



# 2019/2020 ANNUAL REPORT



ANNUAL REPORT



## PRESIDENT'S CORNER

"Tradition and innovation are often in tension, unless an institution's self-understanding is marked by innovation, risk-taking, and imagining new ways of living out its mission. Meadville Lombard Theological School lives up to the challenges it faces inspired by our tradition that points the way towards innovation."

—Dr. Elías Ortega, President

"What a year to begin a new leadership role!" This is a phrase I heard many times over the last few months. I heard it from students, alums, faculty, staff, supporters, and friends. More often than not as an exclamation. Facing the challenge of leading this institution through our current moment, as we faced the impact of a global health crisis and then the tumult of nation-wide protests against police brutality and white supremacy culture, required us to take a deep look into what makes us who we are. Meadville Lombard Theological School's DNA is one of being willing to re-imagine and reinvent ourselves anew to face the moment with an eye towards the future. Some may call this resilience when facing a crisis. Others may call it innovation that leans into new possibilities. For me, it is something deeper

and richer that fuels this creative spirit. As an institution, we are willing to work creatively and passionately into futures that forward our mission: equipping religious professionals grounded in the rich tradition of Unitarian Universalism. It is this commitment to our mission and the future of Unitarian Universalism that energizes our work and helps us see possibilities through the cracks of current realities.

During this year, there have been moments where the newness of it all has required us to imagine solutions for unexpected problems. Undoubtedly, this year brought us things that we were not expecting. How do we move as an institution through a pandemic? How do we continue our work during these times? How do we foster community when we are supposed to be social distancing?

In my first year as President of Meadville Lombard, I have experienced first-hand what makes this school a forward-thinking institution. Through the caring and mindful work of our faculty and staff, the generous support of donors, and the wisdom of our community of alums, students, and friends, we were able to lean heavily into our mission and thrive.

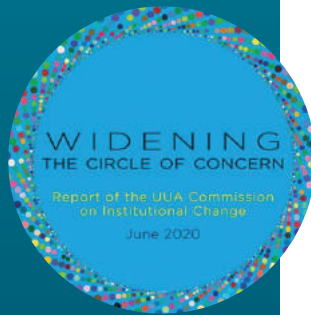
This year was a year of many "firsts" for us. We...

- learned how to work remotely and continued the digitalization of our work that had started in the Fall, including migration of our courses to a fully online environment.
- hosted a Virtual Commencement to honor and celebrate the achievements of 23 graduates and 3 honorary degree recipients.
- re-envisioned our Partners in Ministry annual fundraising event at GA into our first crowdfunding event.
- committed to strengthening pedagogical practices and completed an online teaching certification process for our Core and Affiliated Faculty members.
- opened a space for connecting our students, alums, faculty, and staff by hosting monthly vespers.
- began hosting regular virtual gatherings with alums and other supporters.

What a year it has been, indeed! I am very grateful for the warm welcome, support, and encouragement I've received from our community, faculty, staff, Board members, and supporters. As President of this institution, I look forward to imagining with you new possibilities for our work ahead.

Elías Ortega, President

## MILESTONES: FACULTY



### Dr. Elías Ortega's anti-oppression work in the larger Unitarian Universalist community

Dr. Ortega, President, was an integral part of the UUA's Commission on Institutional Change as a theological scholar and lay-leader. The Commission delivered its final report at GA 2020 and published the full report, *Widening the Circle of Concern*, which will guide all UUs in creating systemic change to dismantle white supremacy culture within Unitarian Universalism.

### Dr. Pamela Lightsey's induction into one of the most prestigious collegia

Dr. Lightsey, VP for Academic and Student Affairs, was inducted into the 35th Martin Luther King Jr. College of Ministers and Laity Collegium of Scholars at Morehouse College. Dr. Lightsey was among the distinguished honorees, some of the most prominent scholars and academics who are committed to research, mentoring, and teaching in a wide variety of disciplines and contexts that promote the work of peace through moral cosmopolitan social responsibility and engagement.

### Dr. Mike Hogue's interfaith work

Dr. Hogue, Professor of Theology, Ethics, and Philosophy of Religion, teamed up with Dr. Dean Bell, President of Spertus Institute, to explore vulnerability and resilience as leadership tools in inter-religious dialogue. They have received grant funding from the Arthur Vining Davis Foundation for their Religion, Vulnerability, and Resilience Project, which explores—via case studies, research, and public programs—how these principles can be applied to improving outcomes in inter-religious work. They are writing a book together.

