

# GROWTH

Dear Readers:

We are pleased to present the ninth issue of *Growth: The Journal of the Association for Christians in Student Development*. In this issue, you will find a good blend of applied and basic research in the feature articles, and a full complement of reviews of recently published books pertinent to the field of higher education.

Needless to say, this “new and improved” product is the result of a great deal of work by a number of people. Of course we want to thank each of the authors for their hard work and willingness to share their knowledge with us. Additionally, we want to thank Steve Christensen for his continued good work as Layout and Design Editor. We also want to introduce you to a new member of the *Growth* team. Deb Austin, a graduate student in higher education and student development, has worked tirelessly to edit and attend to the numerous details necessary to produce the journal. Finally, we are thankful for the contributions of Elaine Cooper who performed a final copyedit, fine-tuning this issue to near perfection. It is not an exaggeration to say that we could not have done this without her.

The organization of *Growth* into content areas has served us well and we will continue to solicit manuscripts that relate to the following content areas.

- Foundations, TBA
- Leadership and Professional Development, Tim Herrmann, Taylor University
- Student Culture, Don Opitz, Geneva College
- Student Learning and Assessment, Anita Henck, Azusa Pacific University
- Spiritual Formation, TBA
- Diversity and Globalization, Brad Lau, George Fox University
- Book Reviews, Jason Morris, Abilene Christian University

As you can see, we are currently in transition with two of these areas and are looking for interested persons to fill the roles of content editors for the areas of Foundations and Spiritual Formation. If you are interested, please contact Skip Trudeau, Co-Editor of *Growth*. Please contact these individuals as you have interest in writing a piece related to any of their respective content areas.

Please know that we hope to promote and facilitate scholarship by assisting you in your research and writing. We especially want to encourage you to consider submitting manuscripts for inclusion for the next issue of *Growth*. Publication guidelines are included in this issue near the end of the journal. We are particularly interested in manuscripts presenting original or basic research and encourage anyone who has recently completed a graduate thesis or dissertation to submit a manuscript based on your work.

We thank you for your support for *Growth: The Journal of the Association for Christians in Student Development*. We trust that you will be challenged by what you read.

Sincerely,

Skip Trudeau, Co-Editor  
Tim Herrmann, Co-Editor



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The Journal of the Association for Christians in Student Development

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# **Millennial Sex Habits: The sexual attitudes and behaviors of unmarried undergraduate males at a small, private, Christian institution.**

By Travis T. York

## **Abstract**

This study analyzed the sexual attitudes and behaviors of 211 unmarried, traditionally-aged undergraduate males at a small, private, Christian, liberal arts institution in western Pennsylvania. As hypothesized, data were largely consistent with millennial theorists' projections about current students' decline in sexual activity in comparison to data from the past. The results of this project also confirm the relevance of the Social Norms Theory to the study of sexual behavior (Berkowitz, 2003). Descriptive data and definitions of sex, virginity, and abstinence are also discussed. This research suggests that student development professionals should invest in education and programming that provides accurate statistics about sexual behaviors.

## **Introduction**

Millennial theorists, such as Howe and Strauss (2007), indicate that the new generation of students primarily comprising college campuses is perceived to be more "traditional," "conventional," "religious," "driven," and "special," than the students that have passed through higher education over the past couple of decades. To what extent do these characteristics define the actions and beliefs of this generation? In particular, what does this mean for the current college students and their sexuality? Very little conclusive research has been gathered about the sexual attitudes and behaviors of current students; barely any at all have been related to Christian institutions. Thus higher education professionals are faced with two distinct questions: What are the sexual attitudes and behaviors of the students on a Christian college campus? How do these beliefs and behaviors compare to those of the past?

This study used a survey to explore the sexual attitudes and behaviors of male undergraduate students at a private, Christian, liberal arts institution. The survey included several questions that were taken from a similar survey conducted in 2003. This 2003 survey, created by A. Jacob and used by permission, provides some descriptive data for comparison from the same demographic at an earlier date. The present study pays particular attention to the trends that may be present within this sample of millennial students. The goal of this research is to provide accurate data that can be used in assessing and improving programming in this area. The purpose of this project is to give student development professionals insights into the sexual values and practices of male undergraduates, and to confirm or contrast trends suggested by generational theorists regarding the sexual attitudes and behaviors of millennial students.

## Definitions

**High-risk behaviors** are behaviors that can lead to the contraction of serious sexually transmitted diseases, the most common of which is HIV. The following is a list of activities that most commonly fall under this classification:

- Unprotected intercourse without male or female condom use, except in a long-term, single-partner (monogamous) relationship.
- Unprotected mouth-to-genital contact, except in a long-term, monogamous relationship.
- Early sexual activity, especially before age 18.
- Having multiple sex partners.
- Having a high-risk partner (one who has multiple sex partners or other risk factors).
- Having anal sex or a partner who does.
- Having sex with a partner who injects or has ever injected drugs.
- Exchange of sex (sex work) for drugs or money.

Sexual health or prevention programs are commonly oriented around the goal of lowering or stopping high-risk behaviors amongst their participants.

*Sexual intercourse*, *sexual activity*, and *sexual partners* are all terms that do not have clear definitions. For this project, the term *sexual intercourse* will be defined as any sexual activity that involves penile/vaginal or penile/anal penetration, unless otherwise differentiated. A large number of researchers, such as Randall and Byers (2003), are finding that students themselves have differing opinions on what the definitions of these terms are, which is why this study hopes to gain a clearer understanding of what these terms mean to this group of people. *Sexual activity* includes any activity that a participant(s) engages in where sexual stimulation occurs. Since this is such a broad definition, for this study the term will be used to signify activities that include, but are not limited to: sexual intercourse, oral sex, and masturbation. The term *sexual partner* most commonly describes a partner with whom sexual intercourse has been had (and this will be the primary definition used in this study unless otherwise denoted); however, more recent studies (Randall & Byers, 2003) show that this demographic repeatedly considers *sexual partners* to be anyone with whom a *sexual activity* has occurred, especially where at least one person obtains orgasm. Therefore, it should be noted that while the primary definition does hold true for this term, this term could be more broadly used to define partners with whom *sexual activity* has occurred.

## Literature Review

The actual reliability of data collected in sexual attitude and behavior assessments is highly debatable because of recent trends that show a multitude of definitions for the meaning of what “sex” is. While the hope of many remains that exposure to sex education and programs about healthy sexuality will decrease student involvement in high-risk sexual activities, what research is showing this to be the case? Are these hopes held without much understanding or research about what students’ current sexual attitudes and behaviors are? Such questions also involve questions and assumptions about what “healthy” sexuality looks like and what types of sexual activities are

considered “high risk.” What may be more concerning is the lack of research conducted on this topic at smaller private Christian liberal arts institutions at all.

The importance of gathering accurate research about students’ behaviors and sexual history is intensified with the negative effects related to students’ lack of knowledge or inflated statistics. Page, Hammermeister, and Scanlan (2000) indicated that students who were more sexually active also displayed higher estimates about their peers’ sexual activity. Not surprisingly, the researchers also found the inverse to be true: students who estimate less active peers tended to be less active themselves, which the researchers attributed to the Social Norms Theory, which describes a strong correlation between students’ perception of their peers’ behaviors and their own. This information becomes more concerning as this study shows that males on average estimate higher activity for their peers than is actual. The result is that without accurate information about the reality of sexual activity amongst males, they are more likely to participate in sexual activities.

In fact, males who estimated that 75% or more of their male peers were sexually active were 11 times more likely to have had sexual intercourse in the past months than were those estimating this to be true of less than a quarter of males (Page *et al.*, 2000, p. 390).

This overestimation is also supported by the *Journal of American College Health* (2007) who reports that students overestimated both rates of oral sex and number of sexual partners: 45.2% of students reported having had oral sex one or more times, although they estimated that 93.1% had in the past thirty days; and the rates of sexual partners: 75.8% of students had zero or one partner in the past year, although they estimated that only 17.7% had zero to one sexual partner.

Scholly, Katz, Gascogne, and Holck (2005) provide further explanation to this effect, saying that college populations who are exposed to health education programs that focus on high-risk behaviors and inflated statistics understand their peers’ behaviors as being more involved or more risky than they truly are. As a result, students may begin or increase their participation in high-risk behaviors so that their behaviors are in line with the high-risk perception they hold of their peers. If male students are given more accurate norms regarding the sexual activities and attitudes of their peers, they are less likely to participate in high-risk situations since most males overestimate their peers’ behaviors.

Scholly, *et al.*, (2005) are not alone in their perception that college educators and administrators are limited in their information about students’ sexual attitudes and behaviors. In writing about the importance of programs on sexuality for students and their apparent limited success, Langer, Warheit, & McDonald (2001) note, “...it is clearly evident that an understanding of the risk and protective factors on which many prevention programs are based needs further refinement and elaboration” (p. 134). They go on to cite that age (older), age of first sex (younger), number of sex partners (greater), and gender (male) are the top four correlates for risky behavior; with this in mind, it is not surprising that the “Morbidity and Mortality College Risk Study” done by the Center for Disease Control (CDC) in 1997 also shows these protective factors colliding in a negative way amongst college males. The study reported that males were more likely to have had their first intercourse younger than age 13 and more likely to have had six or more partners.

Other studies trying to find the correlates of risky sexual behaviors have made similar connections to the relationship between a person's sexual history and their current and persistent sexual actions. A study conducted at a small Midwestern college surveyed unmarried undergraduates about their sexual behaviors, attitudes, and knowledge. In their results, Ratcliff-Crain, Donald, and Dalton (1999) found that, while it had largely been unstudied, sexual history was a stronger predictor of risky behavior than any other factor examined by these researchers. Moreover, age of first intercourse was indicated as the strongest factor in their study. They also noted that this study found that those who engaged in intercourse at a younger age were more likely to persist in risky behavior and perceive peer norms to be more consistent with their behavior (Ratcliff-Crain, et al., 1999, p. 639). This study intensifies the need for accurate research assessing perceived norms, sexual history, and their relationship to sexual attitudes especially as males are continually noted as being more involved in high-risk predictors such as younger age of first intercourse and higher numbers of partners.

There is another consideration that must be given to these situations: while males are shown to be more likely to have engaged in sexual activities at younger ages and to have more sexual partners, this data may be skewed due to their definition of these terms. Students' understanding and definitions of "sex," "sexual partner," and even "being unfaithful" have a broad range (Randall & Byers, 2003). In this study, Randall and Byers (2003) concluded that sex researchers could not assume that these terms meant the same thing for their participants and subsequently advised researchers to carefully define the sexual terms they use to question the specific behaviors they were intending to gather data on. These researchers concluded that unclear or general terms could decrease the accuracy of the gathered data due to the test individuals' variations in definition. As these researchers began to study the sexual trends and history of students, they found that definitions of what sex is and is not were not as clear as they originally anticipated. Their 2003 study conducted at the University of New Brunswick reported that "... the current sexual script defines having sex narrowly and many behaviors that students might agree are sexual activities are nonetheless not having sex" (Randall, et al., p. 93). The study went on to find that most students reported that only activities that involved the genitals of both partners made the cut of being defined as sex, while activities involving one person's genitals—such as oral sex—was only a sexual activity, not sex. Furthermore, the researchers concluded that students also had varying understandings or definitions of what "having sex," "sexual partners," and even "unfaithful behaviors" meant. As a result of these variants, there were certain activities that many students categorized as unfaithful behavior but that they did not consider to be "having sex."

Research conducted over the span of two decades (1980-2000) indicates a steady increase in sexual activity among college students. (Netting & Burnett, 2004, p. 34) This data is consistent with popular thought about the sexual liberation experienced by many adolescents during the 80s and the early 90s; however, it is most important in contrast to the more recent research. The information that the Center for Disease Control collects annually provides statistics regarding the current trends in youth behavior across America. In 1993 the CDC reported a drop in the percentage of high school students who had experienced sexual intercourse with one or more partners in the past three months. Likewise, this percentage has dropped each year since, and there was an overall reduction of 9.5% between 1991 and 2005 (CDC, 2007). Later this trend showed up

in higher education as well. Amy Holmes reported in her article *Hook-up U: Sexual Practice Amongst College Students* (1999) that the UCLA's survey of college Freshman found approval of promiscuity at its lowest point in 25 years. What is it that caused this change? This question has been the topic of much debate, especially for generational theorists.

Neil Howe and William Strauss have proposed answers to this question with their work on generational trends. In *Millennials Rising: The Next Great Generation* (2000), Howe and Strauss note the falling trends of not only sexual intercourse, but also the number of sexual partners and involvement in high-risk behavior correlatives (p. 197). Their book *Millennials Go to College* (2003) did not just describe this new generation's (largely classified as persons graduating high school in 2001—thus their most popular name: Millennials) actions, but also described the characteristics that dictated such behavior trends. Here Millennials are primarily described as being more religious, more sheltered, and more conventional than their predecessors. George Gallup, Jr., remarks that according to recent Gallup polls:

Teens are decidedly more traditional than their elders were, in both lifestyles and attitudes. Gallup Youth Survey data from the past 25 years reveal that teens today are far less likely than their parents were to use alcohol, tobacco, and marijuana. In addition, they are less likely than their parents even today to approve of sex before marriage and having children out of wedlock... They are searching eagerly for religious and spiritual moorings in their lives. They want abstinence taught in school, and they think divorces should be harder to get (Howe, *et al.*, p. 60).

Data which describes millennials as less sexually active, then, is not surprising when other studies show that religiosity is significantly related to sexual attitudes in that “the more religious a person tends to be, the more likely he or she will also hold conservative attitudes about sex” (Beckwith & Morrow, 2005). But are these attitudes and projections of millennial behavior consistent with their behaviors today?

Are millennials really less sexually active or have their definitions of sex just become more narrow? Is there any difference with this type of data collected at a small, private, Christian liberal arts institution versus the type of data at other institutions? Unfortunately, there is very little data with which to answer these questions. Along with the decrease of sexual intercourse reported by the CDC, a 4.4% increase of high school sexual education was also reported (2007). This statistic could suggest that sexual education has some sort of positive effect upon reducing high risk behaviors, barring any other mediating factors; however, high-risk behavior is still a prominent aspect for many students' lives. Langer, et al. (2001) notes this inconsistency, arguing that such sexual education programs' limited success makes it evident that there is a need for greater understanding of the correlates of risky behavior and the protective factors that can be implemented (p. 134).

