctuary spaces using lighting, fabrics, sacred objects and gifts from the earth.
- My prayer beads [that I made for myself] have enriched my prayer practice unceasingly. Sometimes this practice is of an existing mantra, sometimes each bead is a specific prayer for a specific person...sometimes I create my own mantras... I pray my beads out loud, and I pray them in silence. I pray them in stillness, and I pray them in motion—all are relevant and wonderful.
- Creativity is life. Art is sacred. As a spoken word poet, every Starr King course I had encouraged artistic expression and beauty as essential to religious and spiritual life... I see the role of a religious leader and community organizer, as that of an artist: working to bring about the best in others, building bridges, finding new solutions and connecting resources and communities in creative ways that work to challenge all forms of expression.
- In my work in the behavioral and psychiatric hospital during my residency, I frequently led groups of various patient populations centered on using creativity and art, such as poetry, visual art, and music, to help patients express and discover their own sources for emotional and spiritual healing.
- There is still a seed in me that believes art is frivolous in the face of all that is devastating the world, though I do have a part of me that believes it's actually a form of resistance and resilience.