### Rev. Julie Taylor's service to the community

Senior Director of Contextual Ministry and Affiliated Faculty, Rev. Julie Taylor also serves as an Air National Guard chaplain, and was deployed during the COVID-19 pandemic in support of the NYC Office of the Chief Medical Examiner. This experience informed and deepened Rev. Taylor's work at Meadville Lombard.

Dr. Nicole Kirk was on sabbatical for the 2019/2020 Academic Year. We look forward to reporting her superb scholarship in next year's report.



### Dr. Elyse Ambrose, our new Visiting Professor

Dr. Ambrose joined us as Visiting Assistant Professor of Ethical Leadership and Society and Louisville Institute Postdoctoral Fellow at Meadville Lombard. Dr. Ambrose will be with us for two academic years, through Commencement 2022. The fellowship is a prestigious award that supports cutting-edge work done by scholars and understood as "advancing North American religious and theological scholarship."



## MILESTONES: VIRTUAL EVENTS

During the course of our 176 years of history, thanks to the steady stream of people who continue to be in our corner, we have been able to fully embrace our ability to stay nimble and continue to evolve to better serve our students and the world, especially in these drastically changing times. Spring of 2020 demanded that we show that quality in earnest. The school planned and executed two first-time virtual events on very short timelines.

### Commencement Ceremony

The ceremony was viewed live by over 3,000 individuals, many of whom interacted with one another by way of virtual chat during the live event. The graduates were happy with the outcome and the event was appreciated by their loved ones who likely would not have been able to attend a physical event. To date, the ceremony recording has been viewed over 2,700 times. The Honorary Degree recipients were Dr. Barbara Ransby (L.H.D.), Dr. Janet Wolf (D.D.), and Rev. Danielle Di Bona (D.D.).

### Partners in Ministry Fundraiser

Meadville Lombard counts on the *Partners in Ministry* breakfast at the UUA General Assembly as its largest source of gifts every year. With GA going virtual, we hosted a two-part virtual fundraiser in place of our physical event and turned it into a crowdfunding opportunity, which generated \$26,716 and created increased visibility for the school. The live-stream event on June 18, featuring Rev. Leslie Takahashi, MDiv '04 as the keynote, was recorded and replayed over 340 times.



# 2019/2020 FUNDRAISING STATISTICS

We received

# \$2,043,342

from **296** donors, including **53** first-time donors.