In accordance with such a need, this project seeks to provide some amount of additional information to the already expansive field of male students' sexual attitudes and behaviors. With the apparent gap of this data at small, private, Christian liberal arts institutions, I hope to provide accurate descriptive information about the sexual nature of students at such an institution. The discussions and data presented will certainly not answer all of the questions presented, nor will they be able to propose the “best”



programming methods for “good” or “healthy” sexuality; however, the desired outcome is that professionals in higher education will move along that path by describing trends that can be seen in this population and that may be present in others. In so doing, I hope that this information will educate and encourage others to continue to research this important topic.

## Method

Five hundred and seventy students met the required demographics of the quantitative study, being non-married, male, undergraduate students. Those students were each invited by email to participate in the study which was being conducted securely online. Of these, 211 students volunteered to take the 42-question, online, multiple choice survey during a one-week period. Invited students were assured of their anonymity, and approval was gained by the Institutional Review Board of the participating institution. Invited students were also given a list of on/off-campus resources, should they have experienced any discomfort due to the survey and wanted to seek counsel.

### Delimitations

This survey has been narrowed from the previous survey (2003) given in its scope by concentrating on several specific delimitations: males, undergraduates (18 years and older), unmarried, at a small, private, Christian, liberal arts institution in western Pennsylvania. The previously-conducted survey (2003) was conducted at the same institution, thus to preserve the integrity of some of the data that is being compared, its environment will be kept as constant as possible. The encouragement of such Biblical standards as abstinence prior to marriage, the view of homosexual acts as sinful, or even the enforcement of an alcohol-free campus by this faith-based institution might also delimit the population's activity and thus should be taken into account.

### Limitations

There are several limitations to this project as well. The chosen population is so specific that any trends or suggestions made may not translate to other institutions. The campus's conservative environment, size, and location may also limit students' sexual behaviors. While this is not damaging to the research conducted, it is a noteworthy limiting factor in that students may have more conservative behaviors at this institution because of these factors and not because of their generational trends. The size of this institution may also limit a student's feeling of anonymity, and could thus limit a student's exploration of some sexual behaviors. Finally, the very nature of the information being asked is somewhat of a limitation, as the subject may be perceived as being highly personal, which may limit honesty in the responses.

## Results and Analysis

### Population Characteristics

This study consisted of research gathered from 211 completed surveys (570 students were invited to participate voluntarily). These students were 18 years of age or older, unmarried, and attended a small, private, Christian, liberal arts institution located in western Pennsylvania. Race was not questioned due to the ability to link minority answers with their potential demographic data. The mean age was 20.5, and the mode age was 21. Participants were well dispersed amongst class status: 18.4% Freshmen,

24.5% Sophomores, 24% Juniors, and 33.2% Seniors. Participants were primarily traditionally aged, with only 3% (n=6) indicating they were 25 years or older in age. Participants lived on campus for a mean of 3.9 semesters. Students' relational status was described as: 42.3% Single, not dating; 15.3% Single, dating; 6.6% In a relationship, not dating; 26% In a relationship, dating; 8.7% Engaged; and 1% Other. When asked, 95.7% of the students said that their religion/spirituality was important in their life (65.6% very important, 30.1% important), and in an average school week, 22.6% reported attending 1 religious gathering (35.5%-2; 23.1%-3; 6.5%-4; 4.8%-5) or more, and only 7.5% said they "Do not attend." This data was gathered to explore what correlation, if any at all, exists between students' sexual behaviors, their participation in religious activities, and the importance of religion/spirituality in their lives. It is pertinent to note that there were different correlations found between all three of these factors which will be discussed further in greater depth.

**Descriptive Data**

When describing what "practicing abstinence," "being a virgin," and "having had sex meant," students had varying definitions for these three terms. Figure 1 shows their answers:

**Figure 1.**

To you, "being a virgin," means...  
(Please mark all that apply.)

	Response Percent	Response Total
No kissing	0.5%	1
No light petting (hands above clothing)	8.6%	16
No heavy petting (hands underneath clothing)	15.1%	28
Not having oral sex	62.2%	115
<b>Not having intercourse</b>	<b>96.8%</b>	<b>179</b>
Other (please specify)	4.3%	8
Total Respondents		185

To you, "practicing abstinence," means...  
(Please mark all that apply.)

	Response Percent	Response Total
No kissing	3.2%	6
No light petting (hands above clothing)	30.3%	56
No heavy petting (hands underneath clothing)	53%	98
Not having oral sex	80.5%	149
<b>Not having intercourse</b>	<b>94.6%</b>	<b>175</b>
Other (please specify)	7.6%	14
Total Respondents		185

Figure1. Continued

For which of the following acts would you label that a person “has had sex”?  
(Please mark all that apply.)

	Response Percent	Response Total
Kissing	0.6%	1
Light petting (Hands above clothing)	3.1%	5
Heavy petting (Hands underneath clothing)	6.8%	11
Manually stimulating another’s genitalia	31.7%	51
Oral sex	62.7%	101
<b>Intercourse (penile/vaginal)</b>	<b>98.1%</b>	<b>158</b>
Intercourse (Anal)	86.3%	139
Total Respondents		161
(skipped this question)		50

While the majority of students included sexual intercourse in their definitions, the number of students who did not define some acts as sex should be noted. Oral sex is not particular to abstinence by 19.5% (n=36), not a disqualification of virginity by 37.8% (n=70), and not considered sex by 37.3% (n=60). Likewise, anal intercourse is not considered sex by 13.7% (n=22). This data is consistent with other research conducted in general student populations (Randall & Byers, 2003).

As hypothesized, the sexual behavior averages were overall lower than the national averages reported by the National College Healthy Risk Behavior Survey (Page et al., 2000). When asked about their first sexual activity, 75.4% said they had experienced some sexual activity; the average age being 16.1 years old [24.6% (n=41) reported that they had not had any sexual experiences]. Only 29.9% (n=50) reported having ever experienced sexual intercourse. Additionally, 72 (42.2%) respondents reported they had experienced oral sex. Below are more response details:

Figure 2. With which of the following have you had intercourse? (Please mark all that apply.)

	Response Percent	Response Total
<b>A female I’m in a relationship with</b>	<b>26.3%</b>	<b>44</b>
A male I’m in a relationship with	0.6%	1
A female friend	18%	30
A male friend	0.6%	1
A female stranger	7.8%	13
A male stranger	0.6%	1
<b>I have not had intercourse</b>	<b>67.7%</b>	<b>113</b>
Total Respondents		167
(skipped this question)		44

**Figure 2. Continued**

At what age did you first experience intercourse?

	Response Percent	Response Total
14 or younger	3.6%	6
15	1.2%	2
16	5.4%	9
<b>17</b>	<b>7.8%</b>	<b>13</b>
18	4.8%	8
19	3.6%	6
20	3.6%	6
21	0.6%	1
22	0%	0
23	0%	0
24 or older	0%	0
<b>Not yet happened</b>	<b>69.5%</b>	<b>116</b>
Total Respondents		167
(skipped this question)		44

With how many partners have you ever had intercourse?

#	Response Percent	Response Total
<b>0</b>	<b>69.3%</b>	<b>115</b>
<b>1</b>	<b>12.7%</b>	<b>21</b>
2	5.4%	9
3	4.2%	7
4	1.2%	2
5	1.8%	3
6 or more	5.4%	9
Total Respondents		166
(skipped this question)		45

When asked to describe their feelings after viewing erotic material, participants most commonly responded that they felt guilty [73.3% (n=121)] and shameful [62.4% (n=103)]. The most common source of viewing erotic material was through the Internet (67.9%, n=112). When asked to think of the past six months and report how often they viewed pornography in a typical month, students answered with the following answers:

Figure 3.

Think of a typical month during the past 6 months. In total, how often did you view erotic films, videos, magazines, Internet sites, or chat-rooms during this month?

	Response Percent	Response Total
<b>One or two times a month</b>	<b>37.3%</b>	<b>62</b>
Once a week	11.4%	19
A few times a week	14.5%	24
Once a day	3.0%	5
Several times a day	1.8%	3
Never	31.9%	53
Total Respondents		166
(skipped this question)		45

Comparative Data - Millennial Trends

In both studies (2007 & 2003), respondents were overwhelmingly heterosexual; however, this study showed an increased indication of non-heterosexual self-descriptors when asked to describe the respondents’ sexual orientations. The 2003 survey showed 95.5% heterosexual (n=106); this study (2007) shows 95.2% (159) heterosexual. The 2003 study indicated that 5.2% (n=3) of the males had some sexual activity with another male and this study showed a similar 5.6% (n=8). What is interesting is that both studies had showed some percentage of students who classified themselves as heterosexual, but that had also experienced sexual activities with another male. The current study added the option of “heterosexual/curious” to its answer choices and received a 3% (n=5) choice of this descriptor.

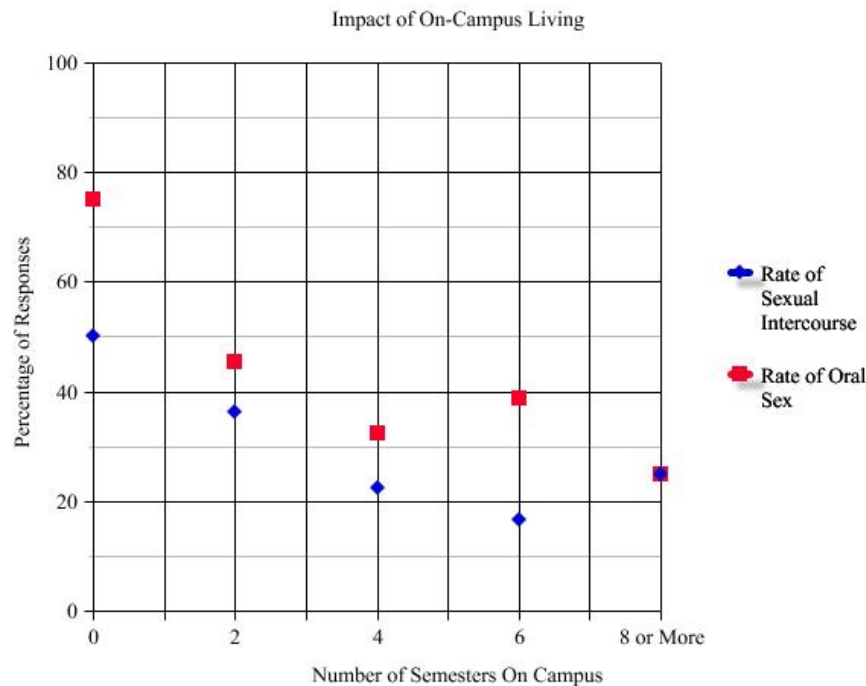
The current study found 50 respondents (29.9%) who reported that they had engaged in sexual intercourse, which shows an unexpected 10.1% increase from the 2003 survey which reported that only 19.8% of the males had engaged in sexual intercourse. This increase is counter to the millennial projections; however, it most likely resulted from the delimited sample group of the 2003 study. For instance, the 2003 study only surveyed students in traditional halls. This difference may be impactful to the study because of the negative correlation found between residents living in traditional halls and their participation in sexual activities found through this study. As Figure 4 shows, traditional hall participants have lower peer estimates of sexual intercourse which will further link to less, and less risky, sexual engagement.

With respect to living arrangements, this study shows a correlation between the amount of time spent living on campus and a student’s sexual behaviors. Figure 4 shows a negative association with rates of sexual intercourse and oral sex as the number of semesters on campus increase. Since this study was conducted in the spring, typical college students are grouped in the even-numbered semesters, whereas the odd-numbered semesters indicate a much smaller group of mid-year transfers or mid-year

new students. It was interesting to note that those who reported an odd number of semesters (likely to be transfers or non-traditional students) had higher rates of sexual intercourse and oral sex.

This relationship deserves further research. Does this living environment have a limiting effect upon these behaviors or do less sexually active students seek out these living conditions? What do these statistics say about younger millennial students coming into higher education?

**Figure 4.**



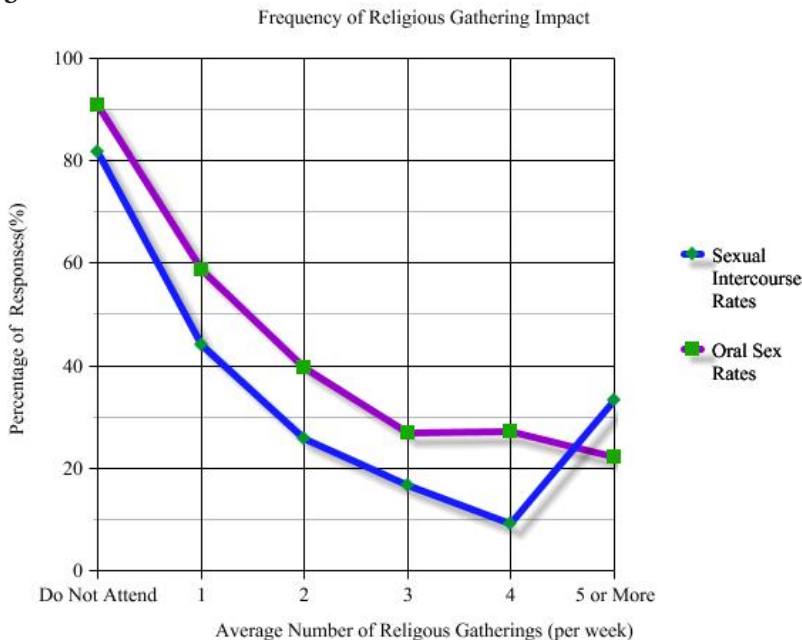
It is important to note that all of these statistics are far below the national average rates of sexual behavior offered by the CDC. In reference to high-risk behaviors, it has already been shown that the sample group which participated in this research study engaged in sexual activity and intercourse at an older age. The research shows this sample group to be a considerably safer (or less involved in high-risk behaviors) population with an extremely large decrease of 45.5% in intercourse where neither partner used a condom. The 2003 study showed that 68.2% (n=15) had experienced sex without a condom, where this study only showed 21.7% (n=34). This statistic is made even more poignant when it is noted that of the 34 respondents that reported engaging in sexual intercourse where neither partner used a condom, 23 lived somewhere (on or off campus) other than traditional dorms. This would indicate that had the 2003 study included participants from these living arrangements, this decrease of engagement in high-risk sexual intercourse would be even greater. Of these respondents, 19 (12.1%)

reported participating in this act with only one partner, six (3.8%) reported doing so with two partners, two (1.3%) reported three partners, one (0.6%) with four partners, and six (3.8%) with five or more partners.

