

Bylaws of the Unitarian Universalist Fellowship of Montgomery

June 30, 2024

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0. Introduction

This liberal religious Fellowship was organized with 22 individual Members on September 18, 1966, and became affiliated with the Unitarian Universalist Association at that time.

These bylaws lay out an organizational structure to carry out the will of the Fellowship in an effective manner. This document takes into account whether the Fellowship is deemed small or medium.

This document is a living document that changes as the Fellowship changes.

1. Name

The name of this religious Fellowship shall be the Unitarian Universalist Fellowship of Montgomery. It is the legal successor to the Unitarian Universalist Fellowship of Montgomery, Alabama, Inc. and shall have all the rights and responsibilities of the antecedent organization.

2. Terms

This document defines terms to avoid confusion. For example, one could speak of members of the Fellowship, the Board, and Committees but this would cause confusion. Limiting “Member” to the Fellowship allows only one interpretation. These terms are capitalized to reinforce their specific meanings.

Term	Meaning
Board	Board of Trustees.
Committee	A permanent or ad hoc workgroup.
Committee Person	A person who is elected or appointed to a Committee.
Fellowship	The entire congregation; the Unitarian Universalist Fellowship of Montgomery.
Member	A person who is a member of the Fellowship.
Trustee	A person who is elected or appointed to the Board. A Trustee can be the President, Vice-President, Secretary, Treasurer, or a Member-at-large. The Minister and person responsible for Religious Education are ex officio.

Fellowship Size: During its history, UUFM has been considered a small or medium Fellowship. This document specifically defines requirements for a medium-sized Fellowship that are not appropriate for a smaller Fellowship.

Term	Meaning
Medium-sized Fellowship	A Fellowship with 50 or more active members.
Small-sized Fellowship	A Fellowship with under active 50 members.

3. Denominational Affiliation

This Fellowship shall join the Unitarian Universalist Association (UUA) and the UUA regional organization in which it is geographically located.

4. Vision and Principles

The Fellowship is intentionally diverse and tolerant, offering refuge to those searching for spiritual and intellectual growth, without regard to past religious histories, personal background, or status. We cherish reason, freedom of religion and thought, and embrace democratic principles.

To make a difference socially, ethically, and spiritually, we dedicate our membership, resources, and staff to be a presence and influence in our community.

In addition, we covenant with the UUA to promote these principles:

1. The inherent worth and dignity of every person;
2. Justice, equity, and compassion in human relations;
3. Acceptance of one another and encouragement to spiritual growth in our Fellowship;
4. A free and responsible search for truth and meaning;
5. The right of conscience and the use of the democratic process within our Fellowship and in society at large;
6. The goal of world community with peace, liberty, and justice for all;
7. Respect for the interdependent web of all existence of which we are a part; and
8. Journeying toward spiritual wholeness by working to build a diverse multicultural Beloved Community by our actions that accountably dismantle racism and other oppressions in ourselves and our institutions.¹

5. Inclusiveness

This Fellowship affirms and promotes the full participation of all persons in all our activities,

¹ UUFM ratified the Eighth Principle on June 2021.

including membership, programming, hiring practices, and the calling of religious professionals, without regard to race, color, national origin, gender, sexual orientation, physical abilities, or age.

This Fellowship shall be inclusive of Members and Friends who are unable to attend in-person. Attendance at meetings may be in-person, virtual, or a hybrid. Virtual meetings include using telephone, Zoom, Facebook, or other means.

6. Members and Friends

6.1. Members:

Eligibility: Any person 14 years or older who has read and agrees with the purposes and principles of the UUA and this Fellowship.

Joining: An eligible person can join by:

- Pledging for the Fiscal Year of the next month; and
- Signing the membership book in the presence of a Trustee, as an indication.

If unable to physically sign the membership book, the person joining shall delegate someone to sign for them.

Maintenance: A Member shall maintain their membership by completing a yearly pledge to the Fellowship, and participating, according to interest and ability, in the religious services and functions of the Fellowship.

Resignation: Any Member may resign from the Fellowship at any time by providing a written notification to the Board.

Reinstatement: A Member who resigned may regain membership by providing written notification to the Board and making a current pledge, without having to re-sign the membership book.

Only individuals who have been Members for over 30 days may vote on any question before the Fellowship, be elected to the Board, be a Committee Chairperson, or be a Nominating Committee Person.

