

RELIGIOUS INSTITUTE

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Religious Institute Doubles the Number of Seminaries Preparing Clergy to Address Sexuality Issues

Twenty Seminaries Now Meet Standards of Sexual Health and Responsibility

February 1, 2012—The Religious Institute, a multi-faith organization dedicated to sexual health, education and justice, has doubled the number of United States seminaries, divinity and rabbinical schools that are preparing the next generation of clergy with the training they need to address sexuality issues in ministry. Twenty seminaries now meet a majority of the criteria for a sexually healthy and responsible seminary, compared to just ten in 2009.

“When I was in seminary, there was virtually nothing mentioned about sexuality in my courses,” said the Rev. Debra W. Haffner, Executive Director of the Religious Institute. “Through the Religious Institute’s hard work in partnership with these institutions, we are proud to say that the landscape at U.S. seminaries, divinity and rabbinical schools is shifting towards increased sexuality education. These twenty seminaries are the vanguard in ensuring that tomorrow’s clergy are prepared to minister to their congregants, and to be effective advocates for sexual health and justice.”

Progress made as a result of the Religious Institute Seminary Project includes:

- **Brite Divinity School** now offers a full-semester course on sexuality and pastoral care issues; has revised their community inclusion statement to be inclusive of sex, gender identity, and orientation; and requires all field education supervisors, students, and lay committees to address sexuality-related training needs. Additionally, Brite has developed a model for seminary-wide conversations on lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) ordination within Christian denominations.
- **Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion in New York** now includes gender identity and gender expression in its non-discrimination policy, and will display a groundbreaking collection of Jewish art that addresses gender and sexuality issues at its museum in Fall 2012, the first ever at a Jewish museum.
- **The Jewish Theological Seminary** developed two full-semester courses on sexuality issues, and now requires at least one full-semester sexuality-related course as well as clergy sexual misconduct training for all rabbinical students prior to graduation. Going forward, almost all Conservative rabbis in the U.S. will have at least one full course on sexuality issues, including education on sexual orientation and gender identity, as well as a professional sexual misconduct training—all as a direct result of this project.
- **Union Theological Seminary** dedicated its alumni days to “Sex and the Church,” instituted a required sexual misconduct class, and greatly increased its curricular offerings on sexuality issues.
- **Yale Divinity School** now requires students take at least one of sexuality-related course prior to graduation. With the direct support of the Religious Institute, YDS revised their Master’s of Divinity required ministerial misconduct workshop to include broader sexuality topics, including LGBT issues and sexual health.

A full list of these institutions, designated as Sexually Healthy and Responsible Seminaries, follows. This list updates a 2009 study, which found sexuality courses largely absent from most seminary curricula and degree requirements.

“There is an urgent need for ordained clergy who understand the connections between religion and sexuality, particularly given so many denominations concerned about sexual abuse or embroiled in controversies over sexual orientation issues,” added Rev. Haffner. “This work makes significant strides towards combating future clergy sexual abuse, while helping all future clergy become sexually healthy and responsible.”

Additional information on this project is available at <http://www.religiousinstitute.org/Seminary>.

The Religious Institute, based in Westport, CT, is a nonprofit, multifaith organization dedicated to advocating for sexual health, education and justice in faith communities and society. More than 5,400 clergy, seminary presidents and deans, religious scholars and other religious leaders representing more than 70 faith traditions are part of the Religious Institute’s national network.

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