

Generation Peace Academy (Formerly STF) Charges Ahead with Record Number of Trainees

Ariana Moon
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Roland Platt, Director of Generation Peace Academy

Roland Platt, Director of the Generation Peace Academy, or GPA (formerly known as the Special Task Force, or STF), says business is booming at the premier character-education program of the Unification movement.

“This year has by far a record number of applicants. We actually anticipated a few years back that the number of applicants would decrease, based on the demographics. The number of Blessed Children graduating from high school for the last three years has been declining, and so we thought this program would get smaller and smaller. But despite this, last year we had a record number of applicants for its time – 111 first-years – and this year set an even higher record at 122. In addition to the first-years, we have 31 second-years, 8 third-years and 12 core staff, full-time or part-time.

“It’s obvious that the program right now is really appealing and fitting to what the second-generation need and want, which is why we’re getting such a large number of applicants and unparalleled interest in the program. We’re also reaching out to the older Blessed Children, and now there’s a growing number of participants who’ve already finished one, two, or three years of college who decide to do one year of our program to explore their faith before getting back into school.”

An Overview of Generation Peace Academy

“The vision statement of GPA is to be a premier education and leadership training program for Blessed Children graduating from high school,” said Platt in an interview Sept. 23, 2011. “The most important thing for us organizers to do is to provide an environment through which second-generation Unificationists can connect to God and True Parents through the True Children.

“The name is the most obvious change. I think the name is awesome, and feel that one day it will become as prestigious as the names of West Point Academy, or Princeton. The name “Special Task Force” is kind of limited – it doesn’t convey who we actually are. “Generation Peace Academy” is a name we can be really proud of. Right now we’re catering to Blessed Children mainly, but I can see in the future that GPA will become the training program for all the young people who want to learn about the Unification Movement and change their lives. When anything has been around a long time and then changes, it takes

people time to adjust, so I'm sure there were many graduates of STF who struggled with name change. But for the first-years coming in now, the name is quite natural for them.”



First-years, second-years, and third-years gather to sing and join in fellowship at the kickoff workshop.

The Tripartite Module System

“In terms of how the program is structured, we thought of having “modules” last year. It’s a brilliant idea to divide the program into three completely different sections. First of all, before this system, STF was basically a whole year of fundraising, then a whole year of witnessing, and a year is a long time to maintain focus and inspiration. When we broke the program down into modules, the level of spirit and focus stayed with the participants all throughout the year. We’ve seen great results.

“So now the year is divided into three. There’s the fundraising-training module, which develops character and on a deeper level allows the participants to experience God’s and True Parents’ heart by going out into the world. Then there’s the leadership module, which takes place at the Lovin’ Life Learning Center, during which the main purpose is to connect to Lovin’ Life Ministries and all its programs, as well as get a taste of what it’s like to witness and share our faith with others. This module in particular is a special opportunity because it’s in this module that participants can personally interact with the True Family and share fellowship through the Ballroom Dance Ministry. The third module consists of international service for three weeks, which I think provides a powerful experience because many Blessed Children have never been out of America, in developing countries. When you live in America, you take a lot of things for granted, so when you go overseas, your heart and mind can expand greatly when you see how other people are living and how blessed we are to be in this country.

“This year we have nine group leaders and nine groups. Three groups will go through a module at a time. We try to make every team balanced – there are leader types, supporter types, strong types, milder types. So instead of making three big groups, we have nine smaller groups that rotate in different directions – some rotate clockwise, others counter-clockwise, others in a sort of triangle direction, so there’s the maximum amount of interaction between all the different participants throughout the course of the year. Otherwise you’d only get to know one third of the participants of GPA.

“Workshops are interspersed throughout the program, and are an opportunity for all the participants of GPA to gather together and share their different experiences. The kickoff workshop lasts for few weeks – it’s happening right now – and it’s a time during which everyone comes together to start off the year on the same page, grasp the vision and goals of GPA, and clarify their own motivation and goals for the year. Then everyone is split into three modules. We have two inter-module workshops where everyone comes together again, between the transition from the first and second module and then the second and third module. Those are really exciting and there’s a high level of energy there, because you have people

coming in from all around the world – from Lovin’ Life Ministries, from fundraising in the Rocky Mountains, from doing service work in Honduras, Guatemala, Peru, or other places, and there’s a lot of sharing of testimonies. Then there’s the conclusion workshop at the end of the program, where they reflect upon the whole year, wrap up, celebrate at the Commencement Gala, and prepare for the next step in their lives. At workshops, the participants bond through activities, attend lectures from guest speakers such as Rev. Phillip Schanker or Rev. Andrew Compton, and some time in the year we have a Blessing Workshop at which they learn about relationships.”



Participants of GPA stretch before engaging in sports as part of an icebreaker at the Unification Theological Seminary (UTS).

Comparing GPA to STF

“The biggest change I see is that STF used to be an intense training course focused on challenging young people to push themselves physically, spiritually, mentally, and we had a lot of powerful transformations. But the program now as GPA is a lot more suited to prepare young people for life in a more holistic way. GPA prepares them for the Blessing and academic success and provides them with a strong spiritual foundation. I’m confident that the program now prepares them better for daily life and also to be integrated into the community after the program is over. STF before was a bit separate – you went through this intense boot-camp experience for a year, then once you graduated, it was very hard for you to transition and apply what you learned, what you gained, into daily life, despite the powerful experiences you may have had on the program.

“Also, Lovin’ Life Ministries has had a huge impact on STF. I would say that STF is really a part of Lovin’ Life. Because of Lovin’ Life, it’s easier for graduates of STF, now GPA, to go back into their communities and find ways that they can support and be active and engaged in them.”

The Investment of Rev. In Jin Moon

“I’ve been involved in STF since August of 2001, so I’m now going into my 11th year. Ten years of STF, and now the first year of GPA. I joined the Mobile Fundraising Team (MFT) in 1993, and was involved for eight years. In STF I’ve been a team leader, a group leader, director, and pioneered Latin STF back in 2005.

“I feel that it is a tremendous privilege to do what I’m doing. I can’t think of anything I’d rather be doing, even though my job is often challenging and sometimes overwhelming, it’s an honor to be able to work closely with so many Blessed Children, to help them find purpose and direction in their lives, and to serve the True Family.

“I’ve always felt STF, now GPA, is True Family’s program. STF was launched in 1994, and then in 2001, Hyun Jin Nim took leadership and re-vamped it, exactly seven years after the program was created. Then exactly seven years later, in 2008, In Jin Nim came and embraced the program, speaking at the Unification Theological Seminary (UTS) almost the exact day Hyun Jin Nim had seven years earlier, in the very same room. I had an incredibly experience that day when I realized this.

“To In Jin Nim, I would like to say thank you. I’m extremely grateful for the personal love and care and investment I received from her. Her heart towards second-generation is really amazing, and she’s raised up this program. She’s the one who transformed STF to what it is now, she’s the reason we have so many applicants now, and that the numbers are only going to go up. She’s transformed STF, and given it so much love. I wouldn’t be surprised if the number next year reaches 200, and after that 300, because of how In Jin Nim has transformed the program into GPA.”