



MEMORANDUM

To: UUA Board of Trustees

From: President Sofía Betancourt, Executive Vice President Carey McDonald

Date: August 2023

Re: Investments in UUA Presidential success and leadership capacity

To support the success of Rev. Dr. Sofía Betancourt as UUA President, we request the Board's support in making a three-year investment of \$1.28 million (roughly \$425,000 per year) to support specific initiatives in the first half of her presidency. This would be allocated from the UUA's FY22 operating surplus of this amount. As President, Sofía brings priorities focused on collaborative leadership and collective care. This includes the ability to meet not only the current needs of the UUA, but also to face an unknown future together well. The beginning of any administration is a critical time, and requires investment for its success. The UUA is seeking to sustain our current work, and deepen and expand the long-term work of culture change and living into our values as a liberatory, inclusive faith community. The funds would be used to provide for a new vice president position, to invest in shared leadership, and to care for our staff and volunteers. This proposal was developed with former Treasurer/CFO Andrew McGeorge, prior to his departure.

New vice president position

Expanding executive capacity is an urgent need to allow the UUA to pursue key priorities, to relieve pressure on the bottleneck of staff capacity, to provide for the ability to buffer staff transitions, and to invest in shared leadership. A little more than half of this proposed investment would be used to create a new senior executive position and fund it for three years, tentatively called "Vice President for Ministries and Programs." Building consensus across the UUA's complex structure and mix of stakeholders requires sustained executive attention. In order to engage the major adaptive challenges which the UUA faces, we will have to invest more in the capacity to lead these conversations across the Association. Right now, many of these priorities are or bottlenecked or at risk of delay due to lack of capacity. Current challenges and opportunities include continued implementation of the COIC report, widening access to professional religious leadership, cultivating pathways for lay leadership, evolving faith development and support for children, youth and families, safety and security for our congregations in the face of rising threats of right-wing violence, the long-term usage of the UUA headquarters building at 24 Farnsworth, and revising the UUA bylaws.

Additionally, executive capacity is essential for supporting our staff and buffering transitions. Our senior leaders help our staff break down and evolve siloed systems, coordinate our responses to crises, and ensure smooth transitions during normal staff turnover. Even when we are fully staffed, our existing executive capacity has become extremely stretched. As Executive Vice President, Carey McDonald has eleven regular direct reports in addition liaising with the Board of Trustees and supporting departments during staff director transitions, as is currently happening with the CFO and HR Director roles. This creates an unacceptable level of organizational risk concentrated in one person, where a single illness or

unexpected absence could impair the entire organization’s ability to function. Overall, this structure does not currently provide for the broad executive support needed across our workplace.

Over the history of the UUA, multiple Vice President positions have existed off and on. We anticipate this new VP position would report directly to the President, taking on the oversight of core mission and programs which are currently in the EVP’s portfolio. While the exact scope of these responsibilities is to be determined, the position would be responsible for aligning the mission priorities of the UUA, coordinating key cross-staff initiatives and projects, and evaluating systematic impacts and gaps. The EVP would retain the COO/Chief of Staff/Governance functions. This new position would give us the chance to reevaluate the balance of responsibilities across the entire UUA executive team, and allow us to build a renewed sense of shared leadership at a senior level.

Additional investments in shared leadership and capacity

Building on the investment of a new VP position and renewed executive team, we expect to need another administrator to support our expanded executive functioning.

Additionally, we may need to make other adjustments to staff roles or bring on additional consultants. While these adjustments are not currently known or planned, having some flexibility to move in this direction is essential. We expect to follow up with the Board later this fall with a more detailed plan for how these funds might be utilized. Overall, we hope this proposal’s approach will model shared leadership, empowering a wider range of people within the UUA to take on high-level leadership. These changes are rooted in the recommendations from the 2020 *Widening the Circle of Concern* report from the Commission on Institutional Change. This report calls on us to reexamine the role of the President in order to create “a more agile and flexible structure that can meet the challenges of a rapidly changing religious landscape.”

Early priorities

We know that many of our volunteers and staff are exhausted and burned out. We have an immediate need for pastoral care and chaplain support to our Association’s leaders.

Furthermore, we know that the systems of accountability, ethics, relationship and support we use for UUA staff and religious professionals need more scaffolding. We expect that this will be an early area where more resources are needed as well.

Budget

The following estimates assume three years of expense for each item

Item	Annual Cost	Total Cost (x3)
VP for Ministries & Programs (salary, benefits, program budget)	\$250,000	\$750,000
Administrative Assistant (salary, benefits)	\$75,000	\$225,000
Additional staff and consultant capacity	\$80,000	\$240,000
Staff and volunteer care	\$20,000	\$60,000
<i>Total</i>	<i>\$425,000</i>	<i>\$1,275,000</i>

We note that this request is different from past requests for funding from the UUA Board in two key ways:

- First, these items have rough cost estimates but leave substantial room for future decisions. This is intentional to provide us with enough flexibility to have conversations with staff and internal stakeholders. It feels important to have prior authorization from the Board to proceed with those conversations.

- Second, much of this expense is likely to go to staff positions or programmatic costs that we may want to continue after three years. We hope to use the breathing room created by this investment to plan for growing the UUA's income and available resources over time, such as creating new plans for the usage of our physical space at 24 Farnsworth Street. At the completion of three years, recognizing other shifts within the UUA may take place in that time, we will bring a future plan for how to continue needed investments in a sustainable way.

We recognize this involves some risk for the UUA, especially following approval of a modest deficit budget for FY24. However, we deeply believe that leveraging our received funds towards the areas of most urgent need is the most faithful way to approach our responsibilities as stewards of the UUA's resources.

We ask the Board to approve the following motion:

The UUA Board of Trustees approves the expenditure of the FY22 operating surplus of \$1.277 million to support the staffing and initiatives of new UUA President Sofia Betancourt, over the course of three or more years. This will provide for the creation of a new executive position focused on programs and ministries, as well as additional staff support, capacity, and funding for other priorities of the President. As these funds are allocated, the President will provide periodic updates to the Board.