Pledging: A pledge is a promised donation that allows the Fellowship to plan for the fiscal year. The pledge can be monetary or nonmonetary and the Member may contribute more or less than the amount pledged. For example, the Member may pledge the labor needed to maintain the Fellowship's website.

6.2. Friends

A Friend is a person who supports the Fellowship by making a contribution, or participates actively in the Fellowship, but who has not signed the membership book.

Friends may be elected or named to serve on any Committee with two exceptions:

- They may not serve on the Board; and
- They may not serve as a Chairperson of a Committee.

Friends may attend any open meeting but may not vote.

7. Fiscal Year

The Fiscal Year of the Fellowship shall begin July 1 and end June 30 of each calendar year.

8. Fellowship

Powers of the Fellowship: The following matters are specifically reserved for decision by the membership:

- Election of Trustees;
- Call and dismissal of the minister;
- Adoption and revision of these bylaws;
- Adoption of annual budgets;
- Approval of expenditures for non-budgeted items exceeding \$5,000; and
- Approval of any purchase, sale, mortgage, lease, or other dealing in real estate on behalf of the Fellowship.

Annual Meeting: The Annual Meeting shall be held each June. A notice of the meeting shall be provided to all active Members of the Fellowship at least seven calendar days prior to the date of the meeting. Only those who have been Members for at least 30 calendar days may vote at the meeting.

This meeting shall cover six primary purposes:

1. Election of Trustees in accordance with these bylaws;
2. The presentation of the President's report on the Fellowship's accomplishments;
3. The presentation of the Treasurer's Annual Financial Report;
4. Adoption of the upcoming fiscal year's budget;
5. The election of a nominating Committee in accordance with these bylaws; and
6. The presentation of a Minister's report.

Special Meetings: The President or Minister may call a Special Meetings of the Fellowship. The President shall call a special meeting upon receiving a written petition signed by 20% of Members.

Notice of a Special Meeting, specifying the issues to be discussed and voted on as necessary, shall be provided to all active Members at least seven calendar days prior to the date of the meeting.

Quorum: The presence of 30 percent of the voting membership of the Fellowship at a meeting shall constitute a quorum. Voting may be in person or virtual. Friends shall be welcome at all meetings but may not vote.

Voting: Each eligible Member shall have one vote. Voting by telephone, Zoom, or other remote means shall be permitted but proxy voting shall not be permitted.

Unless otherwise specified in these bylaws, a simple majority of those present and voting shall decide any question presented.

9. Board of Trustees

Governance: The government of this Fellowship is vested in its membership. The Board of Trustees, hereinafter referred to as the Board, shall conduct the affairs of the Fellowship and, subject to these bylaws, shall carry out the Fellowship's policies and directives.

Board meetings shall be guided by Roberts Rules of Order.

Friends shall be welcome at all meetings, but may not vote. The Board may go into closed, executive session to discuss confidential matters. Ex-officio Board of Trustees may be present during executive session only at the invitation of the President.

The governing body of the Fellowship shall be the Board of Trustees, consisting of these voting positions:

- President;
- Vice President;
- Secretary;
- Treasurer;
- One to two Members-at-large for small-sized Fellowships; two to three for medium-sized Fellowships;

The Minister and the staff person responsible for Religious Education are ex officio Trustees and are non-voting.

The President shall only vote to break a tie.

Trustees shall be elected at the Annual Meeting by a simple majority of the votes cast.

Eligibility. All Trustees shall be Members. No person may serve on the Board if that person is a family member of a Fellowship employee. In a medium-sized Fellowship, no two people in a committed couple or sharing the same address, may be Trustees at the same time; small-sized

Fellowship has no such restriction.

The Nominating Committee shall post to Members a slate of candidates for standing Committees and Trustees at least seven calendar days prior to the Annual Meeting.

Removal: Trustees may be removed by:

- A two-thirds vote of Members present at a Special Meeting of the Fellowship; or
- A majority of Trustees at a regular or Special Meeting of the Board.

Vacancies: Should a position become vacant on the Board, the Nominating Committee shall submit to the Fellowship the name of at least one person to finish the existing term at least seven calendar days before the vote. This appointment shall be confirmed by a majority of Members eligible to vote who are present at any meeting of the Fellowship.

