



Dear Prospective Student:

We are excited that you are applying to become a member of the Operation Understanding (OU) Class of 2016! OU's mission is to develop a group of young African American and Jewish leaders to effectively lead the communities of Philadelphia and beyond to a greater understanding of diversity and acceptance. Taking the initial step to apply means you are a person who is curious to learn more about yourself, your peers, diversity, culture, and want to enhance your ability to lead in your community!

Operation Understanding's program begins in April of your junior year of high school. During this time, you will get to know your classmates and become oriented to the history, religion, and culture of the African American and Jewish communities through workshops, lectures, group activities and meetings.

The second phase of Operation Understanding involves an intensive summer-study travel experience that is the hallmark of the Operation Understanding experience. You will visit historical and cultural sites meaningful to both the African American and Jewish American identity, attend synagogue and church services, and meet with community leaders. Each night, trained group leaders will help you process the events of the day and dive deeply into your own experiences, reactions and to question each other about long-held beliefs, developing the skills necessary to disagree without being disagreeable.

In the fall of your senior year, your group will come together to turn your experiences into resources for leadership. Over the course of the year, you will facilitate discussions, lead diversity workshops and speak to groups throughout the Philadelphia area.

Operation Understanding is known to change and challenge the lives of its members. OU is a family connected through our common experience in the organization, and our desire to share a message of cross-cultural harmony and acceptance. We look forward to reading your application, hearing your story, and having you join us in our mission. If you have any questions, please contact us at OU16program@gmail.com.

Best,

Operation Understanding Program Committee

Curtis Davis OU '98, Beth Hoffman, OU '98 and Julian Thompson OU '02

"At nine months I learned to walk alone, at 17 I realized that I didn't have to." – Shannon Griffin , OU '11