Other comparisons that are affirming with millennial trends are the areas where respondents indicated they received the majority of their information about sex or health-related issues to sex. Both studies [2007—66.5% (n=123) and 2003—66.6% (n=74)] show close friends as the most frequently mentioned source of information. There was a small increase from 51.4% (n=57) to 56.2% (n=104) with the second most indicated choice of “Parents/Legal Guardian”. From this point the past survey showed “general peer group” as next most common choice (36%); however in this study, 77 respondents (41.6%) indicated “TV” as their next most common choice. This data supports the media-driven nature of millennials (Howe et al., 2000). This is further supported by the fourth most indicated choice of the Internet at 75 indications (40.5%), which is a marked increase of 18%.

Data also supported that millennials are more religiously active than their predecessors and there are interesting comparisons between the importance they indicated of their religion/spirituality and the frequency of attendance at religious gatherings. Figure 5 shows the association between attendance at religious gatherings and the rates of sexual intercourse and oral sex. The effect is remarkable. Moreover, it is intriguing to note that the importance of religion/spirituality had little correlation to behaviors in contrast to the clear negative correlation that frequency of gatherings showed. In other words, the importance of religion or spirituality showed little to no effect upon a participant’s engagement in high-risk behaviors whereas their frequency in attending religious gatherings had a strong delimiting effect, as the graph below demonstrates.

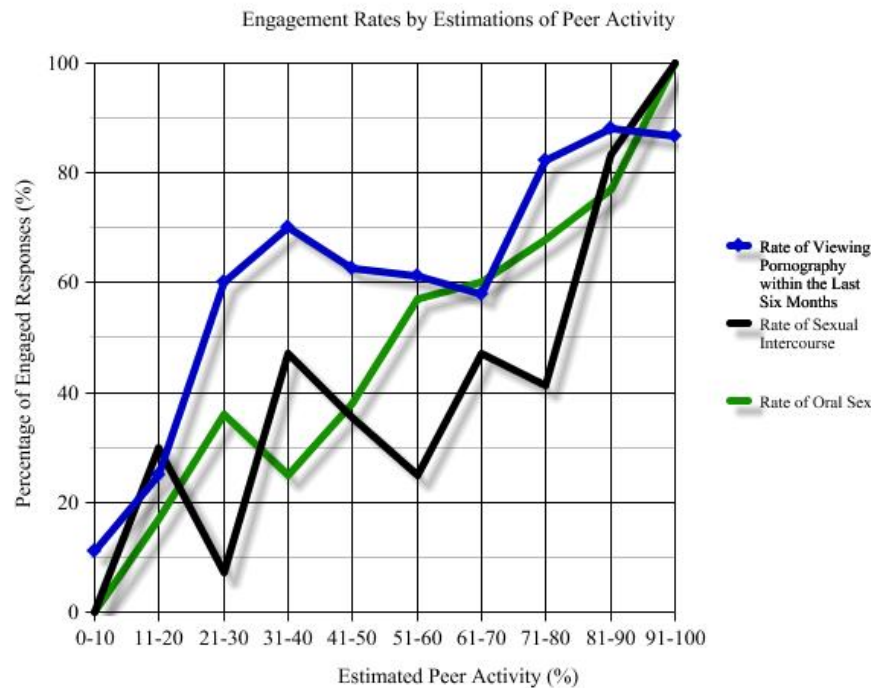
Figure 5.



**Social Norms Theory Data**

The following data looks specifically at the effects of estimated peer activity upon the actual sexual behaviors of those participants. The results confirm the Social Norms Theory (Berkowitz, 2003), which theorizes that as estimates of peers’ sexual activities increase, so will the actual behaviors of that individual. Figure 6 shows the comparative data of estimates of peer sexual activity with that of participants’ rate of sexual activities (delineated by specific behaviors). There is a clear overall positive association which is consistent with the Social Norms Theory. Students who estimated that 0-10% of their peers were engaging in sexual intercourse were not engaging in sexual intercourse themselves at all. Moreover, as the research suggests (Scholly et al., 2005) and as hypothesized, it is shown that students who have high estimates about their peers’ engagement in sexual intercourse are much more likely to be engaged in sexual intercourse themselves.

**Figure 6.**





## Conclusion and Recommendations

The data collected gives a clearer picture of the types of sexual behaviors this demographic may be engaging in. While the data certainly shows millennial students are safer (meaning less involved with high-risk sexual behaviors than the same demographic in the recent past) in their sexual activities, it also shows that a large number of these students are engaging in risky behaviors. While more students are presently shown to be engaging in more sexual intercourse than the 2003 study, this may actually be attributed to the limiting correlation of the sample's living situation. In this previous study, the entire sample resided in traditional halls, which through this study has a limiting correlation with sexual behaviors. Similarly the statistics discovered about this demographics' sexual behavior, are more meaningful in their scope coupled with the firmer definitions of what "sex," "sexual partners," and "sexual activity." Clearly, students' varied responses to what these terms mean further confirm that researchers must be clear and detailed when they are inquiring about this topic. It is also interesting to note here that the majority of students in this study hold a more narrow description for what a virgin is than for what it means for a person to practice abstinence. In other words, a person can still be a virgin yet not be abstinent because of their sexual activities which may not include sexual intercourse. This difference in definitions further supports the hypothesis made that this generation of students, while safer, are still involved in sexual activities even though the rates of sexual intercourse continue to drop (CDC, 2006).

Because of the overwhelming support that the data lends towards the Social Norms Theory, I would recommend that student development professionals seek opportunities to educate students about correct sexual activity statistics. Furthermore, with the lowered rate of sexual activity engagement on a campus like this one (i.e., small, private, Christian, liberal arts institutions), these departments should seek to research and share lowered statistics. As students start to form more correct and thus lower estimates, they are more likely to be less involved in high-risk sexual activities and less involved in premarital sex, assuming that there aren't any other mediating factors. Programs that focus on high-risk statistics can inflate student perceptions and actually cause increased probability for high-risk behaviors. A note must be made here that while it is my belief that this relationship is causal, the data only suggests a correlation; thus, further research must be done to prove this hypothesis.

The negative correlation between religious/spiritual gatherings (such as times of worship, small groups, accountability groups, etc.) and sexual activity can clearly be seen in this data. Further research should be done to seek out a causal relationship here as well. If such a relationship does exist, student development professionals on non-religiously-affiliated campuses would be wise to make sure students are provided with religious resources. Religiously-affiliated institutions should seek to hold open communication and intentional programming about these topics, especially since "Teacher/Professor" was indicated 37.3% of the time when asked who students received the majority of their information about sex from. Students may face social stigma and/or policy infraction issues as they deal with the nature of their sexuality; however, developing a healthy sexuality that is both expressive and safe is imperative for the long-term success of these people.

Further study about the correlates of high-risk sexual behavior and the protective factors upon students is desperately needed. Additionally, further study at other similar

institutions is necessary. Are protective correlates such as on-campus living or traditional hall settings distinctive to this population, or are they found at other institutions as well? While millennials are predicted to be less sexually involved, the data from the four-year span of respondents at this institution question whether or not millennials are really less sexually active. A note should be made here that the sample was fairly homogeneous in its ethnic makeup, so a recommendation for further research with a diverse sample should be conducted. Furthermore, high-risk behaviors are still taking place despite this generation having had the most sex education in history as well as the most parental involvement (Howe, et al., 2003). How will the attitudes and behaviors shown affect the culture that these students are beginning to inherit or the culture they are creating? Will we adequately prepare them for the work they have, not only vocationally, but also with the ability to live healthy lives, of which sexuality is such an integrated part?

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# Promoting Student Faith Development Within Evangelical Higher Education Through Engaging People of Other Faiths

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## Abstract

This qualitative study investigated the perceptions of students, administrators, and faculty at two universities within the Council of Christian Colleges and Universities (CCCU) regarding the extent, nature, and impact engagement with people of other faiths had on student faith development. The findings confirmed that constructive engagements with people of other faiths do indeed have a strong and positive impact on faith development. Significant barriers, however, were found that serve to impede the extent and quality of interactions with people of other faiths on the campus. At the same time, institutional leaders, including student development professionals, were found to play a pivotal role in promoting the extent and positive impact these interactions can have on student faith development by: a) modeling a posture of openness toward the “other;” b) preparing students how to respectfully engage people of other faiths prior to formal activities involving such encounters; and c) supporting students who feel like the *other* at these universities.

*Keywords: student, faith development, student development, faiths*

## Introduction

Evidence exists that encounters with faith perspectives vastly different from one's own can be powerful experiences that foster college student faith development (Light, 2001; Parks, 1996; Wells, 2003). Such interactions encourage students to: a) rethink and more critically examine their faith with more thoroughness; b) reaffirm their own religious commitment; c) gain a more complex understanding of the world around them; d) grow in respect for others from different religious backgrounds; and e) become more inclusive in the way they interact with people with different perspectives (Fowler, 1981; Garber, 1996; Holcomb, 2004; Light, 2001; Wells, 2003). These effects have led Parks (1996) to describe interactions with “*otherness*” during the college years as being one of the most powerful sources of challenge that encourage student faith development.

Parks (2000) cautions, however, that not all encounters with *otherness* induce such powerful outcomes. She explains that if engagements with *otherness* are to lead to transformational student faith development, these interactions must be “constructive.” Parks defines constructive engagement with *otherness* as interactions that are characterized by respect for and a willingness to learn from the other. In such an encounter, an empathic bond is established that transcends the “us versus them” barriers often found within the faith group to which one belongs. These interactions challenge one to think of the other in a new, more complex way.

Parks (2000) contrasts constructive engagement to that which is superficial. Superficial encounters with those who are different are characterized by a closed and antagonistic posture towards the other. If student engagements with other faiths remain predominantly superficial, the faith development potential of the encounter is not only squandered, but may produce negative effects. Superficial engagement with *otherness* encourages a strengthening of preconceived stereotypes, negative perceptions of the other, and a stronger “us versus them” mentality that restricts the ability to experience empathy for someone who is different. Consequently, on one hand, engagements with other faiths have the potential to foster dynamic faith development, but on the other hand, they can impede faith development.

### **The Evangelical University and Constructive Engagements with Otherness**

For purposes of this study, the Evangelical University was defined as a liberal arts institution of higher education whose identity is rooted in the evangelical Christian faith reflected by its membership in the CCCU. By their very nature as faith-based educational institutions, these universities place a high value on student faith development, particularly as it relates to the Christian faith. However, the research literature identifies two potential obstacles these institutions face in providing constructive student engagement with other faiths.

The commitments of CCCU institutions—such as having board-approved mission statements that are Christ-centered, requiring full-time faculty and staff to profess a faith in Jesus Christ, and matriculating a large percentage of students who are evangelical Christians—ensure the presence of the evangelical faith on campus while limiting the presence of other faiths. According to Kuh and Gonyea (2006), students on these types of campuses have far fewer serious conversations with students whose religious, political, and personal beliefs and values differ from their own. Therefore, it appears that the inherent character of evangelical universities potentially creates an obstacle to providing student opportunities to constructively engage with other faiths by their homogenous faith environments.

Another potential obstacle to providing constructive student engagement with *otherness* arises out of the challenge most CCCU institutions experience in maintaining and preserving their evangelical identity amidst a higher education landscape that has grown increasingly secular in the last 150 years (Marsden, 1994). This path towards secularization, often referred to as a “slippery slope” (Adrian & Hughes, 1997), creates anxiety in the leadership of evangelical institutions that the same secularized fate will be realized on their campuses. Consequently, much energy has been expended in demarcating the boundary lines that maintain and sustain the evangelical identity of such institutions (Edrington, R., 2004; Litfin, 2004; Ringenberg, 1979). This produces an emphasis on defining and welcoming those with a similar faith who are considered “insiders,” and protecting the institution from the threat posed by “outsiders” who hold to beliefs, traditions, and values contradictory to evangelicalism. While preserving institutional evangelical identity, these efforts can also create a defensive “us versus them” posture—what McMinn (1995) refers to as an enclave mentality—on the evangelical campus that can undermine the developmental potential of encounters with *otherness*.

## Purpose of Study and Research Questions

Two challenges, then, exist on the evangelical campus in providing opportunities for students to constructively engage with *otherness*: a) the homogenous faith culture that limits the extent to which students engage with *otherness* (Kuh & Gonyea, 2006); and b) an enclave mentality that promotes a defensive posture towards those who are outside of the evangelical enclave (McMinn, 1995). Understanding this, the overarching research question this study asked was, “how well do the faith environments found on evangelical Christian campuses foster constructive student engagement with other faiths?” The purpose of this study was to address this question by: 1) observing, identifying, and describing interactions that students at two distinctly different evangelical universities have with *otherness*—specifically people of other faiths; and 2) discerning how members of these two institutions understand and interpret the role that student engagement with other faiths serves in the faith development of students. Insights gleaned from this study illuminate how student development professionals can encourage students to maximize their faith development by approaching engagement with other faiths in constructive ways.

## Method

In keeping with phenomenological, qualitative research objectives, this study adopted a case study design (Merriam, 1988). A two-site case design was employed because evidence from multiple case designs is considered more compelling than simply examining one case (Yin, 2003). Pseudonyms were used in referring to both sites in order to mask the identity of the two institutions selected.

Both sites were member institutions of the CCCU and had board-approved mission statements that sought to provide a liberal arts education that was informed by the evangelical Christian faith tradition. The first site, Jonathan Edwards University (JEU), was a suburban evangelical university in which roughly 97% of the student body identified with the evangelical Christian faith tradition. The other 3% of students either identified with a non-evangelical form of the Christian faith or no faith at all. The second site, Dietrich Bonhoeffer University (DBU), was an urban evangelical university in which approximately 60% of the student population identified with the evangelical Christian faith tradition. The remaining 40% of the student body identified with either a non-evangelical Christian faith, no faith, or with a completely different faith such as a Jewish, Muslim, or Hindu faith.

The researcher sought a broad understanding of how engagement with *otherness* impacts student faith development by interviewing three distinct groups within these communities: administrators (who represent the organization's leaders and key decision makers), faculty, and students. Because this study investigated student faith development, a greater number of students were chosen to participate. Purposeful sampling techniques were used to ensure that information-rich participants were interviewed. Two administrators, two faculty, and five students were interviewed for a total of nine participants from each site.

