



## **Fact Sheet: Supporting an Inclusive Campus Climate** ***Interfaith Prayer, Reflection, and Meditation Mini-Grants***

Religious diversity is one of New York State's and SUNY's great strengths, and SUNY is committed to ensuring that students from all faith backgrounds feel seen and respected.

According to [Interfaith America](#), "Embracing religious diversity on campus means accommodating the spiritual needs of students not only through staffing and programming, but also through architectural spaces that accommodate a variety of religious, spiritual, and ethical practices. Interfaith spaces are a visible symbol of an institution's commitment to welcoming religious diversity, and whether large or small can provide support to diverse students."

As outlined in the 2024 State of the University Agenda, SUNY awarded a total of \$125,000 in small grants for 22 SUNY campuses to create or enhance an interfaith prayer, reflection, and meditation space. All funding uses must be nondenominational to be eligible for support.

**Seven** campuses will use the funding to **create a new space**:

- **The University at Albany** will open its new interfaith space in January 2025. With these funds, it will purchase room dividers, prayer rugs, shoe racks, and other furnishings to equip the space.
- **SUNY Canton** will buy prayer mats, portable dividers, floor pillows, décor, lighting, furniture, books, bells, chimes, equipment, and supplies. Members of a campus interfaith council will be a critical resource in identifying necessary items for religious and ceremonial use.
- **SUNY Delhi** plans to develop an interfaith prayer room and meditation space accessible to all students 24/7. Furnished with mats, comfortable furniture, and an audio/video system for guided meditation, this initiative is a collaborative effort involving various campus departments.
- **SUNY ESF** will create an interfaith space in the Moon Library where members of the ESF community, especially students, can enjoy religious freedoms and a place of contemplation—be it faith based or not. It will be a reflective space in which one can sit, stand, and/or kneel in reverent silence or pray without fear of judgement. This room will feature individual prayer mats as well as seating accommodations.
- **Herkimer County Community College** will establish a new interfaith space. This space will be used as a prayer, meditation, and reflection room for all students and employees. The goal is to create a welcoming, inclusive, and neutral space where individuals from diverse religious backgrounds can freely and comfortably pray, meditate, or reflect, thereby enhancing excellence and personal growth for all members of the campus community.
- **Jefferson Community College** will create an inclusive, welcoming interfaith space, which will feature comfortable seating, soundproofing, and flexible design elements to accommodate various religious and spiritual practices. Funds will also support the provision of signage,

meditation materials, and necessary maintenance to ensure a peaceful and accessible environment for all students and employees, fostering a sense of community and wellbeing across diverse faith traditions.

- **SUNY Purchase** will establish a nondenominational space that will house appropriate educational and religious materials and supplies to provide a calm, welcoming place open to all members of the community for their spiritual needs.

**Fifteen** SUNY campuses will use the funding to **enhance existing spaces**, furnish it with nondenominational items, and increase its sense of belonging. For example:

- **Alfred State College** will introduce new furnishings and storage solutions, increasing the space's capacity for larger groups and events. The revamped space aims to foster community and support, promoting student well-being and academic achievement by providing a serene environment for reflection, contemplation, and spiritual development.
- **Binghamton University** will use the funds to improve all four of its multifaith prayer and meditation rooms. This funding makes it possible to improve the visibility, access, and resources available in each room. Items such as white noise machines, lamps, coat racks, floor pillows, and instruments will improve the experience of the campus community.
- **SUNY Brockport** will paint the walls, replace the carpet, and install storage for meditation, religious observances, and/or reflection spaces, as well as room dividers for added privacy. In addition, a portion of the funding will be allocated to raise awareness about the space and to reestablish the interfaith council.
- **The University at Buffalo** will further promote welcoming spaces, including enhancements to its prayer rooms on the North and South campuses, celebrating the diverse campus community.
- **SUNY Erie** will equip the prayer room on all three campuses with furniture and supplies such as shoe racks, prayer rugs, kneelers, portable dividers, meditation bells, and floor pillows.
- **Farmingdale State College** will establish an interfaith council to provide guidance and work towards the refurbishment of the current interfaith space based on the council's recommendations.
- **SUNY Fredonia** will equip its tranquility room to be a peaceful, neutral space. The campus plans to purchase a TV, speaker, futon, end tables, desk, large floor pillows, area rug, yoga mats, shoe rack, landscape/ocean/waterfall art/paintings, and a light dimmer.
- **Monroe Community College** will support and accommodate students' spiritual needs at three locations across its urban and suburban campuses. Monroe will use funds to purchase prayer rugs, meditation maps, pillows, shoe racks, towels, portable foot-washing machines, and inspirational posters for three existing interfaith prayer rooms. In addition, Monroe will formalize an interfaith council as a subcommittee of its existing Inclusion, Diversity, Equity, and Accountability (IDEA) Council.

- **SUNY New Paltz** will enhance the comfort and necessities of the space so that students, faculty, and staff can experience an inclusive contemplation space. Purchases will include prayer rugs and cushions for spiritual and religious practices as well as items that will encourage participants to share and learn about religious and holiday rituals and observances.
- **SUNY Old Westbury** will be purchasing ablution stations to be fixed within two bathrooms, furnishings for organization (storage cabinets, bookcases), privacy dividers for prayer spaces, and meditative tools for reflection and mindfulness practices, such as yoga mats. Lastly, it will create two door signs for both entrances and purchase window privacy screens for doors.
- **SUNY Oneonta** will create an interfaith council, executing interfaith programming, and furnishing a space that accommodates a variety of religious, spiritual, and ethical practices. The funds for the interfaith space will be used for furniture such as an armoire to house various items including books, prayer rugs, and other items that students might use for their practices.
- **SUNY College of Optometry** will create a more welcoming space for the campus community to decompress. This includes installing dimmable lights, replacing the carpet, painting the room a calming shade, adding a shoe cubby, and purchasing plush furnishings to encourage reflection, meditation, and prayer.
- **SUNY Oswego** will use the funding to support the new prayer and meditation space set to open this fall, which represents SUNY Oswego's commitment to tending to the spiritual needs of students, faculty, and staff of all faiths and spiritual backgrounds. The funding will expedite the final renovations needed to make this space fully functional, inclusive, and secure.
- **SUNY Polytechnic Institute** will enhance its existing interfaith sanctuary into and develop an even more inclusive and purposeful Interfaith Center for Prayer and Reflection. The physical space will include flexible seating such as kneeling platforms, pillows, and pads. SUNY Poly will also invest in external shoe racks, a sound system, and signage that helps lead students to this reflective and calm space.
- **Suffolk County Community College** will use the grant funds to support a refresh on each campus with new supplies such as mats, benches, battery-operated candles, decorations, moveable panels, and rugs. Displays will be scheduled on the movable panels on a rotating monthly schedule provided by the Office of Multicultural Affairs and in collaboration with clubs and organizations.