**\$1,512,314** (74%)  
from **27** non-individual donors

**\$531,029** (26%)  
from **269** individual donors

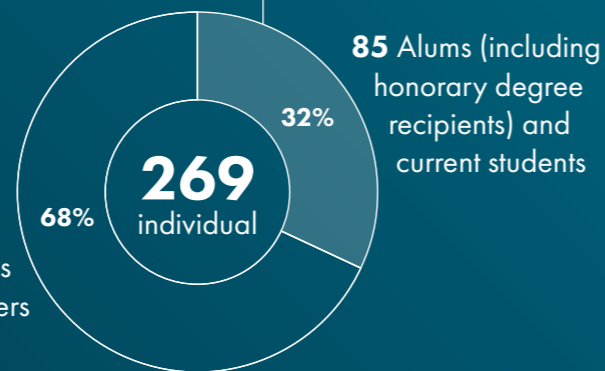


## Who were our donors:

- 10 Congregations
- 9 Foundations, Trusts, or Estates
- 8 Other Organizations

**27** non-individual

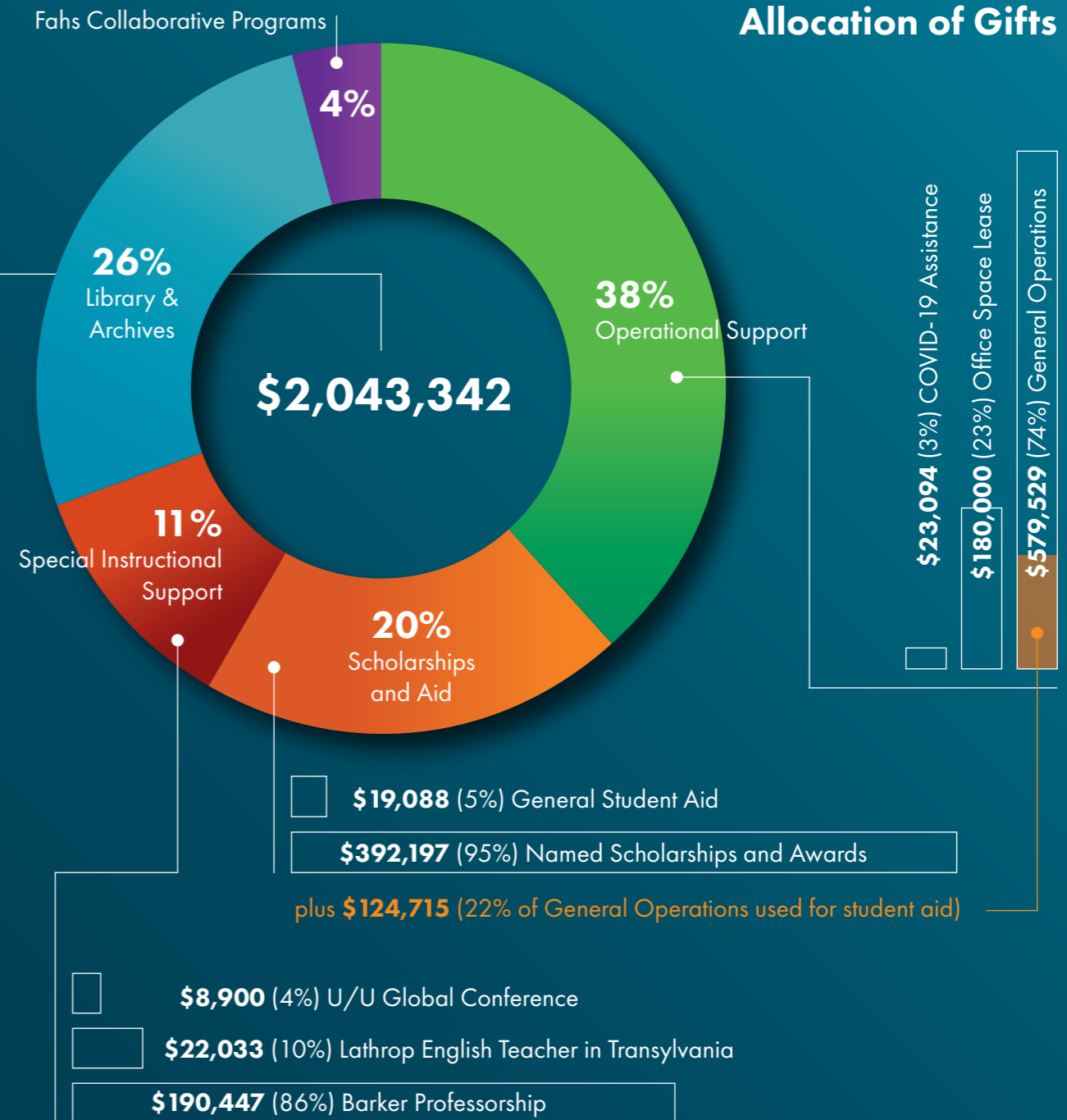
**184** friends and supporters



## How we received the gifts:



## Allocation of Gifts



## IN MEMORIAM

We celebrate the generosity of the **Doris A. and Lowell L. Blaisdell Estate**. In May, we received \$500,000 to support our Archives and \$300,000 in support of the Daniel G. Higgins Jr. Scholarship. This scholarship helps prepare students for Unitarian Universalist Ministry. Lowell, an educator, historian, and author of multiple books, and Doris, an archivist, had distinguished careers spanning over three decades at Texas Tech University. They were pillars of their community and their UU church, where they left an indelible mark.

# OUR DONORS: THANK YOU!

WE ARE SO GRATEFUL for our Fiscal Year 2019/2020 donors who made gifts to Meadville Lombard between July 1, 2019 and June 30, 2020, as well as our major donors, whose generosity continues to sustain our work. Thank you for supporting the education and training of the progressive faith leaders our world needs.

