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**AS ITS AGENDA BROADENS,
INSTITUTE FOR RESEARCH ON UNLIMITED LOVE MAKES ITS MARK**

As its range of activities broadens, the Institute for Research on Unlimited Love (IRUL) is rapidly establishing its presence as a leading force in helping the world more clearly understand the universal phenomenon of unselfish love. Located at the School of Medicine, Case Western Reserve University in Cleveland, Ohio, the Institute awaits results from its first funded scientific studies into unlimited love – which it describes as altruistic affirmation and care for all humanity without exception – and is sponsoring a growing number of conferences and research programs.

Most recently, IRUL and the Ford Foundation's Governance and Civil Society Unit co-hosted a conference – “The Love That Does Justice” – reflecting on Martin Luther King's belief that social transformation can occur only when unselfish love, spiritual experience and a rigorous pursuit of justice are linked. The conference brought together spiritual activists, social scientists, and religious and social thinkers to share their perspectives and experience on these links, and how their relationship informs social activism today. Among more than 50 distinguished participants at the conference, held October 14-17 at Case Western, were the Rev. Dr. Otis Moss, Jr., president of the board of Morehouse College; Mirabai Bush, director of the Center for Contemplative Mind in Society; and Rev. Joan Campbell, the first woman executive director of the U.S. Office of the World Council of Churches.

“We focused on how perceptions and experiences of an Infinite Love translate into action, with respect to both one-on-one acts of kindness and the willingness to confront injustice in society,” said Stephen Post, the Institute’s president and a professor of bioethics at Case Western.

The Institute for Research on Unlimited Love was established in 2001 with a grant from the John Templeton Foundation, following a 1999 symposium, "Empathy, Altruism and Agape: Perspectives on Love in Science and Religion," sponsored by the Fetzer Institute and the John Templeton Foundation. It is among the first organizations to seek rigorous, open-minded and empirically-focused research into the causes and effects of unlimited love.

The Institute funded 21 research projects with more than \$1.7 million in grants in December 2002, with studies in human development, neuroscience, compassionate love and health outcomes, other-regarding virtues, the evolution of altruism, and faith-based helping behaviors. A matching grant by Fetzer funded four additional projects in December 2002 and four more projects in August 2004. Further, six pilot studies have been funded. Several projects have been completed and submitted to journals for publication, and most will be completed during the next 12 months. Information on the studies is available at the Institute's web site at www.unlimitedloveinstitute.org.

Many of the researchers participated in the "Compassionate Love Research Conference" held in Washington, D.C. last May. Co-sponsored by Fetzer and IRUL, the conference offered a first look at the studies and provided participants from science, humanities, and religion the opportunity to examine and share research.

Recent progress of the not-for-profit institute also includes a broadening of public discourse on topics of unlimited love through course competitions, encouraging academic reflection on altruism and altruistic love in graduate schools, seminaries, and universities. IRUL sponsored, for example, a competition to promote the study of other-regarding love to encourage integration of theology, religious studies and scientific perspectives. While aimed at scholars of religion and theology, the competition was equally open to faculty from all fields and disciplines. Winners of the Altruistic Love & Science Course Competition will attend a workshop at the

Claremont School of Theology in Claremont, California, in March 2005. A second course competition will culminate in a workshop at St. Paul's School in Concord, New Hampshire in spring of 2006.

Other Institute-related developments include:

Dr. Jacob Neusner, Senior Research Fellow at the Institute for Advanced Theology at Bard College in Annandale-on-Hudson, New York, will host a conference at Bard in November 2004. At "Unlimited Love in World Religions," leading scholars in all the major world faiths will present papers on the extent to which universal love is contextualized within their narrative and theological traditions.

A three-week summer institute – "Seminars in Christian Scholarship" – was held in July 2004 at Calvin College in Grand Rapids, Michigan. The program attracted 12 scholars – five social scientists, one biologist, and six philosopher/theologians – from some 43 applicants, and gave each an opportunity to participate in integrative discussions.

The Institute also publishes a monthly electronic newsletter, available free by subscribing at www.unlimitedloveinstitute.org. The newsletter highlights leading-edge scientific studies, announcements, and publications on unlimited love.

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