

**AAR Regional Grant Proposal**  
**Meeting the Challenge of Transitions: Employment Workshops for Religious Studies**  
**Scholars and Religious Professionals**

**Contact**

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**Background**

AAR has made employability a priority for its members and to that end offers a robust program of workshops and sessions at the annual conference that addresses the specific challenges of creating careers, either academic, professional or “alt-ac” (alternative academic) with a specialization in religion. Yet in addition to an academic job market which is frequently both economically and emotionally debilitating for both graduate students and PhDs, many scholars and religious professionals who are interested in career transition often do not know how to adequately identify their skill sets or how to identify professional opportunities. This proposed event fits into the series of employment initiatives that AAR has been developing by addressing both the emotional and practical needs of religious scholars and professionals trying to establish careers at different phases of their lives. This may also provide an excellent opportunity for the AAR Western Region to engage in local outreach with a program that will have broad appeal to academics and religious professionals in the community. This program is also very easily transferrable to other regions.

**Participants**

Dr. Amy Hale teaches Humanities in the Undergraduate Program for GGU and has been producing workshops on a variety of employment topics for AAR Regional and National programs for three years. She specializes in online course development in the Humanities and Social Sciences. Her workshops range from résumé building skills and rethinking academic careers in the 21<sup>st</sup> century to exploring various facets of educational technology. She is also on the Pagan Studies steering group for AAR.

Dr. Jeffrey Yergler is the Chair of Management for the Undergraduate Programs at GGU. In addition to a PhD in Management, Dr. Yergler holds an M. Div and a D. Min with a focus on theology and organizational performance. He is a principal for Integer Leadership Consulting, a firm that specializes in leadership training, executive coaching, diversity training, and management consulting solutions.

## **Program Details**

We propose a series of three workshops directly addressing employability and job transitions for Religious Studies PhDs and graduate students, and religious professionals which will be held over a two day period in June 2015 at the Golden Gate Campus in Downtown San Francisco. These will be delivered by Dr. Amy Hale and Dr. Jeffrey Yergler and promoted to AAR members as well as local colleges, seminaries and universities.

The first workshop, drawing on Dr. Yergler's ministerial background, will focus on career transitions and job skills for religious professionals, exploring the unique skill sets that religious professionals have and can contribute in a variety of professional environments. There may be a number of reasons why a religious professional might consider a career transition, yet they may not understand the wider applications of ministerial training to other professions. In this workshop we will break down the specific training that religious professionals receive and help them to build career strategies that will utilize their training and skills. This workshop will also help religious professionals to consider the wider application and value that religious training can bring to a variety of professional settings.

The second will be a workshop for graduate students and PhDs in Religious Studies or Theology that will help them identify their skills and consider a range of possible career options that can fit holistically into wider life strategies. The shift away from tenure-track positions has and will continue, creating new financial, social, and emotional challenges for those who entered academia hoping for professorships. This new academic job market demands a creative, entrepreneurial approach to making a living. This workshop is designed to help academics and graduates approach academic work as only one part of a wider picture that potentially integrates a variety of income streams while still being able to pursue research goals and interests. Participants will examine their own history and relationships to academia, and become more empowered through discovering marketable skill sets they may not know they possess. During the workshop we will discuss sustainable life strategies, considering what activities and relationships bring us real joy and can therefore be maintained in the long term. Participants will have the opportunity to reframe the issue of work/life balance in the context of an academic career, describe their abilities in terms of marketable skill sets and consider alternatives to traditional research, teaching, publishing and academic engagement.

The third workshop will focus specifically on career transitions specifically for people 40 and over. Middle aged professionals, particularly those with advanced degrees, face unique challenges when changing careers. This workshop will provide an overview of the specific circumstances that over 40s with a PhD face in making career transitions, either into or outside of academia. Participants will discuss the conditions and concerns that people at midlife face in a supportive environment. We will also do some exercises to help identify skills, discuss strategies for talking about one's varied career history confidently to prospective employers and also to others. We will work on advanced elevator pitches designed for people in career transition. We will discuss the importance of networking and continuing education and discuss ways to leverage these resources in the community. Finally we will look at some case studies of individuals who have been successful with career transitions at midlife, one who worked in religion and moved successfully to an academic career, and hear their inspiring stories and tips.

## Budget

We anticipate that Golden Gate University will make facilities available to us for holding this event.

Coffee and light refreshments for 2 days	\$
Stipend for Dr. Yergler	\$
Facilities set up fees	\$
Worksheet packets for conference attendees	\$
Promotional post cards and flyers	\$
Total Budget	\$