## Donors with Lifetime Gifts of \$500,000 +

Martha Atherton  
Doris A. and Lowell L. Blaisdell  
Arnold Bradburd, LHD '00 and Julia Bradburd  
Stanley Christianson  
Spencer Lavan, LHD '97 and Susan Lavan  
David Osborn, BD '52, DD '77 and Janet Osborn

Allen Hardy Sanders, LHD '03 and Betty Sanders  
J. Frank Schulman, DD '06 and Alice Schulman  
O. Darwin and Myra Smith  
Unitarian Universalist Association of Congregations  
Unitarian Universalist Congregation at Shelter Rock  
Marion Wertheim

*The following list is based on gift amount received during 2019/2020 Fiscal Year.*

## \$100,000 +

Doris A. and Lowell L. Blaisdell Estate  
Arnold Bradburd, LHD '00 and Julia Bradburd  
Martha Atherton Foundation  
Unitarian Universalist Association of Congregations  
Unitarian Universalist Congregation at Shelter Rock

## \$50,000 – \$99,999

Susan Weaver and Eric Alan Isaacson

## \$10,000 – \$49,999

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Douglas Eads  
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Lawrence R. Ladd, LHD '13  
Charles L. Hutchinson Fund  
Lyssa Jenkins, MDiv '14 and Patricia Houck  
Bruce and Barbara Schultz Mickey  
St. Lawrence Foundation for Theological Education, Inc.  
Diana Strassmann  
Unitarian Universalist Fellowship of Huntington, NY  
U.S. Treasury  
Ken and Jerusha Vogel

## \$5,000 – \$9,999

Dan and Julie Brody  
Claudia Frost, MDiv '08 and David Frost  
Brock Leach, MDiv '11 and Julie Leach  
Nick Lewis and Judie Rinearson  
Virginia (Ginger) Luke, MDiv '01 and Don Chery  
Midwest Unitarian Universalist Conference  
NYS Convention of Universalists  
Anthony Pinn  
Jeanne Pupke, MDiv '04 and Regina Largent  
William Pitt Robinson Fund  
Kurt and Pat Steele

## \$1,000 – \$4,999

All Souls Unitarian Church, Tulsa, OK  
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Wayne B. Arnason and Kathleen Rolenz  
Jane and Lee Bannor  
Lee Barker, DMin '78, DD '01 and Kristina Barker  
Nancy Bechtolt  
Michael Berger and Rosalie Clavez  
Deborah and Klaus Bieber  
J. Randolph Burnham and Linda Hudson  
Stephen Charles  
Carol B. Conger  
Diana Davies, MDiv '17  
Charles and Barbara DuMond  
Eleanor Emmons  
First Unitarian Church of Oklahoma City, OK

First Unitarian Universalist Church of Richmond, VA  
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Clyde H. Griffith Fund  
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Holly Kerr  
David and Marjorie Kroll  
George Krumme  
Bonnie Lepoff  
Liberal Religious Educators Association  
Shari Loe  
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Thom Maciula and C. Fish Greenfield  
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Winnie McDonagh  
Carrie McEvoy  
Leonora Montgomery, DD '12  
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Melanie Walter-Mahoney

Mark Ward, MDiv '04 and Deborah Ward  
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Lynnda White, MDiv '13  
W. Frederick Wooden, DMin '79 and Wendy Wooden

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Roger and Suzanne Ames  
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Elizabeth Citrin  
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Bunny Hodas  
Michael Hogue  
Hillis Howie Jr. and Margaret Shaklee  
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Eric Kaminetzky, MDiv '09 and Cathy Kaminetzky  
Nicole Kirk  
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Dave Leonard  
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and Donna Morrison-Reed, DMin '79  
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Margret O'Neill, MDiv '09  
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Millie Rochester, MDiv '03 and Roger Rochester  
Bruce Russell-Jayne, MDiv '05 and Cece Russell-Jayne  
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Jenice L. View  
Willard and Katharine Wilcox  
Teresa C. Wilmot  
Shari Woodbury, MDiv '15  
Ted and Christine Yang

## \$100 – \$499

Peter Arian  
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Alice Diebel, MDiv '19  
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Vilius Rudra Dundzila, DMin '06  
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Gloria Kinney  
Roberta Knight  
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Evy Lipecka  
Edward Loomis, MDiv '07  
Hector Lopez-Sierra  
William F. Lyon  
Mary MacCormac  
Kenneth MacLean, DD '82  
Claus and Pat Makowka