Direct observation of both case contexts (i.e., campus environments) was another source of data collected in this study. Direct observation offered two advantages that interviewing could not provide (Taylor & Bogdan, 1984). First, since interviewing occurred within an isolated library room removed from the rest of the campus, direct

observation provided access to places and events that actually involved engagement with *otherness*. Second, direct observation provided a first-hand account of the context being studied, rather than a second-hand account given by a person being interviewed. Because of this, significant time was spent on campus observing student culture and attending events such as chapels, classes, and on-campus conferences that involved engagements with *otherness*.

Documents were a third source of data. Because of the rich value of this data source, time was allotted during field visits to search for documents. Student newspapers, college catalogs, public forum walls, brochures, web-pages, promotion and recruitment materials, and other documents that addressed interactions with other faiths were collected for analysis.

The analysis of data began with the onset of data collection and continued throughout and after the data collection ended. A method of coding consistent with thematic analysis was employed (Boyatzis, 1998). The process of extrapolating meaning and ultimately conclusions from the thematic analysis involved comparing and contrasting themes from the two cases.

## Results

Key themes emerged in the analysis of data that were common between JEU and DBU. First, interviewees at both institutions revealed and affirmed the powerful effect that engagement with other faiths has on student faith development. Second, formidable barriers were found at both institutions that hinder constructive engagement with *otherness*. Third, the findings suggest that student development professionals and other institutional leaders can encourage students to overcome these barriers by: 1) modeling a posture of openness toward the *other*; 2) preparing students to respectfully engage people of other faiths prior to formal activities involving such encounters; and 3) supporting students who feel like the *other* at evangelical universities.

### Powerful Effects of Engagement with Other Faiths

A common theme that arose at both institutions was that constructive engagement with people of other faiths was perceived to be a powerful source of learning that encourages student faith development. These encounters were seen as experiences that help students to: 1) raise difficult questions that compelled them to more critically examine their faith; 2) develop greater respect for the *other*; 3) gain a more complex understanding of the *other*; and 4) strengthen their own faith commitment.

### Critical Examination of Faith

One JEU administrator highlighted the dissonance that comes from engaging people of other faiths and the resulting growth that he's observed:

[These encounters] produce a little bit of internal crisis within most people. When they come to that point of discomfort or a little bit of internal crisis and they begin to cry out to God to find a place of peace in that. It could be from something as challenging as, 'boy, I talked to these Mormon guys and their experience of God sounds so much like mine, how do I reconcile that?'



The internal crisis that this administrator talked about was perceived as a natural outflow of engaging people of other faiths. Every interview participant referred to difficult questions that emerged as a result of encountering religious differences. Students at both JEU and DBU described how these questions forced them to confront and rethink tacit assumptions within their faith. One JEU student stated the questions have compelled him to examine his faith more critically:

How [these interactions] impact my own faith is that it brings into question my own faith. It truly does. Just as I ask someone of a different faith certain hard questions, people who aren't Christians have asked me very tough questions that I need to reflect on.

A JEU professor identified a common question he has observed that has challenged students:

One question that frequently comes up is, well, how are we different from this other faith? I mean say, for example, that they see a Buddhist who wants to be compassionate to other people as we Christians want to be compassionate. So the question comes up about what makes Christianity so different than other religions. And that's been good, I think for students, because it's helping them come to their own convictions about their faith.

Other questions that students identified as helping them to think through their faith more thoroughly included:

- How do I know that I believe the right thing?
- How do I know my experience of faith is real when compared to the experiences of others?
- What makes Christianity different?
- Does God's grace extend beyond the boundaries of our tribe to people of other faiths?

Students, faculty, and administrators alike spoke of how these questions help students take ownership of their faith and examine their faith more critically.

### ***Respect for the other***

Interview participants also spoke of how student faith often attained a greater respect for the *other* after engaging with people of different faiths. One JEU student who had many constructive conversations with people of another faith during a spring break trip to a foreign country outlined how her respect for the *other* has increased:

I think sometimes we think of non-Christians as less than us, you know? And that's not right. I used to think that way. Now I see them more as people trying to seek the same truth I am. It just gives me a great degree of mercy towards them and makes me want to be there for them and with them.

A DBU student also described how, through these encounters, she has become more respectful of people with differing perspectives. She also stated that this respect has helped her to maintain friendships with others in the midst of differences.



I have a few friends who grew up Christians who have chosen not to be that anymore. And you know, just being respectful of that, when it comes to certain topics that we talk about that we have differing viewpoints on. And we're still ok and there's just this kind of mutual respect that, it doesn't really do any good to sit there and just argue. We've kind of made our decisions and just have to be ok with that.

### ***Complex Understanding of Faith***

Along with a greater degree of respect for the *other*, students described how constructive engagement with *otherness* has challenged them to have a more complex understanding of faith. One JEU student explained how a more complex understanding has changed how he approaches the *other*:

Four or five years ago, I would have approached a conversation with someone of another faith with an agenda, giving them pat answers to difficult issues someone else was facing. Now I realize that there are a number of things that are not as clear-cut. I used to have a very black and white thinking of faith.

A DBU student also related how an interaction with a person of a different faith has challenged her to develop a more complex understanding of faith. She described how her more complex understanding of the world has caused her to be more respectful when she interacts with the *other*:

I guess that experience changed my perspective in the sense that I no longer approach a conversation with someone of a different faith like, 'I'm going to tell you all about what I have to say, and you need to listen.' That's how I used to think. And now I realize that they're coming from somewhere too. It's not just, 'here's the magic solution. You need to listen to and then everything is going to be fine.' Like they have a story and I need to listen to that and kind of see where they're coming from and be sensitive to their background. You know, it kind of made me think about what other people are thinking instead of just being like, 'Jesus loves you, accept him, and go to heaven.'

### ***Strengthening of Faith***

Students also spoke of how the devotion of the *other* challenged and inspired them to take their own faith more seriously. A student from DBU, whose quotation most completely reflected this theme, described how her friendships with Muslims challenged her to deepen her own faith commitment.

I know my Muslim friends have impacted me hugely to be strong in my faith because they are so strong in their own. Seeing them especially when they take time off and they go do their prayers twice a day. And it's like, ok, they just took time off out of their whole day to specifically be like, 'Allah, we thank you for what you're doing for us.' And I look at myself and I'm just doing my homework, watching T.V., and thinking I'm too busy. Am I really that busy to not devote time to my faith? It challenges me to just reflect on how I'm living my walk compared to how they are living their walk.

A deepening of one's faith commitment, gaining a more complex understanding of faith, becoming more respectful of the *other*, and critically examining one's faith were powerful outcomes of constructively engaging with other faiths. However, in the midst of understanding that these encounters can be potent learning sources, an acknowledgement occurred that barriers also existed on these two evangelical campuses which hindered the quantity and quality of engagement with other faiths.

### **Barriers to Constructive Engagement on the Evangelical Campus**

Numerous barriers were found to exist at both JEU and DBU that discouraged constructive engagement with other faiths, such as: 1) Christian enclaves to which students could retreat in order to avoid engaging with *otherness*; 2) ambivalent student attitudes towards engaging with people of other faiths; 3) antagonistic responses by some students toward people of other faiths; 4) the pressure to conform to the views of the dominant evangelical culture; and 5) the presence of divisive conflict among different faith perspectives during interactions with people of other faiths.

These barriers led interview participants to be critical towards the student body at both JEU and DBU in regards to how much students interacted with people of other faiths. One JEU student said:

We surround ourselves so much with Christianity that we don't allow ourselves the opportunity, that we never venture out and experience, we're too afraid to experience other people's world views. We're afraid of offending them or afraid of how we will feel around them.

Another JEU student remarked:

But I think as a whole, the JEU population, we are really self-centered. You know we forget about the rest of the world. I think it [exposure to other faiths] is very small, because we live here, we don't really need to go anywhere. You know, we have this saying here at school that we live in the JEU bubble and we don't leave it.

Similarly, many critical comments were revealed at DBU, even though DBU had a more religiously diverse student population. The student newspaper, in an article that reported findings on a survey about student experiences with diversity, critically stated:

Our community is slacking, and in effect, creating a weak sense of a true diverse community. The truth is, there is a clear divide within the students. Any sort of cross of cultures that causes any bit of discomfort is seemingly avoided at all costs. And so, without our willingness to cross these lines, our diversity might as well be thrown out the door as it is not being utilized and cultivated.

The most disturbing barrier involved antagonistic and hostile attitudes of students at these two evangelical universities toward the *other*. Although these attitudes were not pervasive throughout the entire student body, multiple experiences were relayed by interviewees that confirmed these attitudes were indeed a problem at both institutions.

One JEU student described the dialogue between students and people of other faiths on a mission trip that was undermined by disrespectful attitudes students exhibited

toward people of another faith. He described how students attempted to disguise their disrespectful attitudes in the presence of people of another faith, but then when they retreated into their Christian enclave, they made fun of and joked about the faith of these people. There was a sense of, “how could anyone believe something so ridiculous.” Although students attempted to disguise this disrespectful attitude, it ultimately manifested itself in argumentative conversations with people of different faiths, as this JEU student described:

A lot of things that came up in my questions about their faith, they got offended by. I can see, in retrospect, why they got offended by it... I mean sometimes you could physically see people getting more excited and a little more zealous in what they're saying and not making any kind of discussion out of it. It was more point, counterpoint, point, counterpoint. There was no break in the wall. And it was kind of unfortunate to have seemed to have wasted that time.

This student went on to describe that most of the mission trip was characterized by these kinds of argumentative conversations. Not only did this occur at JEU, but examples of antagonistic attitudes toward people of other faiths were found at DBU as well.

One DBU student interviewed identified herself as an agnostic. She chose to attend DBU not because she has a Christian faith, but because her grandfather said that the only way he would financially support her college education was if she enrolled at DBU. She described numerous stories of encountering fearful and hostile attitudes toward her because of her agnosticism. Her freshman year roommate, during an argument, told her to, “get your demonic spirits away from me.” This agnostic recalled how other Christians on campus told her that they could be her acquaintance, but not a friend because of her agnosticism. She was also hesitant to share her perspective because she feels her views are often discounted because of her “lack of faith.”

Another DBU student, named Rosa, who is a Christian and an international student from Africa, shared how she has often been mistaken by DBU students as a Muslim because of her facial features and the way she dresses. Rosa conveyed a strong and painful awareness of a lack of relational engagement from the evangelical Christian students on campus, which she associated with the false perception that she is a person of Muslim faith.

The people who I thought would accept me here at DBU were the people that rejected me. It wasn't the Christians on this campus—I'm kind of sad to say—that accepted me and wholeheartedly opened up for me. It was like the people who felt like they had no religion or the people who felt like they didn't believe in anything, and the people that were Muslim or Hindu. These were the people that accepted me. These were the students, the people who we as Christians see as lost. They're the ones who showed me Christ. Even though they were a different religion, even though they were of a different background, they're the ones who showed me Christ, and not the ones who were supposed to show me Christ.

Rosa's compelling critique directed toward the evangelical culture found on DBU's campus, along with other students' criticism directed toward JEU, highlight the need for student development professionals at evangelical universities to be proactive in fostering an environment that is conducive to constructive engagement with other faiths.

### **Steps to Foster Constructive Engagement with *Otherness***

While this study revealed that formidable barriers to constructive engagement with other faiths were present on these two evangelical Christian campuses, also documented were positive ways institutional leaders were helping students to address and overcome these obstacles. These approaches challenge student development professionals at evangelical colleges and universities to take action that fosters an environment that is conducive to constructive engagement with *otherness*. For example, institutional leaders at both JEU and DBU: 1) modeled an open posture toward the *other*; 2) prepared students to engage constructively with people of other faiths prior to formal encounters; and 3) supported students who felt like the *other*.

### ***Modeling an Open Posture***

A common theme in interviews with students was that they could often name institutional leaders who exhibited open and closed postures toward people of other faiths. Students also relayed that the postures exhibited by institutional leaders frequently impacted how they themselves approached interactions with people of other faiths.

One JEU student recounted how the open posture she observed in a student development professional on a spring break trip to a Muslim community helped to foster an environment in which she could constructively interact with people of the Islamic faith:

But [the student development professional] emphasized that we were just trying to get to know them, get to know who they are, what they believe in, what their families are like. That's another thing that we mentioned to them, that the purpose of our trip was to know who Egyptians are. And that helped them to feel accepted. They said to us that they feel so rejected by American people, so they were so overwhelmed by the fact that we were so different from what they thought Americans really are.

A student from DBU talked about how the student chaplain and the director of the student ministry office challenged students by exposing them to different perspectives.

And they want to get up there [in front of students] all different types of perspectives. And if you talked to [the university chaplain], she's so different too. Even though she went to this school and to this seminary, she felt like she was on the fringes of the Christian culture here, too. And so for her, when she speaks, she challenges [DBU students] in chapel, in Sunday night services she challenges... Like everywhere she goes, she's making sure that everyone gets challenged by different perspectives. The student ministries office is also stepping up and challenging students big-time.

On the other hand, a JEU student described how the combative posture toward people of other faiths exhibited by the leaders of a spring break trip in which he participated fostered an environment that led to hostile conversations with people of

other faiths. Students going on the trip were trained in the theological errors of the faith of the people they were going to encounter. Students were also prepared to enter into a community of faith that was identified as “hostile” to their own Christian faith. In retrospect, this student regretted that most of the dialogue that took place on this trip was combative.

Understanding that the posture of institutional leaders can have a powerful influence on the way students relate to people of other faiths, student development professionals can foster an environment conducive to constructive engagement with *otherness* by being mindful of their own attitude toward the *other*. Questions that evangelical educators can ask as they go about the daily task of fostering an educational environment conducive to student faith development include:

- What is my posture toward the other?
- In what ways do I explicitly and implicitly communicate or model my posture towards the other to students?
- How capable am I of being able to address issues related to constructive engagement with other faiths?
- To what degree do I need to pursue gaining more experience interacting with people whose faith is different from my own?