Quorum: A majority of voting Trustees shall constitute a quorum at any Board meeting.

Regular Meetings: The Board shall meet monthly. No notice shall be required for these monthly meetings.

Special Meetings: Special meetings of the Board may be called at any time by the President or by written request of any two Trustees. Each Trustee shall be notified of the time, place, and the purpose for the special meeting at least 24 hours before such meeting.

Duties of the Board: The Board, on behalf of the Fellowship, shall have general charge of the property of the Fellowship, conduct all of its business affairs, and control the administration of UUFM. The Board shall:

- Approve new Committees within the Fellowship;
- Approve all staff positions with accompanying salary range;
- Review activities of Committees under the purview of the Board;
- Formulate a yearly budget to be approved by the Fellowship at the Annual Meeting;
- Gather at least three quotes for any contract of \$2,000 or greater;
- Actively review the Fellowship's real estate, trust funds, and other assets and liabilities;
- Maintain an accurate record of membership;
- Maintain an up-to-date comprehensive Policy and Procedures Manual;
- Evaluate the performance of the Minister; and
- Determine whether and when the financial books of the Fellowship should be audited and certified:
 - Before a new Treasurer takes office;
 - When requested by a majority of the Board; or
 - Upon written petition signed by 20% of the active Members and presented to the President.

Each Trustee shall disclose to the Board when that Trustee is an interested party to a contract.

Term Limits: All Trustee positions have a two-year term and Trustees may serve up to three terms consecutively (or six years). Subsequently, that Member shall wait a year before being considered again for a Board position.

The President and Vice President shall serve terms on a staggered basis rather than concurrently or sequentially.

Members-at-large shall serve terms on a staggered basis as much as possible.

For small-sized Fellowships, the same individual may fill one position in the Board and serve temporarily in another Board position. The individual shall have only one vote, not two.

For medium-sized Fellowships, the same individual shall not fill two positions in the Board.

President: The President shall:

- Serve as Chairperson of the Board;
- Preside at all business meetings of the Fellowship and of the Board;
- Call meetings of the Board and of the Fellowship;
- Create and dissolve, with the approval of the Board, ad-hoc Committees;
- Remove or replace a Committee Chairperson as needed and with the approval of the Board;
- Prepare Board agendas in cooperation with the Minister and others;
- Direct or delegate the activities of the Fellowship in a reasonable and orderly fashion; and
- Represent the Fellowship on all appropriate occasions.

The President votes at Board meetings only as needed to break a tie.

Vice President: The Vice President shall:

- Exercise all the duties and functions of the President when the President is unavailable or the position is vacant; and
- Serve as the liaison between the Board and all Committees.

Treasurer: The Treasurer shall:

- Receive and deposit all money of the Fellowship in a timely manner;
- Disburse assets per the approved yearly budget or under the direction of the Board;
- Submit a current financial statement at each regular Board meeting;
- Submit an annual financial statement for the fiscal year at the Fellowship's Annual Meeting;
- Handle all tax matters including payroll and sales taxes and filing required Federal and State forms;

- Prepare pledge statements for Members and Friends as requested; and
- Serve on the Finance Committee.

Secretary: The Secretary shall:

- Create and distribute minutes;
- Keep minutes of all meetings of the Fellowship and the Board;
- Keep the Policy and Procedure Manuals; and
- Have such records available for inspection upon request.

Members-at-large: Members-at-large shall:

- Serve as a liaison with the Board, Committees, Members, and Friends;
- Contact departing Members or Friends to conduct exit interviews;
- Contact new Members and Friends to conduct entry interviews;
- Perform informal opinion gathering; and
- Serve as an Ex officio Committee Person of the Membership Committee or the Caring Committee when these committees are available.

10. Committees

Committees fall under the purview of the Fellowship or the Board. Committees are not limited to the ones referenced in this document.

All Committees shall select their Chairperson and notify the Board of their selection and of any changes in Chairperson. A Committee Chairperson shall be a Member. In medium-sized Fellowships, a Committee Chairperson shall not serve concurrently on the Board. Committee Persons may be either Members or Friends.

All terms are two years. If a Member or Friend serves on a Committee for three terms in succession, that person shall wait a year before serving again.