Lyn Marshall, MDiv '14  
Shirley Matthews  
Fred K. McCoy  
Peggy McIntosh, DHL '12  
Daniel and Tammy McKanan  
Elaine McMillan  
Betty Jo Middleton, ISP '83 and J. Howard Middleton  
John R. Miles, DHL'07  
Bonnie Miller  
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Francis Morehouse  
Fredric Muir  
Linnea Nelson  
Christopher Nelson  
Barry and Maija Nobel  
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Unitarian Universalist Church of  
Rockford, IL  
Unitarian Universalist Society of  
Martha's Vineyard, MA  
Suzanne Wasilczuk, MDiv '07 and  
Tim Stratton  
Gretchen E. Weis, MDiv '13  
Laura Wilson  
Sara Zimmerman, DMin '09

## \$1 – \$99

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Irene Burkner  
Barbara Coeyman  
Jonathan Coffee, MDiv '17  
Emily Conger, MDiv '17  
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James L. Gula  
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Carol and Bob Hopper  
Laura Horton-Ludwig, MDiv '05 and  
John B. Ludwig

Thank you for growing the  
roots of love, compassion,  
and justice!



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Lillie Searles  
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Anthony and Mona Taylor  
Joseph Thomas  
Patricia Vogler  
Bill Weir, BD '61  
Alice Wesley, ISP '77 and  
Joe Wesley  
Joanne Whelden, MDiv '04  
Carter Woodiel  
Jacqueline Ziegler, MDiv '94

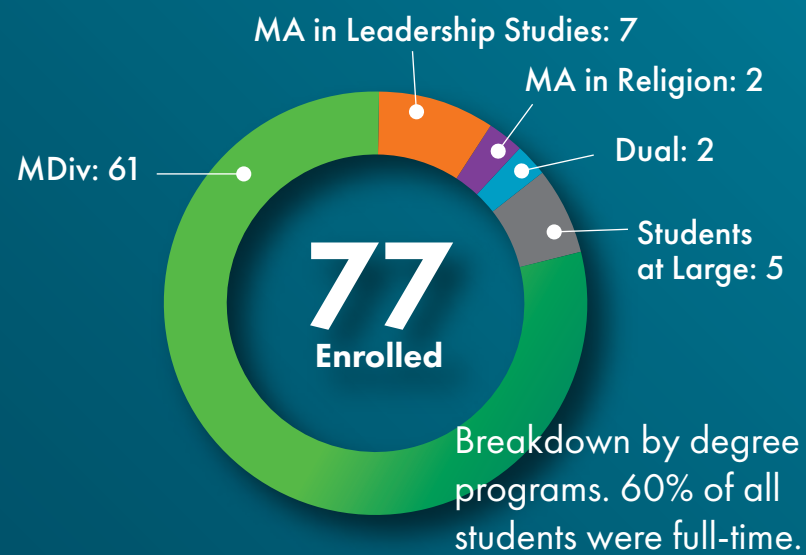
## DONOR SPOTLIGHT

**Laurel Hallman**, DMin '81, DD '97 and **Larry Ladd**, LHD '13 each believe deeply in the importance of spiritual depth and effective leadership in our faith. "It was what drew us together when we were serving on Meadville's Board of Trustees," they said. Since their marriage in 2009 they have given as a couple, helping to sustain the school in campaigns for special purposes as well as giving regularly to the General Operations Fund for ongoing expenses. "We are glad to be able to support the school out of our own gratitude, and are proud of the students and graduates who are serving our congregations and communities in these extraordinary times."