### ***Preparing Students for Constructive Engagement***

The homogenous evangelical Christian faith environment present at both JEU and DBU led student development professionals to prepare students prior to any co-curricular cross-cultural trips. The director of the World Outreach Office at JEU created a curriculum, what he termed the “learner/servant/storyteller model,” to which every student going on a spring break mission trip was exposed. The director of the Student Ministries Office at DBU prepared students on how to be sensitive to students of other faiths participating in the same outreach trip. The preparation at both DBU and JEU emphasized respect, humility, understanding one’s own ignorance of the *other*, and forming relationships with people of other faiths that transcended differences.

The director of the World Outreach Office at JEU explained his desired outcomes of this training module:

I really want our students to go into these situations knowing their ignorance. Knowing they don’t understand who these people are and what they believe and why they believe. Their first job as a learner is to be quiet, to observe, to learn, to ask questions, and to listen. Their second task as servant is to not do things that we think need to be done for them, but to ask them in a supportive way, how can we serve? How can we come alongside and help? And hopefully through this process of those two things, I think doors open up then for us to share our stories from our own Christian faith.

The training programs at both JEU and DBU were referenced in interviews with students. One JEU student said that the “learner/servant/storyteller model” helped him to share his faith in ways that weren’t offensive to others. A DBU student mentioned how the director of Student Ministries is constantly challenging students in many

different venues to view their experience through different perspectives and to seek out others with different views. Unfortunately, these programs were not required for all students, but were only experienced by students who voluntarily interacted with the Christian outreach offices. A need exists for student development professionals at evangelical universities to collaborate with academic administrators to develop ways for all students to experience such training.

### ***Supporting the other at Evangelical Institutions***

No matter how homogenous the faith culture may be at an evangelical university, this study suggests that students who feel like the *other* will likely be present. While many studies have been conducted revealing that evangelical Christian students encounter antagonistic attitudes in public university environments (Bryant, 2005; Lowery, 2007; Moran, Lang, & Oliver, 2007; Schulz, 2005), this study suggests that those who are *other* at evangelical institutions may experience similar antagonism. Evangelical educators and researchers should acknowledge that they may have similar work to do to address constructive engagement with *otherness* at evangelical institutions as may be found in public universities.

Instead of potentially alienating the *other* enrolled at CCCU institutions by seeing them as a threat to institutional or individual faith identity, evangelical educators who are secure in their own Christian identity have a valuable opportunity to seek them out in a Christian faith context. While those who are *other* at evangelical institutions may, at times, feel alienated and marginalized, an encounter with a student who is *other* becomes an opportunity to listen, understand, encourage and support. Many in this study who saw themselves as *other* were very much sustained by Christians who heard them out and formed a committed friendship with them that transcended difference.

Rosa, the student who felt alienated by Christians at DBU because of her “Muslim appearance,” revealed just how crucial a student development professional had been in encouraging her to respond in constructive ways to the estrangement she felt within her university community:

[The student development professional] is almost like my mentor. She’s like the busiest person on earth, but she always makes time to see me and talk to me. Especially when she knows that I’ve bottled up things. Especially with how I’ve been feeling when it comes to Christianity and what I thought it was and what it is here. So I’ve been talking to her a lot about things. And you definitely need someone to talk to, because it’s so easy to just be bitter about it and keep it in your heart. And that will just turn into frustration, anger, and hate. That’s why I’ve decided that I have to let go of hate. Because I was letting it control me.

During the interview with this student, it appeared that her persistence at DBU was because of the student development professional’s investment in her life, even in the midst of feeling like an *other* throughout her entire experience there. Consequently, not only did the support from a student development professional for someone who felt like an *other* help a student to persist, but it also promoted student faith development by creating opportunities for evangelical students to encounter this other faith perspective because she continued at DBU.

## Conclusion

While this research suggests ways that student development professionals can promote an environment more conducive to engaging people of other faiths constructively, much work still remains to be addressed on this issue. Instead of an endpoint, this study should be viewed as a continuation of an ongoing conversation regarding student faith development within evangelical higher education that began much earlier than the onset of this investigation. While this study has helped illuminate how engaging people of other faiths affects student faith development in the unique context of evangelical universities, it has also generated many questions, such as:

- How do the experiences of students at other evangelical colleges around engagement with other faiths compare with those in this study?
- How do students at other types of faith-based institutions of higher education engage with other faiths?
- How can a better understanding be gained of what it is like to experience life at an evangelical Christian university as the other and how can the institution provide more support to these students?
- 4) What characteristics at evangelical institutions exert pressure on students to conform their views to the dominant culture?

This study also highlights the great need for evangelical educators—including student development professionals—to become more intentional in fostering constructive student engagement with people of other faiths. As one student development professional at DBU observed, for various reasons, engaging with this aspect of multiculturalism is a “touchy subject” into which evangelicals are hesitant to enter. However, as this study reveals, the potential for student faith development that is inherent in constructive engagement with other faiths warrants increased focus on how to create environments that foster these interactions within the evangelical campus context. This study suggests that until educators on evangelical campuses become more intentional in fostering environments that encourage constructive student engagement with *otherness*, the faith development of students on these campuses will not be fully actualized.

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# A Qualitative Exploration of Student Spiritual Development in a Living-Learning Community

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## Abstract

The purpose of this study is to examine the spiritual development of eight participants in a living-learning community at Abilene Christian University. Using a qualitative methodology, this study attempted to capture the voices of participants as they concluded a year together in a Barrett Hall living-learning community (LCC). Data were collected over a period of 2-3 weeks through individual semi-structured interviews, as well as one focus group comprised of all eight community members. Data were analyzed to capture meaningful themes and categories. Implications for practice are discussed.

## Introduction

Interest in spirituality in the broader landscape of higher education has experienced a recent resurgence. In 2003, UCLA researchers at the Higher Education Research Institute launched a national longitudinal study on the spiritual life of college students that has become a seminal study on student spirituality. In addition, several other recent major works address college student spirituality (Astin, 2004; Chickering, Dalton, & Stamm, 2006; Dalton, 2003; Dalton, 2006; Johnson, Kristellar, & Sheets, 2004; Love & Talbott, 1999; Ma, 2003). Despite this rebirth of interest in student spirituality, continued research needs to be done in this area. Chickering, Dalton, and Stamm (2006) state, "The rigorous research methods and analytic frameworks we use to understand other critical social, psychological, and cultural issues need to be applied to helping us professionals understand students' spiritual experiences and their development of values and personal beliefs" (p. 105).

One ideal setting to explore student spiritual growth is within intentionally constructed residential learning environments. Often referred to as a living-learning community, or LLC, these purposeful groups are gaining popularity on campuses throughout the nation. Past research has linked numerous positive outcomes to living-learning communities (Inkelas & Weisman, 2003; Inkelas, Daver, Vogt & Leonard, 2007; Pike, 1999); however, student spiritual development has not yet been examined in a living-learning community. Due to their communal nature, living-learning communities appear to be ideal settings for the spiritual development of students.

As the need for ongoing exploration of student spiritual development continues, the authors of this article believe that faith-based institutions are ideally positioned to contribute to the growing dialogue concerning spiritual development. This study attempts to add to that dialogue as it endeavors to look at spiritual development in the

context of a living-learning community at a faith-based institution of higher education. More specifically, the purpose of this study is to examine the spiritual development of eight male participants in a living-learning community at Abilene Christian University. Using a qualitative methodology, this study attempts to capture the voices of participants as they conclude a year together in Barrett Living-Learning Hall.

### **Conceptual Frameworks**

Spirituality is a difficult concept to define. In our attempt to gain perspective on the practice of spiritual development, we have used a definition of traditional Christian spiritual formation from Ma (1999) and spiritual development frameworks from Love and Talbot (1999) and from Fowler (1995). These three perspectives provided us a broad lens through which to view student spiritual development. Ma (1999) defines Christian spiritual formation as follows:

Spiritual formation is defined as the process of becoming conformed to the image of Christ, for the purpose of fellowship with God and the community of believers. The process involves a personal relationship with God the Father, through a person's dynamic faith and commitment to the Lord Jesus Christ, and the regeneration of the Holy Spirit. The process involves all aspects of a person: heart, mind and spirit and develops mature Christian character in a Christian believer over the course of a lifetime. Spiritual formation involves integrative and restorative growth in relationships; namely, relationships with God, ourselves and others. Mature Christian character involves integration and growth in all aspects of human development: the cognitive, affective, volitional, and spiritual domains (p. 99).

In their article, *Defining Spiritual Development: A Missing Consideration for Student Affairs*, Love and Talbot (1999) propose that spiritual development involves the following:

1. An internal process of seeking personal authenticity, genuineness, and wholeness as an aspect of identity development;
2. The process of continually transcending one's current locus of centrality;
3. Developing a greater connectedness to self and others through relationships and union with community;
4. Deriving meaning, purpose, and direction in one's life; and
5. An increasing openness to exploring a relationship with an intangible and pervasive power or essence that exists beyond human existence and rational human knowing.

In his work entitled *Stages of Faith: The Psychology of Human Development and the Quest for Meaning*, Fowler (1995) reveals his "Stages of Faith" theory. This theoretical understanding of faith development was created by building on other developmental theories. Fowler's theory is comprised of six stages of development including:

1. Intuitive-Projective Faith—Child's discovery of language, imagination, and self-awareness. Begins to understand meaning of sex and death.
2. Mythical-Literal Faith—Stage where the person has acquired operational

thinking skills and makes distinctions between fantasy and reality. In this stage, stories are given more importance and one's sense of morality is based upon mutual fairness and justice.

3. Synthetic-Conventional Faith—Individual is utilizing more formal operational thought, however, lacks individual perspective and therefore conforms to the beliefs of a group they belong to.
4. Individualized-Reflective Faith—Stage where an individual develops their personal identity and worldview.
5. Conjunctive Faith—Individual is comfortable with their faith and acquired knowledge, however continues to seek for deeper wisdom and contrasting ways of thinking.
6. Universalizing Faith—People in this stage of spiritual development actively seek ways to pursue their “calling.”

### **Research Questions**

The basic information we hope to glean from our conversations with the residents can be summarized by the following questions:

1. How do college-age men residing in a campus-based living-learning community describe their experience over the course of an academic year?
2. How do college-age men residing in a campus-based living-learning community describe their spiritual development over the course of an academic year?
3. How do college-age men residing in a campus-based living-learning community perceive the impact of the living-learning environment on their spiritual development?

### **Literature**

To provide a backdrop for our current research, the following literature review consists of brief overviews of literature in two main areas: student spiritual development and living-learning communities. Before we discuss the literature on these two topics, we want to point out the natural connection between community/social interaction and spiritual formation. Dalton (2003) states:

It is not surprising, therefore, that many of the forms of spiritual search that are popular today with college students are social in nature. Most popular forms of contemporary spirituality activities reported on college campuses revolve around groups and activities designed to facilitate spiritual exploration in a social context (p. 10).

### **Student Spiritual Development Literature**

A landmark work in student affairs literature is Chickering's (1969) *Education and Identity*, which outlines his now famous seven vectors of human development. A second edition of *Education and Identity* was published in 1993 with Linda Reisser incorporating new findings from the ensuing 25 years. Building on this work,

Chickering recently published a new book with co-authors Jon Dalton and Lisa Stamm (2006) entitled *Encouraging Authenticity and Spirituality in Higher Education*. This book expands the human development conversation further by overtly advocating spirituality as a necessary aspect of student development. As previously mentioned, researchers at UCLA's Higher Education Research Institute (HERI) have commenced a multi-year research project examining the spiritual development of undergraduate students. Initially, this study indicates that college students have a high level of interest in spirituality and involvement (Executive Summary obtained January 3, 2008, from [www.spirituality.ucla.edu](http://www.spirituality.ucla.edu)). Jennifer Lindholm, Director of the Spirituality in Higher Education Research Project, has published her own material pertaining to spiritual development in higher education. In Lindholm's (2003) work, *Spirituality and the Academy: Perspectives and Possibilities*, she relates some of the findings that have surfaced thus far in the national multi-year HERI study, *Spirituality in Higher Education*. She cites this data in the article to further advance the argument that student spiritual development has a place in the educational arena. A final piece of significant literature pertaining to this research study is a project by Ma (2003). In Ma's research, the development of spirituality of students attending faith-based institutions was examined. Results indicate that these students perceived nonacademic activities and peer relationships as more spiritually formative than planned academic activities.

#### **Living-Learning Community Literature**

One pedagogical method has emerged as an efficient and effective paradigm for improving undergraduate education: the resurgence of learning communities within the academy. Influenced by the educational philosopher John Dewey, learning community pedagogy can be traced back to the early curricular reforms of Alexander Meiklejohn at the University of Wisconsin and can be seen again in the work of Joseph Tussman at the University of California at Berkeley. Research suggests this paradigm for learning has the ability to improve student learning and development, as well as enhance retention and overall college satisfaction (Astin, 1993; Tinto, 1993; Heller, 1998). Though various models of learning communities exist, most can be categorized into one of four approaches: paired or clustered courses, cohorts in large courses or FIGS (freshman interest groups), team-taught programs, and residence-based learning communities, also known as living-learning communities.

Living-learning communities, the focus of this study, play an integral role in the academic and social development of college students (Kennedy, 2002). Several recent studies have linked living-learning communities with positive outcomes. Inkelas and Weisman (2003) examined three different types of living-learning programs and compared them with a control group. These researchers found that living-learning students demonstrated higher levels of engagement in college activities and had stronger academic outcomes. Inkelas, Daver, Vogt and Leonard (2007) analyzed data from the National Study of Living-Learning Programs and found first-generation college students in living-learning programs reported a more successful academic and social transition to college than their first-generation counterparts who lived in a traditional residence hall. Finally, Pike (1999) collected student data from the College Student Experiences Questionnaire and found students in residential learning communities had "... significantly higher levels of involvement, interaction, integration, and gains in learning and intellectual development than did students in traditional residence halls" (p. 1).

## **Procedures**

### **Rationale for Qualitative Study**

The following qualitative methodological assumptions (Merriam, 1998) strengthen the choice of a qualitative research design:

1. Qualitative researchers are interested in meaning—how people make sense of their lives, their experiences, and their structures of the world.
2. The qualitative researcher is the primary instrument for data collection and analysis.
3. Qualitative research usually involves fieldwork. The researcher physically goes to the people, setting, site, or institution to observe or record behavior in its natural setting.
4. The product of qualitative research is descriptive. The researcher is interested in process, meaning, and understanding gained through words or pictures.