Committees fall under the purview of the **Fellowship** or of the **Board**. The Fellowship committees are the Nominating Committee and the Committee on Share Ministry.

The following list shows typical committees. It is not intended to be all inclusive.

Committee	Board or Fellowship	Ad-hoc or Regular	Mandatory ²
Building and Grounds	Board	Regular	No
Finance	Board	Regular	Yes
Interim Search	Board	Ad-hoc	Yes
Membership	Board	Regular	No
Ministerial Search	Board	Ad-hoc	Yes
Moving	Board	Ad-hoc	No
Nominating	Fellowship	Regular	Yes
Program	Board	Regular	No
Shared Ministry	Fellowship	Regular	Yes
Social Action	Board	Regular	No

Committees of the Board:

Board Committees may be **regular** or **ad-hoc**. A regular Committee has a mission that is ongoing or repetitive. An ad-hoc Committee is established to meet a limited goal or purpose and ends when that goal or purpose is met.

The Finance Committee is the only mandatory Board Committee according to this document.

The Board may also establish ad-hoc Committees as required for a limited goal or purpose, and such Committees shall cease to exist upon attaining the goal. With the advice and consent of the Board, the President shall set forth the purpose and goal of the Committee. The Committee shall select its own Chairperson who is responsible for setting procedures for the goal attainment, and presenting a written report to the President and the Board.

Committees of the Fellowship:

Nominating Committee: Members of the Nominating Committee shall be elected at the Annual Meeting. A small-sized Fellowship requires two Members while a medium-sized Fellowship requires three to five Members. The Nominating Committee elects its own Chairperson.

The Nominating Committee shall produce a slate of nominees that contain at least, but not be limited to, one nominee for each available office. The slate shall also include nominees for expiring terms on the Nominating Committee. Nominations shall be accepted from the floor prior to each vote.

The Nominating Committee shall post to Members a slate of nominees for Trustees at least seven calendar days prior to the Annual Meeting.

The Nominating Committee shall also develop a list of nominees for ongoing Committees and

² Mandatory Committees are listed in the Bylaws.

present it to the new Board prior to the Board's August meeting.

In the event of a Chairperson vacancy, the Nominating Committee shall provide nominees to the Board.

Committee on Shared Ministry: A Committee on Shared Ministry (CSM) shall consist of at least three Members and shall select its own Chairperson. Its main role is ministerial advisement. The CSM "can be a source of congregational knowledge, history, and wisdom that a minister may not have. They can serve as a confidential 'sounding board' for developments in the ministry, allowing the minister to receive feedback from a team of trusted lay-leaders on ideas, before they go to the congregation. This team can also provide healthy reflections upon the ministry, based on their own personal experience of the ministry, that can allow the minister to see more than their own perspective".³ It is an advisory, nonvoting body that facilitates communication among the Fellowship and the Minister.

For medium-sized Fellowships, the CSM Committee Person shall not be Chairperson of any other Committee and shall not be a Trustee of the Board. A small-sized Fellowship has no such restriction.

The CSM shall advise the Board on the Minister's performance.

The CSM and Minister together shall identify candidates to fill vacancies.

Ministerial Search Committee:

When a vacancy exists which is to be filled by a permanent minister, the Nominating Committee shall nominate a Ministerial Search Committee (MSC) slate. The MSC shall be composed of Members who are appointed as being representative of the Fellowship, considering differences in Fellowship experience, age, theological and program interests, gender, family composition, and other matters as appropriate. A MSC shall not be selected until the Members have been notified and given at least seven calendar days to suggest names of individuals to serve. The notification shall include such criteria as the Board shall consider appropriate to encourage the formation of a reasonably balanced committee that shall pursue its charge with the necessary diligence.

The Nominating Committee shall present a slate of at least five nominees for the MSC. The Members shall vote for up to five from this slate. The Board shall meet as soon as possible to select another two Members from the slate or from the larger Fellowship. Trustees may not simultaneously serve on a search committee.

Responsibilities: The MSC shall be guided by recommendations of the UUA. The MSC shall work to achieve consensus on the candidate to be recommended and shall not recommend a candidate if any committee person dissents or abstains.

³ Source: <https://www.uua.org/leaderlab/forming-committee-ministry>

The MSC shall establish a covenant of participation for its Committee Persons.

