

Joan B. Kroc School of Peace Studies

Building Peace



Religion and Peacebuilding Initiative: \$500,000

Background

The Joan B. Kroc School of Peace Studies is seeking \$500,000 to establish a **religion and peacebuilding initiative**. In the years since 9/11, considerable attention has been paid to the negative impact of religion on domestic and international policy, and its use to motivate terrorism, radical social movements and communal violence. Yet, on the positive side, faith-based organizations and their leaders — calling upon fundamental tenets of peace and justice shared by the major religions — have successfully negotiated the ends to bloody conflicts, initiated reconciliation processes, and provided desperately needed relief to refugees in war zones where all others have failed.

While religious zealotry makes headlines, religious-based peacemaking often goes unnoticed. Both aspects must be better understood. To contribute to this crucial endeavor, the University of San Diego's Joan B. Kroc School of Peace Studies plans to use its interdisciplinary expertise to develop a unique program in religion and peacebuilding that provides a more comprehensive perspective to a broader constituency.

Objectives

The main objective of the religion and peacebuilding initiative is to provide communities that are suffering from conflicts in which religion is a potent factor with peacebuilders who are trained, skilled and prepared to deal with this critical, but often neglected or misunderstood element to create new paths to peace.

The program will grow through a three-phase evolution guided by the following directives:

- Illuminate the growing influence of religion on national and international relations.
- Balance theory, practice and faith by including perspectives of policy analysts, conflict resolution practitioners, experts in theology, and religious and secular leaders.

- Gather, study and assess cases of faith-based peace initiatives and negotiations to build a foundation for scholarship, inquiry and evaluation. A database of faith-based conflict interventions would be developed by student fellows to provide them with in-depth knowledge of the successes and failures of this approach.
- Explore diverse outlooks and opportunities through a visiting scholar component that will rotate between specialists in the major religions.
- Provide hands-on skill building, impactful research, and innovative learning, using local communities, international projects and summer programs.
- Broaden the student base of this emerging academic field to include undergraduates, graduates, and professionals.
- Engage women and youth.
- Investigate how to integrate religion, including non-Abrahamic religious traditions, with secular peacebuilding efforts.
- Improve the evaluation of inter-religious peacebuilding efforts.

Impact

The religion and peacebuilding initiative will enable agents of change — religious leaders, community members, humanitarian workers, diplomats, human rights activists, educators, policymakers, businesspersons and security forces — to build peace more effectively.

For More Information

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