### **Type of Design Used**

The type of design used for this study is a basic or generic qualitative design. A basic design incorporates many of the previously mentioned characteristics of qualitative research. Merriam (1998) states, “Rather, researchers who conduct these studies, which are probably the most common form of qualitative research in education, simply seek to discover and understand a phenomenon, a process, of the perspectives and worldviews of the people involved” (p. 11).

### **The Role of the Researchers**

Due to the nature of qualitative research, it is typical for researchers to identify biases, values, and personal interests about their research topic and process (Creswell, 2003). Two of the four researchers conducting this study are employed at the university being examined. The other two researchers are students enrolled at the institution being studied. The researchers’ perceptions of student life and student spiritual growth on this campus have been shaped by many experiences with students. The researchers have been involved with various programming specifically designed to enhance students’ spirituality. It is the researchers’ belief that as educators they are responsible for educating and nurturing the whole student: mind, body, and soul.

### **Context and Population**

The residence hall, Barret Living-Learning Hall, is on the campus of Abilene Christian University (ACU). ACU is a selective, private, residential, master’s level university affiliated with the Churches of Christ and is located in Abilene, Texas. ACU is a member of the Council of Christian Colleges and Universities and is accredited by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools. In the Fall of 2006, the total undergraduate population at the university was approximately 4145. The number of entering first-year students for Fall 2006 was 964. Students are significantly engaged inside and outside the classroom in ethical leadership, social justice, and responsible service, both locally and globally, including humanitarian and mission internships around the world, as well as involvement with local social service agencies as coordinated through ACU’s Volunteer and Service-Learning Center. Approximately 25% of students study abroad, 40% of freshmen participate in learning communities, and 25% of sophomores participate in living-learning communities. With a freshman and

sophomore on-campus residency requirement, 2,000 students live in 10 residence halls, and 600 junior, senior and graduate students live in on-campus apartments.

Barret Living Learning Hall is the newest residential facility on the campus of Abilene Christian University. Barret was designed to promote community among students. This 172-bed, state-of-the-art facility houses sophomores in 22 themed communities; women live in pods A and B, and men live in pods C and D. A sophisticated surveillance system and wireless connectivity are attractive amenities for millennial students and their parents. Each pod has a separate entrance and contains four double-rooms with private baths; the rooms open into a 15x18 community space that has a fully upholstered couch and chair, occasional tables, a study table and chairs, and a 32" television with DVD player.

Residents are assigned through a competitive process that is ranked by a faculty committee; students organize themselves into groups of eight, secure a faculty sponsor, and complete a written proposal describing their co-curricular, year-long theme and project. The proposals are blinded and submitted for review to a committee, comprised of a faculty member from the College of Arts and Sciences, the College of Education and Human Services, the College of Business Administration, the College of Biblical Studies, and members of the Student Life professional staff. The committee ranks each proposal, considering the quality of the project and its relationship to a curricular initiative and the university's mission.

Living-learning community themes have included the "Bluestockings," a group of women students who are studying women's development and are mentored by two Honors professors; they volunteer in the community shelter for battered women and their children. Mentored by a Bible professor, a group of physics majors chose to read C. S. Lewis' *The Problem with Pain*. Another living-learning community is working on a film project that will document Barret co-curricular experiences. The themes are as varied as the students who participate.

Barret faculty sponsors meet with each living-learning community at least once a month to mentor students and ensure accountability. At the conclusion of the academic year, each living-learning community presents its project at a "capstone" event. Barret faculty sponsors teach in the smart classroom, adjacent to The Den, Aramark's coffee shop that includes a fireplace, a 50" plasma television, and an Internet bar.

#### **Data Collection and Analysis Procedures**

In May 2007, the students were contacted through their Resident Assistant and Resident Director. The students agreed to participate in individual 45-minute interviews with researchers as well as one focus group session. An interview was also conducted with the Resident Assistant. These interviews were completed during the last week of school prior to final examinations, so the students would be able to reflect back on a full academic year of experience. Interviews were captured by audio recording, transcribed, and reduced to meaningful themes with narrative added afterward. To ensure the accuracy of our findings, we have utilized two strategies as proposed by John Creswell (2003) which include member checking and peer debriefing.

#### **Results**

Four prominent themes emerged as the interviews were analyzed. Looking back to the theoretical framework for this project, a large degree of overlap exists between the definition of spiritual formation and the theoretical frameworks discussed earlier.

A discussion of these themes follows:

### **Worldview Diversity**

Actively engaging diversity means creating formal and informal opportunities in the living-learning environments of college life for students to encounter and learn from each other. The purpose of such learning is not only to understand each other's differences but also to search together for common ground, for common truths, for shared beliefs and meaning that create the possibility of a new kind of community that embraces diversity (Chickering, Dalton, & Stamm, 2006, p. 100).

The pod members recognized a significant number of differences among themselves. A. A. observed:

I really learned a lot from my pod mates because [it] seems they are more diverse in background than where I come from. I noticed the different interpretations of some Bible verses and I've seen things from different ways—even within the group because we are all different majors. We have [a] physics major and art major [and] other majors around. [These] different perspectives impacted the way [I] read certain things in the Bible.

This and other statements of perceived differences stemmed more from their varied spiritual backgrounds than from other areas. T. L.'s statement, "it's been good, also, to get the different perspectives, 'cause we definitely—some of the rest of the pod—we definitely don't agree on everything... about God and about theology and things like that" serves to support this idea.

Respondents seemed to view these perceived diversities as a beneficial phenomenon rather than a negative influence for their group. A. Y. stated:

I think we have been able to discuss different perspectives on several issues involving spirituality and our beliefs in Christianity and God, and that's been healthy for us to have different views but bring them to the table peaceably and to discuss them and still say there's differences—to go into depth on issues that you might have perspectives on or even the same ones that we had—[It was] really helpful to me to have those long talks.

Chickering and Reiser (1993) further highlight the importance of differences in the following statement: "Encounters with others who have diverse backgrounds and strongly held opinions create the context for increased tolerance and integrity. Growth can be tangible when bonds are formed with those of different backgrounds, lifestyles, and values" (p. 392).

### **Authenticity and Connectedness**

*The experience of belonging, of feeling that one is part of the community, is not only important from the standpoint of students' psychosocial development but also a critical element in students' satisfaction, learning and achievement in college (Chickering, Dalton, & Stamm, 2006, p. 173).*

Barret, LLCs, or "pods," were designed to influence student relationships and create community, understanding that out-of-the-classroom experiences can and do impact



students' educational development. Connections between and among students, constrained and formed by close proximity, empower a deeper level of relationship, one grounded in authenticity and truthfulness; these relationships, both negative and positive, become living laboratories for learning to communicate, empathize, argue, and reflect.

The theme of authenticity and connectedness was evident in several student responses. A. A. stated:

One of the main things I have noticed is dealing truthfully with others... at times I might just say [something callously]—but most of the time I would consider the way people would feel before saying something, that might not be the truth—like flatter them. But being around these guys—they tell you that they want the truth no matter how much it hurts them. And since [they have] these attitudes—I have been able to just come out and deal with them truthfully and not flatter them.

Another student (T. L.) referred to his developing ability to discern among the varying levels of relationships stating:

[Living in Barret] has definitely helped me see that I don't treat people the same. I've got my friends and acquaintances that I enjoy being with, and it's helped me see that there are some of my acquaintances that I'm not crazy about. And it's helped me see that I really need to try to love these people and treat them well. It's been a struggle to make it more than treating them well on the outside—because I feel like I can do that, but to actually have it coming from the heart—instead of just being civil with them—it's been one thing that it's opened my eyes to.

The community-building benefits of the community space were often referred to by residents. P. B. stated:

The living room [community space] is the biggest thing—because it causes us to get in each other's face—and it is all our space and so we have to get in each other's way and deal with it. And I think that a big part of spiritual growth is just learning how to be with other people.

R. B. added:

[The community space] really did help all eight of us to get to know each other really well. And to get that personal and spiritual connection to—the friendship where we can talk about these things...proximity was the biggest thing—like I said—just leaving your door open—people come in and out. Or if you're sitting out in the living room—people walk by and you can just talk. Whereas in the dorm it's like—I mean—in a big dorm you leave your room locked because you don't want things to happen.

Living in community also allowed a greater sense of connectedness, of thinking beyond the needs of the individual to the needs of the group. A. A. stated living in a Barret LLC had:

Given [him] a greater view of the way that Christians just should be. Because we all actually live in community. Living in a community—right—and living in a community [sic]—more effective—because we see each other every day and help each other—we do things in [a] group—we do things together... so it's really created so much meaning in life. Wow! That this might be like community life during the times of the apostles and disciples. This is what it might have been [like].

The presence of authenticity and encouragement seems to lead to additional phenomenon being revealed as our conversations continued. R. B. reflected on the LLC, “It really did help all eight of us to get to know each other really well and to get that personal and spiritual connection to the friendship....” A. Y. described intimacy and connection:

You think of a body as being made up of cells and all these tiny structures that function and all these amazing things within them—they're beautiful—ectoplasm or whatever. I haven't taken science in a while. But they can't survive by themselves—it has to have these connections with the other cells to form anything substantial, certainly, and in order to grow.

### **Identity Formation**

Identity development, or “establishing identity” is a chief task of higher education; it involves a “growing awareness of competencies, emotions and values, confidence in standing alone and bonding with others, and moving beyond intolerance toward openness and self-esteem (Chickering & Reisser, 1993, p. 173).

In his epigenetic principle, Erikson (1968) suggests that the individual faces a series of challenges or “crises,” and, as each is resolved (an ongoing process), the ego identity is formed. The eight stages are:

1. trust versus mistrust;
2. autonomy versus shame and doubt;
3. initiative versus guilt;
4. industry versus inferiority;
5. identity versus identity confusion;
6. intimacy versus isolation;
7. generativity versus stagnation; and
8. integrity versus despair (pp. 93-96).

Identity development surfaced as a consistent theme from Barret residents, whether in addressing interpersonal relationships or in self-understanding. P. B. said:

I'd say that I understand myself better, why I do things, you know. My own fears and reservations—all that, I kind of have a better idea of what those are. Also, I think in a lot of ways I've learned to like myself a lot better. Just to come in agreement with what the Lord says about me and who I am and really to just accept that by faith and not have to work and all that striving to be something—before... knowing [that] all my works are just nothing.

Another student (J. X.) referred to the opportunity to discuss his thinking with his community members, about coming to terms with his own motivation and behavior:

Well, it's all about just the godly friends that I have made—you know, people that I could be unhindered [with]—just tell them exactly what I thought about things and all that. Even today I was having a very honest conversation about just stuff that isn't right in me—but I don't understand why I do what I do. And just being able to bring that before my friends and say, 'this is what I'm thinking'—hope you understand why I'm thinking this and what I should do about it, you know. It helps to have somewhat more of an objective source [from his community members].

### ***Personal Spiritual Growth***

Spiritual growth, increased capacity to love and be loved, strengthened authenticity and identity, emotional resilience and stability, empathy and altruism, character and integrity—these and others, all are critical for satisfying lives and productive citizenship (Chickering, Dalton, & Stamm, 2006, p. 221).

Arguably, one of the two biggest themes present in our conversations with the members of the Barret Hall LLC was the idea of purposefully pursuing spiritual growth. The members of the pod we examined were certainly aware of the fact that the pod was designed to facilitate this aspect of their lives. This fact is actually one of the major reasons why many of these particular students chose to live in this setting. The group members variously described their own growth, the growth of other members, and the growth of the group in general. M. Y. recounted his year by saying:

I just kind of started realizing what Christ had called me to. I was just freed from a lot of different things. After I kind of got the idea of that, this semester was when I really started changing. [The] first semester was just kind of a build up to that. I used to have a lot of issues that got changed around—changed around my idea of Christianity—totally changed.

T. L. described his spiritual growth as follows:

I think it's definitely been a formative year... largely because of the people in the pod—being around some of these guys—it's been a great influence on me. Being able to develop those relationships and walk 10 or 15 feet and be like 'hey... I'm struggling with this... pray for me.' And just get advice, get thoughts, get prayers. And see that example and try to live out more of a bold Christian life outside of the pod... so it's been good to have that example inside [the pod] and see their lives. And then try to imitate that.

J. X. made the following comment about growing in his prayer life:

Well, I know at least for me—when I first came to ACU I was an atheist. And shortly after I converted. But one thing I always had problems with was group prayer because I always felt really awkward about it and it never really settled right with me. And I think just being in this community and being in an environment with these guys sort of helped me get over that fear a little

bit—not fear but anxiety, I guess you would say. Just being around people from all walks of life and who all have very different goals in mind—it made me—it just sort of allowed me to gain a bond with them enough to where I would feel comfortable in prayer with them... and I think that was really helpful for me.

## **Implications and Conclusion**

The purpose of this study was to examine the spiritual development of eight participants in a living-learning community at Abilene Christian University. Although this study was a unique case that produced no generalizable results, several implications for practice have emerged from this study that provide valuable forms of insight for colleges and universities interested in or already facilitating living-learning communities. Specifically, the implications from this study raise an important question for student affairs professionals in a Christian institution setting: “How do we intentionally harness the potential of living-learning communities to maximize their impact on spiritual formation?” The following suggestions will help to advance dialogue concerning this question:

1) As mentioned previously, close-knit community-oriented living arrangements on a college campus create an ideal setting for spiritual growth, especially if that community is committed to growing personally and spiritually. Our first recommendation to student development professionals is simply to advocate for the creation of LLCs on your campus. Part of this advocacy work involves educating key administrators on campus about LLCs. These key decision makers need to see how an LLC can play an important role in the life of a developing student. In educating others on campus, student development professionals can show how other institutions have had success with LLCs.

2) Advocating, however, is only the beginning. Once an LLC is created, the creators must be intentional about ongoing student spiritual development. It is something that needs to be cultivated and nurtured through active steps of engagement. There are many ways to accomplish active student spiritual development. In the case of Barret, each group had a faculty mentor, weekly prayer time, and other accountability groups. These activities were part of the culture and expectations of the community we examined. It is our impression that the purposeful steps put in place to foster ongoing student spiritual development are fundamentally important in shaping and molding a student’s spiritual life.

3) Finally, this study reflects students’ spiritual development in association with a new residence hall that was designed to provide optimal opportunities for students to engage one another. Most existing residence halls are “traditional” in style, comprised of corridor halls with double rooms and community baths. Within these structural constraints it is more difficult to create community, much less implement communities that impact spirituality or living and learning. However, corridor-style structures

can easily be renovated, creating centrally located community spaces; additionally, housing selection and assignments can be made according to student cohort, major, interest, theme, etc. We feel that such structural arrangements lay the foundation for an LLC environment.