Any vacancy on an MSC shall be reported promptly to the Nominating Committee which shall submit the candidate names to the Board and the Board may elect an individual to fill the vacancy on the MSC.

The MSC shall operate at a high level of confidentiality. The MSC shall periodically brief the Fellowship and Board of their progress in general terms.

Unsuccessful Searches:

If the MSC reports that it is unable to agree upon a candidate, or if the Board finds that the MSC is not making reasonable progress in conducting the search, the Board shall dismiss the Committee and form a new MSC in the manner described above.

If a candidate is rejected by the Members or if a candidate withdraws after being chosen by the MSC or after selection but before a contract is concluded, a new MSC shall be formed in the manner described above.

Ministerial Candidacy Process: The MSC determines the Candidacy Process. No person shall be selected as a permanent minister who has not presented at least one Sunday service in our Fellowship and engaged in other agreed-upon activities, to permit the Members to become familiar with the candidate's qualifications, and to allow the candidate to evaluate the Fellowship.

Ministerial Selection: A vote to accept or reject a minister who has completed the candidacy process shall be held at any meeting of the Fellowship; the Fellowship shall receive notification of at least seven calendar days. The quorum shall be 50 percent of the voting Members of the Fellowship. The Minister shall be called by an affirmative 80 percent vote of the Members present and voting in person.

Interim Minister Search Committee:

Preparation for Selection: The President shall notify the appropriate offices of the UUA whenever the need arises for the selection of an interim minister and shall follow the UUA recommended process to begin search for an interim minister.⁴

Formation of an Interim Search Committee: The Nominating Committee shall submit a slate of five names to the Board to serve on the Interim Search Committee (ISC). The Board shall appoint three persons chosen from that slate.

Responsibilities: The ISC shall follow the UUA guidelines as posted on the UUA website.⁵ The

⁵ See <https://www.uua.org/careers/ministers/interim> for the recommended process.

ISC shall obtain names and resumes of candidates from the UUA website.

The ISC shall interview each candidate by telephone or other remote means and, based upon the resumes and interviews, recommend an interim minister to the Board.

The President shall schedule a meeting with the recommended candidate, ISC, and the Board. After that meeting, the Board shall meet in executive session and decide on the hiring of the nominee. If the Board elects to hire the nominee, the Finance Committee shall negotiate the contract; salaries and benefits must remain within the Board approved range. An interim minister shall be hired for a one or two-year term, allowing ample time for the process of hiring a permanent minister.

If the Board rejects the hiring, the Board shall ask the ISC to nominate another person or shall appoint a new ISC to begin a new search.

Negotiating a Contract: The Minister shall be employed under a contract negotiated by the Board or their designee. The contract shall specify compensation and benefits and the duties of the Minister as mutually agreed upon by the Minister and the Board. The contract shall also specify the type and length of notice to be given and the terms in event of termination or resignation.

Dismissing a Minister: A minister may be dismissed by a two-thirds vote of the Members present and eligible to vote at any meeting of the Fellowship at which a majority of the Members are present. The meeting shall be held only upon the request of at least two-thirds of the Board or two-thirds of Members.

Minister Resigning: The Minister may resign by submitting a resignation in writing to the Board.

11. Minister

A Free Pulpit: This Fellowship shall maintain the tradition of a free pulpit. Ministers and speakers are free to express the truth as they understand it. Ministers and speakers shall also be free to express their personal opinions outside the pulpit. “The minister does not, however, necessarily speak for either the institution or its members. It is the minister’s responsibility to do everything possible to make clear when the minister is speaking as an individual.”⁶

Ministerial Duties: The Minister shall be the spiritual leader of the Fellowship, leading religious services and ceremonies. The Minister shall conduct or supervise pastoral and personal counseling as needed by Members of the Fellowship and shall represent the Fellowship in the community as appropriate. The Minister shall be an ex officio Trustee of the Board and all Board Committees. The Minister shall not participate in executive sessions of the Board, unless requested to do so.

⁶ <https://uuma.org/guidelines/#freedom-of-the-pulpit-and-the-ministry>

Lay led services are permitted.

Selection of Permanent and Interim Ministers: These procedures apply when the Fellowship seeks a qualified person to serve as either an interim or permanent minister.