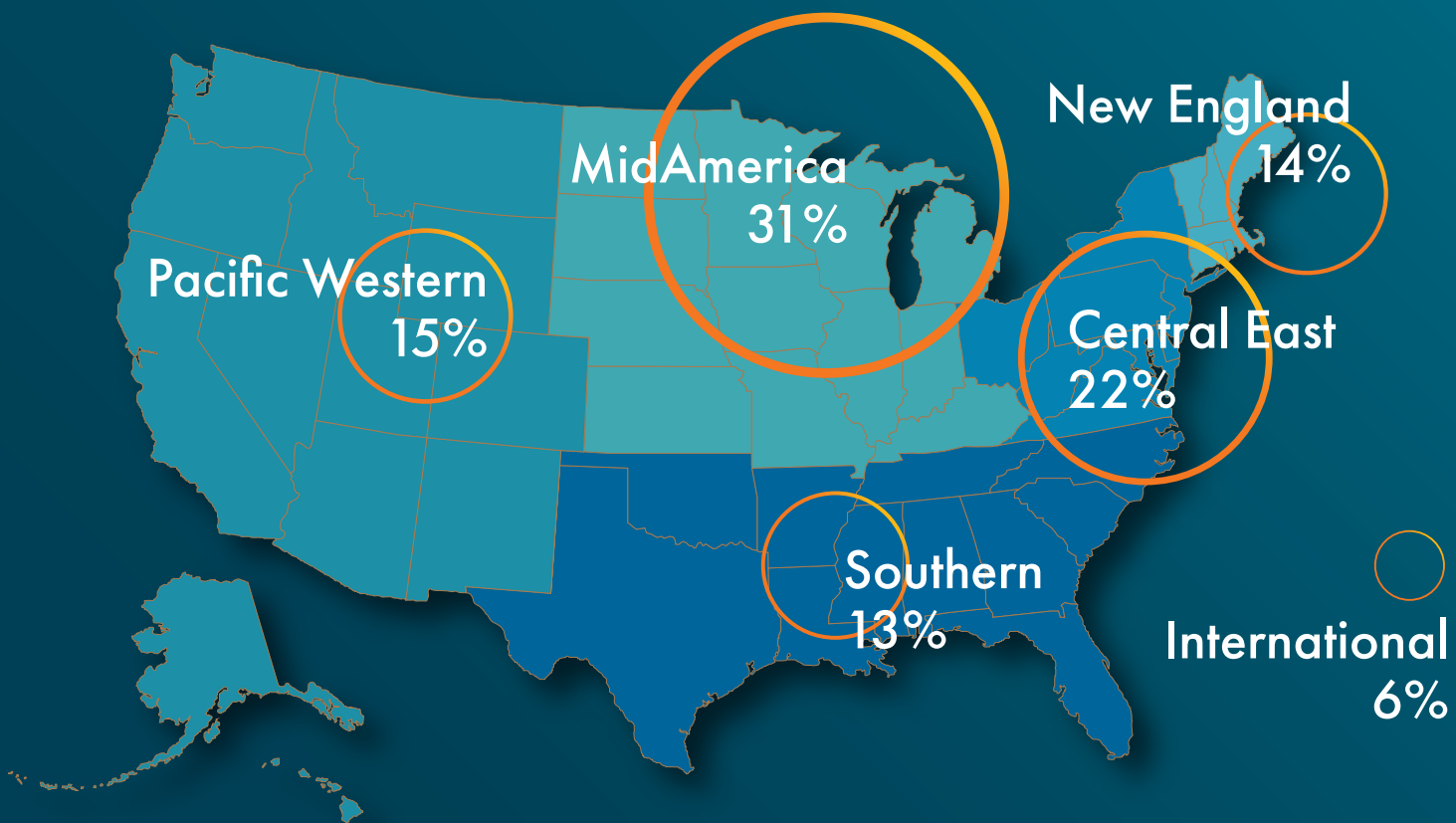


# OUR STUDENTS: FALL 2019

Our students come from a variety of vocational paths and educational environments, bringing a diversity of experience and wisdom.



## Which region are they from?



We are an Open and Affirming Institution. Our students express multiple gender identities. 71% of them identified themselves as female last year. About 84% of our student body identified as white, the age range was 23-73, and average age was **46.**

# FINANCIAL AID

In 2019/2020, we awarded over **\$536,000** in grants and scholarships to our students.