Living-learning communities are a relatively new form of communal living that some institutions of higher education are establishing within their selective campuses. This study examined one such LLC at a private Christian university. The data collected through a qualitative research process revealed unique issues that relate to how LLCs impact a student's spiritual development. Future research is needed specifically addressing the spiritual development of female students in a living-learning community.

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# **An Assessment of Academic Support Service Needs**

Christy M. Tanious

## **An Assessment of Academic Support Service Needs**

Student success is a mutual goal of the student and the college to which one is admitted. However, many students struggle to succeed academically in the higher education environment. To address this issue, most colleges offer academic support (Dvorak, 2004). Such support takes different forms and is referred to by various names, including remedial education, developmental education, learning assistance programs, and academic support programs. These names reflect a diverse set of programs incorporating a large range of services intended to increase student success by addressing the learning needs of students.

### **Current academic support services**

Private Christian College (PCC), the setting for this study, does not currently offer a comprehensive program of academic support services. While concerned faculty and staff members have created specific services directed towards meeting specific needs, such services are limited and disjointed. Existing academic support services include introductory English and math courses, advising, library services, and a writing center. Although they have implied purposes and goals, these services do not have written mission and purpose statements or outcomes.

PCC admissions standards require that entering students have a minimum high school grade point average of 2.0 and either an SAT score of 880 or an ACT score of 18. PCC also has a policy known as the “20 percent rule,” which allows for the acceptance of up to 20% of a pool of applicants who fall below these standards. These standards and the required testing provide the basis for placement in introductory or basic level courses or limitation on the number of courses in which students may enroll in their first semester. Such placements and limitations are intended to increase the skills or balance the demands on students who may be underprepared for the college setting.

Once enrolled, students are assigned advisors based on their major. Staff or faculty advising is encouraged but not required. Students then have access to several ongoing academic support services. The library offers research assistance and workshops intended to support students in their coursework. The writing center, which is directed by a faculty member and staffed by upper level students, is designed to improve the writing skills and abilities of students. This purpose is realized through provision of assistance to students for all aspects of writing, including organization, formatting, editing, and proofreading.

While these services are very valuable, a recent report generated in conjunction with an accreditation visit states that the services are “not sufficient to meet the needs of international students nor of those students who have been admitted into the College, but do not meet its entrance requirements” (Self study, 2006, p. 95). The report mentions centralizing academic support for struggling students, and later suggests that this center “become an institutional priority... to further facilitate helping students having difficulty with course work” (p. 99). Therefore, previous evaluation suggests



a need for expanded and additional services. This study will assess that need through interactions with faculty, staff, and students while considering best practices within higher education.

### **Literature Review**

In their review of effective educational practices, Kuh, Kinzie, Schuh, Whitt, and associates (2005) identify a “supportive campus environment” as a critical condition for student success (p. 241). Specifically, they emphasize the importance of an “institutional emphasis on providing students the support they need for academic and social success” (p. 241). Academic success can be a subjective term (Garfield & Levi, 2004), but is most often understood and defined in relation to student grades (Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005). Thus, a clear relationship exists between institutional support and student academic success. Further, grades have been identified as the best predictor of persistence (Pascarella & Terenzini). Therefore, it is not surprising that most schools have incorporated forms of academic support services aimed at increasing student success for practical reasons such as retention and revenue (Garfield & Levi; Pascarella & Terenzini). In addition, many institutions recognize a moral responsibility to students who are admitted on a provisional basis and are thus at greater risk of failure (Garfield & Levi). Therefore, services and programs intended to facilitate student success are indicated for both practical and ethical reasons.

While strong reasons for academic support exist, the scope, implementation, organization, and location of such programs varies greatly. Certain schools focus solely on first year students, while others offer services for all student levels (Garfield & Levi, 2004). Also, while some institutions provide specific or stand-alone services, others structure the services into organized and comprehensive systems (Damashek, 1999a; Perin, 2004). Finally, while some institutions offer remedial education or other services specifically designed to serve at-risk students, others provide services intended to benefit the entire student body (Damashek, 1999b; Dvorak, 2004). Different approaches may be appropriate for different institutions, but the results of research on such programs reflects a shift away from a sole focus on remedial education and towards more broad learning assistance programs (Damashek, 1999a).

As suggested above, academic support services are abundant and diverse. Common services include individual and small group tutoring (Dvorak, 2004; Garfield & Levi, 2004; Perin, 2004), workshops on subjects such as time management, note-taking, outlining, study skills, or exam preparation (Garfield & Levi; Perin), first-year experience programs or seminars (Garfield & Levi; Kuh et al., 2005), mentoring (Borden, Burton, Evenbeck & Williams, 1997; Dvorak; Kuh et al.), study groups (Dvorak; Garfield & Levi; Perin), labs for writing, math, or reading (Perin), computer-based learning (Damashek, 1999b; Perin), early alert interventions (Garfield & Levi; Kuh et al.), and traditional or developmental advising (Kuh et al.; Perin).

While various approaches exist, several underlying factors appear critical to any academic support initiative. In his discussion of theory and practice, Chung (2005) proposes a theoretical framework that he suggests “might aptly be called a ‘pedagogy of caring’” (p. 10). From this foundation of care, it is critical to develop mission and goal statements (Damashek, 1999b), to identify the services needed by students, and to provide the appropriate services in a timely and accessible manner (Kuh et al., 2005).

Although certain academic support services exist on the PCC campus, they are somewhat limited and disconnected from one another. This sentiment has been expressed by faculty and staff and is supported by one formal evaluation. It is also reinforced through a review of the literature, which provides a voluminous list of support services. A primary strength of the existing programs appears to lie in the dedicated and caring faculty and staff members who have initiated such services out of a desire to see students succeed and excel. Second, the services also meet niche needs. From discussions, observations, and the self-study, weaknesses appear related to the limited scope of services and a lack of coordination and centralization. The purpose of this study was to formally identify areas of strengths and weaknesses through an assessment of the need for expanded and additional services. It sought to answer the question, “What additional services are needed in order to support the academic success of PCC students?”

## **Research Design**

A cross-sectional survey research design was used in order to best address the research question. Survey designs allow researchers to learn about and describe the attitudes, experiences, beliefs, opinions, or practices of a population or stakeholder (Creswell, 2005; Wholey, Hatry & Newcomer, 2004), and to “measure community needs of educational services” (Creswell, p. 356). Because the needs of a specific campus are being identified, capturing the beliefs and opinions of those directly invested and involved in student learning was critical.

### **Participants**

The target population consisted of two groups chosen due to their “relevant knowledge or perceptions relevant to addressing the research question” (Wholey, Hatry & Newcomer, 2004, p. 259). The first was faculty and staff who had direct interaction with student preparedness or learning. This census sample consisted of all full-time faculty members, all adjunct faculty members who taught at least two courses within the current school year, the academic and associate academic deans, admissions staff members, the registrar, and full-time library staff. Of the 35 faculty and staff members who met the target criteria, 21 participated (providing an acceptable response rate of 60%). The second group was the student body, and consisted of all students. Only 36 of 230 students completed the survey, a response rate of 15.6%. The student response rate limits the strength of the findings of the student portion of the survey.

### **Materials**

Information was gathered via two variations of a survey: one for faculty and staff (Appendix A) and one for students (Appendix B). Survey items emerged from a review of the academic support service literature as well as conversations with experts (experienced faculty). The majority of the survey consisted of Likert-type response format questions (1= very needed, 2= needed, 3= slightly needed, 4= not needed, and 5= not important), but also included fill-in and open-ended questions to elicit ideas that may be of particular interest to members of this institution and to gauge faculty, staff, and student perceptions of the priority of services (as suggested by Wholey, Hatry & Newcomer, 2004). Due to the small size of the samples, pretests or pilots were not feasible. Instead, the faculty/staff survey was reviewed by two educators and the student survey was reviewed by two students in order to gain feedback on the clarity and appropriateness of questions.

## **Data Gathering and Analysis**

### ***Data Gathering Process***

Data was gathered via a web-based survey which was distributed towards the end of the spring semester. The original plan to conduct the survey in a face-to-face format was not feasible. Regarding the faculty and staff survey, certain faculty members (adjunct) were rarely on campus, so surveys would have had to be sent via postal mail, which often have limited return rates (Wholey, Hatry & Newcomer, 2004). Therefore, a web survey sent via electronic mail (e-mail) appeared to be the most effective and efficient means of distributing the faculty and staff survey. For the student body, the primary options were to distribute the survey via campus mail or e-mail. Because many students do not check their campus mailboxes, a web survey distributed via e-mail was used for students as well. Campus regulations required sending the survey link through a weekly electronic newsletter sent to all students weekly, and incorporating it into a larger survey of student services.

### ***Limitations***

A limitation to this study was the student response rate. Several factors may have contributed to the low rate. First, the survey was distributed later than planned, and was thus received by students at a very busy time in the semester. Second, the student academic support services assessment was incorporated into a larger student services survey. The combined survey was long, which, despite incentives, discouraged student participation. Finally, the survey was distributed through a weekly e-mail. A separate e-mail request may have elicited a greater number of responses as students are inconsistent about reading the weekly e-mail newsletter. The response rate indicates shortcomings in the data gathering processes, and limits the strength of the findings of the student portion of this survey.

Second, when transposing the survey from a word document into an electronic web survey, one item was entered incorrectly which resulted in the loss of data about one potential service. Finally, the survey included limited qualitative information. Therefore, in considering specific service implications, the quantitative faculty and staff information was given most consideration based on the stronger response rate, followed by the student quantitative data and qualitative data from all respondents.

### ***Data Analysis and Results***

The surveys were analyzed through the web-based survey program and through the use of additional statistical software (SPSS). These processes provided descriptive data including mean scores, frequencies, and standard deviation. A large number of academic success services were identified as needed or very needed (for full table, see Appendix C). While the faculty and staff group ranked almost every service as more strongly needed than did students, each group's average score identified all listed services as either slightly needed (3), needed (2), or very needed (1). Faculty responses, across all items, averaged 1.72, while the student response average was 2.16. Time management workshops, career counseling, and resume writing were identified as highly important by both faculty/staff and students (Table 1 on the next page).

**Table 1.**  
*Items ranked most important by faculty/staff and students*

Faculty/Staff		Students	
Item	Mean	Item	Mean
Study Skills	1.22	Resume Writing*	1.67
Time Management	1.22	Faculty Mentoring	1.69
Career Counseling*	1.28	Job Search Assistance	1.69
Resume Writing*	1.33	Career Counseling*	1.70
Tutoring	1.38	Time Management*	1.79
Career Planning*	1.39	Peer Mentoring	1.79

\*Indicates an item ranked among the most important by both faculty/staff and students

At two points during the survey, faculty and staff were asked to list three academic services that they believed should be either expanded or added in order to help their students succeed. The first list was generated at the beginning of the survey. Once they had listed three needed academic support services, the participants were asked to rate an extensive list of services. After rating the list, they were asked to identify the three services from that list that they thought were the most critical for the academic success of PCC students. Thus, each respondent generated two lists, each comprised of three services. The items were then combined and sorted in order to identify those services that were named most frequently (Table 2). Career counseling, tutoring, and study skills were among the top five most frequent responses on both lists. In addition, English skills enhancement and writing services, which may be viewed as being highly related, were also identified in both lists.

**Table 2.**  
*Frequency of services identified as most important by faculty and staff*

Pre-list	Post-list
Writing Services (10)	Career Services (11)
Tutoring (7)	English Skills (8)
Career Services (4)	Study Skills (6)
Financial Services (4)	Tutoring (5)
Study Groups and Skills (3)	Orientation Course (5)

Finally, both the faculty/staff and the student versions of the survey asked for additional comments. The faculty/staff simply asked for “additional comments,” while the student questions were more specific. Students were asked about the biggest challenge to their academic efforts while at PCC, as well as what the institution could have done to help with the challenge. These comments were coded in order to identify any themes. While member checking was not possible due to the anonymous nature

of the survey, the researcher checked findings with two educators who participated in the survey. These individuals indicated that the coding was sufficiently supported, and neither educator suggested any changes.

The additional faculty and staff comments covered a wide range of topics. While the breadth of the question was not conducive to strong themes, several faculty members reiterated the need for a variety of services. In addition, several individuals emphasized the importance of both faculty and the institutional promotion of academic success and excellence, as well as any related services. While one respondent referred to students' lack of commitment "to doing their best work," another noted that low utilization of existing services may be due to faculty members' acceptance of sub-par work. A separate individual's response seemed to summarize these thoughts by stating, "I would like to see... faculty united in requiring, exemplifying, and supporting academic excellence throughout the entire institution."

While the student comments also covered a range of topics, certain themes emerged. The strongest theme was that of time management. Although stated differently, students identified this challenge as "falling behind in work," "managing my time," "balancing work and school," "turning in assignments on time," and simply "time." Other themes were related to the adjustment to the expectations of college, and a desire for additional spaces on campus conducive for studying. Interestingly, many students did not feel that PCC could or should do anything to help with their challenges. Out of the 19 responses to this question, seven students (37%) stated that there was nothing the college could have done. Rather, they instead determined that the challenge "was [their] own fault," that they "just need to learn to use [their] time better," or that correcting the problem was something that they "just have to do on [their] own."

### ***Discussion***

Higher education literature emphasizes the critical role of an institutional commitment to provide the support needed by students for their academic success (Kuh *et al.*, 2005). This emphasis meets mutual goals of both the school and the student, as such support is associated with increased student grades and persistence (Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005). While the importance of these goals and services is commonly accepted, implementation varies greatly. Therefore, this study sought to assess the need for additional services intended to support the academic success of the students at a small college. The study revealed several broad findings, as well as specific findings that lead to suggested recommendations.

Perhaps most strongly, the results speak to the extent and breadth of the need for academic support services. While informal conversations with faculty, staff, and students and one previous self-assessment suggested the need for increased academic support services, the scope and extent of the need were unidentified and undocumented. Therefore, while the primary intent of this study was to identify specific needs, it also provides information regarding the community's perception of the extent of the need and their perspective on the relationship between institutional culture and academic success.