Budgeting for Searches and Employment: The Board shall, in coordination with the Finance Committee, establish a budget and allocate funds needed for any search process. They shall also determine ranges of the starting salary and benefits, such as housing allowance, and professional expenses to be paid to the permanent or interim minister.

12. Revisions

These bylaws may be revised by an affirmative two-thirds vote of the Members of the Fellowship present at any meeting of the Fellowship. Any Member or Friend may propose a revision. The proposed Revisions shall be available to Members at least seven days prior to the meeting.

13. Dissolution

In the event of the dissolution or final liquidation of this Fellowship and vote of the membership to disband, the Board shall pay or make provision for the payment of all lawful debts and liabilities of the Fellowship. The Board shall then distribute the remaining assets of the Fellowship to the UUA, a nonprofit organization, for their general use for religious, charitable, scientific, literary, or educational purposes, or the promotion of social welfare; it having been deemed by this Fellowship that this Fellowship's aims and objectives are similar to those of the UUA.

Appendix A. Acronyms

Acronym	Term
CSM	Committee on Shared Ministry
ISC	Interim Search Committee
MSC	Ministerial Search Committee
UUA	Unitarian Universalist Association

Appendix B. Sample Committee Descriptions

This appendix lists common committees with a sample description of responsibilities. The Unitarian Universalist Association's website, <https://www.uua.org>, has useful resources for forming committees.

The **Building and Grounds Committee** maintains the building and grounds of the Fellowship. The committee may include an Aesthetics Subcommittee to enhance the physical appearance of the facilities.

The Committee:

- Provides opening and closing services for the Fellowship Building, and solicits and schedules volunteers for this purpose;
- Oversees looking for buildings and rental space;
- Performs routine maintenance as needed, including cleaning up after services;
- Submits requests for maintenance or repairs requiring action by the landlord or contractors;
- Cares for shrubbery, flowers, and plants as needed; and
- Provides analysis and recommendations to the Board regarding long-term building issues.

Note: If the Fellowship has no building or grounds, this Committee can handle the opening and closing of a location for services or these responsibilities can be moved to the Program Committee.

The **Finance Committee** provides financial oversight, analysis, and recommendations to the Board and to the Fellowship. The committee shall consist of a minimum of two Members plus the Treasurer.

The Committee:

- Evaluates and recommends financial policies and procedures;
 - Monitors the monthly income and expenses for compliance with the budget;
 - Prepares the annual budget in concert with other committees, the Minister, and staff; and
 - Conducts the annual pledge drive.
-

The **Membership Committee** fosters growth and development of the Fellowship by integrating new Members into the spiritual life of the Fellowship, actively encourages the participation of all Members in the life of the Fellowship, and by seeking out those individuals in the community at large who may be interested in joining the Fellowship.

The Committee:

- Recruits, schedules, and trains greeters for Sunday services;
- Meets caring and special needs such as contacting missing Members, visitation, sending cards, and short-term special needs of Members such as meals at home and transportation to and from Sunday services and weekly events;
- Provides Members with long-term needs the names and contact information of volunteers for direct contact by the Member in need;
- Takes roll of attendees for Sunday services;
- Conducts New UU classes; and
- Coordinates special events such as Circle Suppers and group outings.

The **Program Committee** organizes lay-led services when there is no minister or when the minister is out of the pulpit and consults with the minister regarding all areas of worship.

The committee:

- Recruits, trains, and schedules volunteers for the tasks of Moderator, Chalice Lighter, Speaker, Second Hour, and Sound Technician;
- Organizes the Share-the-Plate contribution, in collaboration with the Social Action committee, and invites a representative to speak to the Fellowship during worship;
- Organizes programs of general interest to the Fellowship; and
- Assists in the selection of music for worship services.

The **Social Action Committee** sponsors and encourages Fellowship activities that promote the values in our Mission Statement, our Covenant, and the Principles and Sources relied upon by the UUA.

The Committee:

- Nurtures relationships with community groups that share a common vision or agenda consistent with our Mission Statement and Principles and Sources;
- Encourages participation by UUFM Members and friends in the larger community, including One Montgomery, Death Penalty Vigils, Hate Crimes Vigils, and other social justice activity; and
- Coordinates traditional activities such as the Teachers Supply Store, food drives for the Montgomery Area Food Bank, and AIDS walk.

Other common committees include **Fund-Raising**; **Publicity**; and **Religious Education**.