



THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

April 26, 2011

Dear College President,

In America, our diversity is a strength, not a weakness. I have always believed that when people of different backgrounds and beliefs come together in the service of humanity, our Nation grows stronger as a result.

In this spirit, I am inviting college and university presidents and others around the country to join me in the Interfaith and Community Service Challenge. The idea is simple: across our country, campus religious and non-religious organizations will partner together or with local community organizations or houses of worship to tackle specific, year-long community service challenges. The best models of this interfaith and community service will receive recognition by the White House.

Service like this is happening around our country. For example, at the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign, students from InterVarsity Christian Fellowship, Hillel, the Muslim Students Association, and Buddhists for World Peace teamed up with the Salvation Army to help earthquake victims in Haiti. And in Nashville, Tennessee religiously diverse student groups at Vanderbilt University are working together to build a house with Habitat for Humanity this spring.

These students do not always share the same theology or believe the same things – and they do not have to. But they are coming together with the goal of meeting specific community needs across religious and cultural lines.

I am inviting you to join the cadre of higher education institutions that have answered the call to build interfaith cooperation and community service on their campuses by participating in the Interfaith and Community Service Challenge. You can find more about how to join this challenge on our website: WhiteHouse.gov/InterfaithService.

As a Christian who became committed to the church while serving my community, I know that an act of service can unite people of different backgrounds around a common purpose of helping those in need. In doing so, we can not only better our communities, we can also build bridges of understanding between ourselves and our neighbors.

I hope you will take part in this challenge, and we look forward to working with you in the weeks and months ahead.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be "Barack Obama", written in a cursive style.