## How Your Gifts Are Reducing Student Debt

2019/2020 Fiscal Year student debt statistics showed the lowest numbers in the last four years for the amount of student loans borrowed per student, the percentage of students graduating with student debt, and the collective student debt amount of the graduating class. Overall, unlike most graduate schools, our student debt statistics are trending downward. This student debt reduction is made possible by the combination of increased emphasis on financial planning and education for our students and—more importantly—**grants and scholarships provided by the generous gifts from our supporters like you.**

# STUDENT LIFE

## Move to a Fully Online Learning Experience

When the pandemic unfolded, we leaned into our values and made the decision to prioritize the safety of our community. Our staff and faculty moved swiftly and deliberately, mindful of the challenges to create significant online learning environment for the Spring, Summer, and Fall Intensives—the in-person portion of our curriculum. Furthermore, in our commitment to center students' learning experiences, our faculty completed the Designing Digital Teaching and Learning Certification program through the University of Wisconsin-Madison.

Intensives and Ingatherings have always been very precious times when our students come to Chicago, learn together, and cultivate relationships that will support them throughout their ministerial careers. While our students missed being able to physically gather with their colleagues, we have been providing many of the same extracurricular activities during Intensives that we have in the past, albeit virtually for now.



Rev. Mariela Pérez-Simons, MDiv '20

2019

# FAHS COLLABORATIVE



Dr. Mark Hicks, Director, and Joy Berry, Assistant Director

As an educational laboratory led by Dr. Mark Hicks, Angus MacLean Professor of Religious Education, the Fahs Collaborative continues to test new ways of responding to urgent learning needs around faith formation.

**Beloved Conversations: Meditations on Race and Ethnicity** is a program that seeks to change the way everyone experiences race in ourselves, our congregations, and our social world. In the 2019/2020 church year, 1,133 UU congregants in 49 congregations participated, and 19 of the congregations repeated the program for deeper learning.

**Creating Theology Together:** Twelve congregations signed up to field-test this new curriculum. The program is based on the idea that human faith development happens together, in the context of faith community, is

intentionally multi-generational, and supports the kind of shared learning that can transform individuals, their congregations, and their justice work in the world.

**The Well:** The Fahs Collaborative launched *The Well: A Spiritual Retreat for People of Color and Our Families* in July 2019 at Ferry Beach Resort and Conference Center in Saco, Maine. 50 children, youth, and adults enjoyed listening to each other's stories, learning together, and creating a supportive space for one another.



**Beloved Conversations: Virtual** will be launched in Fall 2020. This new program is built out incorporating the lessons learned from earlier work. We expect the new materials—along with new teaching and learning strategies—to spark new insight and deepen connection.



Rev. Kierstin Homblett Allen, Beloved Conversations Congregational Coordinator



Our Library and Archives provide resources not only to Meadville Lombard students and faculty, but also to religious professionals, members of the broader Unitarian Universalist community, and scholars of all (or no) faiths. Our complete library catalog is accessible to search online and most of our books can be shipped directly to users. Our digital archive is open to all users.



Our archives hold invaluable resources for our students' (and anyone's) research.

# LIBRARY & ARCHIVES

**The Heresies UU Women's History Project** added over 10,000 pages of digitized archival material documenting UU women, including the personal papers of Rev. Marilyn Sewell, Rev. Qiyamah Rahman, and Denny Davidoff, to name a few. A unique aspect of this project was the centrality of sermons. To maximize their discoverability, we developed a robust new set of metadata terms specifically to describe UU sermons. The Heresies Project is ongoing, and more material will be added this year.

**More about the Denny T. Davidoff Papers:** Last year, we were able to honor the legacy of our beloved Denny by digitizing her papers and making them available online. The Denny T. Davidoff Papers is one of the largest sets of personal papers digitized by the Meadville Lombard Archives and Special Collections. The digital collection contains 236 sermons or speeches, 186 orders of service, and other materials. Denny's impact on Meadville Lombard and Unitarian Universalism is evidenced in this collection and can be browsed chronologically or by subject.

**New Online Library System:** After 18 months of hard work through the Fiscal Year 2019/2020, in July 2020, Meadville Lombard Library and Archives successfully migrated to Alma, a powerful, cloud-based library system used by most large academic libraries. This will change every aspect of the library, from how students access resources to how library staff catalog books and manage the collection. We have taken the migration to Alma as an opportunity to rethink and rebuild the entire digital infrastructure of the library and archives.

Our work continues...



**MEADVILLE LOMBARD**  
THEOLOGICAL SCHOOL

610 S. Michigan Ave. Chicago, IL 60605 USA  
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2019/2020

