



The New Multi-Faith Theological University and Meadville Lombard

Meadville Lombard has agreed in principle to join with Andover Newton, and, potentially, other schools, to create a **new multi-faith theological university**. The planning will continue over the coming year with a final vote anticipated in June of 2011.

Under a university design, the participating schools will gain financial sustainability while **maintaining their unique missions, programs, and locations**.

The new university will enable Meadville Lombard to extend Unitarian Universalist formation to a much larger number of ministerial students who will be even better prepared to lead within our increasingly pluralistic and multicultural world.

What's happening?

The trustees of Meadville Lombard and Andover Newton agreed in principle to create a brand new, multi-faith theological university offering graduate religious leadership education. The two schools are on a track to become the first two component schools in the new university. Other seminaries and theological schools could also join the university.

The '*new multi-faith theological university*' -- is that its name?

No. The university does not yet have a name, but it will not be named for either school. Each school will keep its own name.

What's the timetable for the new university?

The new university will be formed within a year, by June 15, 2011. At that time, the new university will be legally created and begin operations. The coming year will be used to plan the remaining details of the new university.

Why do this? What's to be gained?

The plan for the new multi-faith theological university answers challenges faced by both founding schools. Meadville Lombard and Andover Newton seek long-term financial stability and viability. They seek means to protect the future of their path-breaking curricula. Meadville Lombard will maintain its Meadville Lombard Educational Model incorporating experiential learning and distance learning for ministerial formation in a multicultural and multiracial world. The future of Andover Newton's own boundary-crossing curriculum will also be maintained.

Each faculty will draw on the resources of the other. Besides financial stability and curricular enhancement, Meadville Lombard maintains its Unitarian Universalist identity and mission. The new university will prepare leaders even better for a pluralistic and multicultural world.

How will this affect Meadville Lombard's students?

In a year's time, Meadville Lombard and Andover Newton will each become an equal component in the new university. The impact on the educational experience of current students should be minimal, especially for students in the TouchPoint distance learning program. Students will have access to a broader range of faculty and courses because the courses from all schools within the university will be available to them. Much of the Meadville Lombard program will remain as it is. For the foreseeable future, residential students in Chicago will be able to finish their programs in a residential setting in Chicago. As changes occur on the Meadville Lombard campus, the physical environment in which residential students live and work may change. Meadville Lombard will work closely with each current residential student to determine and address their needs.

How will the Chicago campus be affected?

The Chicago presence of Meadville Lombard will be changed. Under just about any model going forward, Meadville Lombard needs to address issues of an aging campus that is expensive to operate and does not meet the educational needs of students. Meadville Lombard's campus will be sold and the real estate assets of the school will be converted to more flexible financial assets that can be used to provide the larger and more modern facilities that our students require.

Is Meadville Lombard homeless?

Hardly. Even if the campus were sold today, the school would continue operations in the main classroom, library, and office buildings for at least two more years. Over time, Meadville Lombard will likely operate out of leased office and classroom space in Chicago, though other options are always possible.

So Meadville Lombard will stay in Chicago?

Yes. Although the administrative functions of the new university will be based in Newton, it was deemed important for purposes of identity and mission for Meadville Lombard to maintain a strong presence in Chicago, where the school has been located for more than 80 years.

How can the need for financial stability be met while staying in Chicago?

Cutting overlapping costs in areas such as administration and courses can go a long way, as will the benefit of liquidity following the sale of the campus. Financial projections prepared during the partnership talks confirm this. The projections were prepared conservatively by the schools'

chief financial officers and an independent financial analyst employed to work with the Meadville Lombard and Andover Newton trustees. Although the projections will be refined even further through the next year, there was no “wishful thinking” in the financial projections guiding this decision.

Doesn't Andover Newton also educate students for the Unitarian Universalist ministry?

Yes. Andover Newton is not a specifically UU-identified school, but it is an important center for students seeking to enter the UU ministry. Over time, the new theological university will conduct residential ministerial formation and education at Andover Newton. The TouchPoint distance-learning curriculum will be delivered to students by Meadville Lombard. In time, the TouchPoint model will also be developed for students within the new university from other faith traditions.

Will Meadville Lombard and Andover Newton share educational resources?

Yes. Faculty will be able to teach at both schools. Students will be able to enroll in courses at either school. It is anticipated that students will also have access to faculty and courses of other seminaries that might join the new multi-faith theological university.

Which entity will grant degrees?

The current plan is for Meadville Lombard students to receive degrees from the Meadville Lombard school of the new university.

What will happen to tuition?

The financial plan for the university is not dependent on extraordinary tuition increases.

How will the new university affect faculty?

The faculty of Meadville Lombard will be based in Chicago.

How will the new university affect staff?

This will be hard. The new university will help financially-challenged seminaries such as Meadville Lombard achieve financial stability by combining a number of administrative functions to achieve the economies of scale denied to small graduate colleges like seminaries. Reducing the number of staff is an important and necessary part of the equation. Decisions will be made carefully and introduced compassionately.

What will happen to the financial assets of Meadville Lombard?

Generally, the financial assets of the component colleges will be pledged to the new university. But the founding seminaries, and likely any seminary that joins the university, have been recipients of bequests and gifts for scholarships, professorships, and programs. All of those will

receive legal and financial reviews. The moral and legal obligations to adhere to the requirements of the gifts will be honored. The gifts will be used for the purposes intended by the donor of the gift as accepted by the school at the time of the gift.

Will alumni and alumna continue to call themselves graduates of Meadville Lombard?

Yes. Meadville Lombard will not disappear. In fact, it will be sustained. Alumni/ae relations and functions will indeed continue.

Who will lead the new university?

The Rev. Dr. Nick Carter, president of Andover Newton, will become president of the new university.

The Rev. Dr. Lee C. Barker, president of Meadville Lombard, will become a senior official of the new university. His position will be of senior rank, reporting directly to the university president. The responsibilities (and title) for this new role will evolve as the new university takes shape, but Rev. Barker's position will involve a lead role in representing the institution to a wider audience, working with the UU constituency externally to build support for the new university, and working internally to advocate for the unique gifts and perspectives of Meadville Lombard and the UU movement.

Each school will have a dean, but these have not been named. The university will have a chief academic officer, but this position has not yet been assigned.

The new university will be governed by a single board. Until it is formed, the boards and presidents of Meadville Lombard and Andover Newton retain their separate authority.

What will happen to the Wiggin Library?

The Wiggin Library is one of the school's most important assets and an important asset to all of Unitarian Universalism. A program to preserve the library and make its resources more widely available is being designed, and donors are being approached to support the work. Depending on the final design of a program for Wiggin, some of the collection may be transferred to Andover Newton. But the library will receive careful attention and detailed planning to assure enhanced access by students and scholars.

How can I support this effort?

- Spread the word and build enthusiasm
- Volunteer to work on some part of the transition
- Encourage others to make gifts (over and above what they give now!)