### ***Extent of Need***

Faculty, staff, and students consistently indicated their belief in the need for expanded and additional academic support services. All groups were consistent in identifying every service as strongly needed, needed, or slightly needed. The faculty response averaged

between “very needed” and “needed” on 82% of the items. 36% of the student averages fell into these two categories. No response average fell into the “not needed” or “not important” category. Thus, while one might expect to see greater variation in the degree of need, the faculty, staff, and students were fairly consistent in their identification of the level of need.

Qualitative responses also identified a broad range of academic support needs. This may indicate that faculty, staff, and students perceive multiple challenges to student success, and thus believe many different services would be appropriate and beneficial for their campus. Such responses are consistent with academic support service literature which identifies a large range and diverse constellation of services (Damashek, 1999a; Kuh *et al.*, 2005; Perin, 2004). Also consistent with trends identified in academic support program literature, the results of this study suggest that the community favors broad learning assistance rather than a specific focus on remedial education (Damashek, 1999a).

### ***Specifics of Need***

Although many services were identified as needed, certain services emerged as the most needed at the current time. These services include time management assistance (identified by quantitative faculty responses and qualitative student responses), career services (identified by faculty and student quantitative responses), expanded writing assistance (identified by faculty and student quantitative responses), study skills assistance (faculty), tutoring (faculty), and mentoring (students).

### ***Institutional culture***

Kuh *et al.* (2005) emphasize the importance of an “institutional emphasis on providing students the support they need for academic... success” (p. 241). Several faculty members’ comments resonate with this sentiment, as they call for increased institutional commitment to academic success and excellence. Such comments are consistent with research suggesting the importance of making student success an institutional priority, as well as prioritizing academic excellence in the institution’s mission and values (Kuh *et al.*).

Faculty comments emphasize both the importance of solidarity in setting and requiring high standards of students, as well as an institutional commitment to providing ample student resources. These comments resonate with Baxter Magolda and King’s (2004) view on intellectual development, in which the interplay of challenge and support is critical. Kuh *et al.* (2005) also state the importance of “setting and holding students to standards that stretch them to perform at high levels” (p. 269). These comments, in conjunction with the literature, suggest the importance of a cultural shift towards one that places greater value on academic development, academic achievement, and student learning. Such a shift has the potential to support students’ learning and impact their success.

### **Recommendations**

While on one hand this study identifies a rather overwhelming need, it also provides an unusual opportunity. The broad scope of the need suggests that implementation of nearly any academic support service would be welcomed and viewed as beneficial by the community. However, the results suggest certain areas that might be most beneficial.

Several practical considerations must be taken into account in planning for increased

academic support services, including financial challenges and personnel shortages. Given these challenges, most of the suggested options for improvement leverage existing services and personnel. However, given the extent of the need, it is recommended that additional services be prioritized and implemented as soon as funding or additional personnel is available.

**1. Increase the institutional emphasis on academic excellence**

- Simultaneously increase academic challenge and support. Because success and the related idea of intellectual development is associated with excelling in response to a challenge (Kuh et al., 2005; Baxter & Magolda, 2004), students may benefit from the development of specific college-wide academic standards and outcomes.
- Increase awareness and use of academic support services through increased marketing.

**2. Coordinate and collaborate regarding academic support services**

- Create a centralized location for coordination of academic support services:
  - Determine a name or title for the center that reflects a broad range of services.
  - Designate a person or office to coordinate campus services.
  - Create a mission statement, learning outcomes, and assessment measures.
- Include faculty in decisions regarding and delivery of services. Faculty plays a critical role in student success (Chung, 2005). While a strength of this institution is its dedicated faculty and staff members, students indicated a desire for increased faculty interaction in the form of faculty mentors. If a faculty mentor program is not viable at this time due to limited full-time faculty and heavy faculty loads, alternative efforts to increase faculty involvement could positively impact student success (such as involvement in orientation courses). Such efforts may meet specific needs while maximizing an existing strength.

**3. Provide specific services identified by faculty and students as needed**

- Incorporate time management and career planning into the orientation course curriculum.
- Begin expansion of writing center services to include services (such as tutoring and various workshops) that received high ratings and are relatively easy to incorporate.
- Incorporate assessment into these services to guide and inform future direction & growth.

**4. Future recommendations to meet needs and to continue to demonstrate institutional commitment to academic excellence**

- Create an academic enhancement center, including a physical location with sufficient space for individual tutoring, group tutoring, and study groups—thereby providing a needed service and communicating a commitment to and priority of student success.
- Hire a full-time, faculty-level director.

The consistent identification of extensive academic support needs by faculty, staff, and students is encouraging in that it identifies a community-wide recognition of need. It also suggests that these services should be an institutional priority. This suggestion is consistent with a review of the literature, which shows academic support services as prolific in and critical to higher education. Prioritization includes institutional commitment and specific interventions. While the suggested options listed above meet some of the most clearly identified needs, future recommendations would include, identification of a location conducive to delivery of multiple academic support services, and the hiring of a faculty-level full-time director of the academic support services. Such initiatives would continue to indicate an institutional commitment to academic excellence and student success and support the learning needs of students.

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**Appendix A**

**Private College (PCC) Academic Support Services Needs Assessment:  
Faculty/Staff Version**

Please list three academic and support services that you think would help our students to succeed:

1. \_\_\_\_\_

2. \_\_\_\_\_

3. \_\_\_\_\_

On the right is a list of academic support services offered at various institutions in an effort to improve their students' success. Some of these services are currently in place at PCC while others aren't. Please considerer the need for expansion of existing services and the need for the addition of new services.

## Assessment of Academic Support Service Needs

Service	Level of Need				
	Very Needed	Needed	Slightly Needed	Not Needed	Not Important
<b>Pre-college Services: Summer Programs which could include</b>					
Orientation Course					
Math Skills Enhancement					
English Skills Enhancement					
Study Skills Enhancement					
Academic Counseling					
Career Guidance					
<b>Services or Programs for students during their first semester or year</b>					
Orientation Course					
Common Reading Project (entire incoming class reads one book, themes of which are then incorporated into curricular and cocurricular discussions)					
Math Skills Enhancement					
English Skills Enhancement					
Academic Counseling					
Personal Development (identification & development of personality types, strengths, gifts, etc.)					
<b>Tutoring Services:</b>					
Individual Tutoring					
Group Tutoring					
Course based tutoring or Supplemental Instruction					
Computer assisted tutoring					
<b>Counseling &amp; Guidance Services:</b>					
Career Counseling					
Resume writing					
Job search assistance					
Short term personal counseling					
<b>Mentor Services:</b>					
Peer Mentors					
Faculty Mentors					
<b>Workshop &amp; Seminar Topics:</b>					
Test Taking					
Study Skills					
Career Planning					
Time Management					
Note Taking					
Stress Management					
Academic Success Strategies					
GRE Preparation					
Personal Development					
Self-esteem					
Life Skills					

What three services from the list above do you believe are the most critical for our students:

1. \_\_\_\_\_

2. \_\_\_\_\_

3. \_\_\_\_\_

Please share any additional recommendations you have regarding academic support service needs for PCC students:

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Thank you for your time and assistance.

**Appendix B**

**Private Christian College (PCC) Academic Support Services Needs Assessment: Student Version**

Thank you for agreeing to participate in this survey! The following questions will ask about the services that you think would help Private College (PCC) students succeed academically.

- 1. What has been the biggest challenge to your academic efforts while you have been a student at PCC?
  
- 2. What could PCC have done or what could PCC do to help with this challenge?

Below is a list of academic support services offered at various institutions in an effort to improve their students' success. Some of these services are currently in place at PCC while others aren't. Therefore, as you read the list, please consider the need for expansion of existing services and the need for the addition of new services.

- 3. First, please answer these questions while thinking about when you first started attending PCC and what services helped or could have helped your transition into college.

**Assessment of Academic Support Service Needs**

Service	Level of Need				
	Very Needed	Needed	Slightly Needed	Not Needed	Not Important
Pre-college Services: Summer Programs which could include					
Orientation Course					
Math Skills Enhancement					
English Skills Enhancement					
Study Skills Enhancement					
Academic Counseling					
Personal Development (identification & development of personality types, strengths, gifts, etc.)					
Services or Programs for students during their first semester or year					
Orientation Course					
Common Reading Project (entire incoming class reads one book, themes of which are then incorporated into curricular and cocurricular discussions)					
Math Skills Enhancement					
English Skills Enhancement					
Academic Counseling					
Personal Development (identification & development of personality types, strengths, gifts, etc.)					

4. Next, please identify the ongoing services that you think would be helpful.

Service	Level of Need				
	Very Needed	Needed	Slightly Needed	Not Needed	Not Important
<b>Tutoring Services:</b>					
Individual Tutoring					
Group Tutoring					
Course based tutoring or Supplemental Instruction					
Computer assisted tutoring					
<b>Counseling &amp; Guidance Services:</b>					
Career Counseling					
Resume Writing					
Job Search Assistance					
Short Term Personal Counseling					
<b>Mentor Services:</b>					
Peer Mentors					
Faculty Mentors					
<b>Workshop &amp; Seminar Topics:</b>					
Test Taking					
Study Skills					
Career Planning					
Time Management					
Note Taking					
Stress Management					
Academic Success Strategies					
GRE Preparation					
Personal Development					
Self-esteem					
Life Skills					

5. If you indicated that workshops and seminars are needed, please indicate the days and time during which you would most likely attend:

	Definitely	Probably	Maybe	Definitely Not
Weekdays (9AM - 5PM)				
Weekday evenings				
Saturdays				

6. Is there anything else you think we need to know about the academic support service needs of PCC students?

7. Optional: E-mail address: \_\_\_\_\_

Your e-mail address is optional. It will only be used for the random drawing for two \$10 Starbucks gift cards. Thank you for your time and assistance with this project.

**Appendix C**

Table 1

*Faculty & student ratings of the need for academic support services, listed by faculty mean*

Item	Faculty/Staff (N=21)		Student (N=36)	
	Mean*	St. Dev.	Mean*	St. Dev.
Study skills (WS**)	1.22	.428	2.16	.77
Time Management (WS)	1.22	.428	1.79	.78
Career Counseling (OG)	1.28	.575	1.7	.68
Resume Writing (OG)	1.33	.485	1.67	.65
Tutoring Services (FY)	1.33	.485		
Career Planning (WS)	1.39	.608	1.88	.71
Acad. Success Strategies (WS)	1.44	.511	2.25	.84
Faculty Mentors (OG)	1.44	.511	1.69	.86
Study Skills Enhancement (PC)	1.44	.786	2.41	1.04
English Skills Enhancement (FY)	1.47	.624	2.34	.90
English Skills Enhancement (PC)	1.47	.841	2.48	1.12
Orientation Course (FY)	1.5	.985	2.06	1.13
Academic Counseling (FY)	1.56	.511	1.84	.72
Job Search Assistance (OG)	1.56	.616	1.69	.64
Life Skills (WS)	1.56	.616	2.13	.92
Note Taking (WS)	1.56	.705	2.38	.94
Orientation Course (PC)	1.58	.838	2.28	1.08
Academic Counseling (PC)	1.67	.767	2.13	1.01
Peer Mentors (OG)	1.67	.686	1.79	.86
Stress Management (WS)	1.67	.767	2.03	.93
Brief Personal Counseling (OG)	1.72	.575	1.88	.78
Career Guidance (PC)	1.72	.895	1.97	1.06
Personal Development (FY)	1.72	.895	1.91	.93
Test Taking (WS)	1.72	.669	2.44	.88
Personal Development (WS)	1.83	1.04	2.13	.87
Supplemental Instruction (OG)	1.83	.515	2.15	.94
Group Tutoring (OG)	1.94	.639	2.09	.88
Computer Assisted Tutoring (OG)	2.12	.857	2.19	1.00
GRE Preparation (WS)	2.39	.502	2.15	.87
Self-esteem (WS)	2.44	1.15	2.31	1.09
Math Skills Enhancement (PC)	2.58	.902	2.71	1.13
Math Skills Enhancement (FY)	2.67	.84	2.66	.90
Common Reading Project (FY)	2.71	1.26	2.81	1.15
Individual Tutoring (OG)	NA		1.94	.84

\*1=very needed, 2=needed, 3=slightly needed, 4=not needed, 5=not important

\*\*PC=Pre-college services, FY=First year services, OG=Ongoing services, WS=Workshops/Seminars

# Vocationalism in Higher Education

Joshua Arnold

## Abstract

In their recent book, *The Outrageous Idea of Academic Faithfulness*, Donald Opitz and Derek Melleby (2007) note how “expectations have profound implications on what students actually find when they arrive at college” (p. 15). In recent decades, a paradigmatic shift has occurred among college students concerning their views of the purpose of a college education. Student expectations have grown increasingly pragmatic, utilitarian, and vocational in nature. This shift toward a vocational emphasis has had a profound impact on the landscape of higher education, changing the shape of many institutions and how higher education is both viewed and offered in the 21st century. The following paper shall examine the growth of vocationalism within higher education, its impact on the student, and the unique role that Christian higher education and student affairs professionals share in the preservation of the liberal arts tradition.

## The Vocationalization of Higher Education

In 2002, Kevin Kline starred in the role of Professor Hundert, assistant headmaster of a prestigious preparatory school for boys named St. Benedict’s Academy. The opening scene of the movie depicts a freshman orientation of sorts. The headmaster of the academy is describing the mission of the school, founded upon the following principle: *finis origine pendet*, or literally, “the end depends upon the beginning” (Hoffman, 2002).

The film chronicles the relationship between Professor Hundert, assistant headmaster and teacher of the classics, and his unruly student, Sedgwick Bell. While at St. Benedict’s, Bell unsuccessfully attempts to win a noteworthy classics competition by dishonest means. Professor Hundert would later describe this attempt as evidence of his failing Bell as a teacher. Toward the end of the film, an adult Sedgwick Bell, successful CEO and candidate for the United States Senate, orchestrates a lavish rematch of this event in order to reclaim his “academic honor.” His efforts to cheat his way through the rematch are once again thwarted by the professor in a climactic conclusion (Hoffman, 2002).

At the end of the film, the professor exclaims that, “as a student of history, [he] should not have been shocked either by the audacity nor the success of Sedgwick Bell.” As the motto of the school foretold, the end was indeed dependent upon the beginning.

In their book, *The Outrageous Idea of Academic Faithfulness* (2007), Donald Opitz and Derek Melleby make a very similar statement when they assert that “expectations have profound implications on what we actually find at college” (Opitz & Melleby, 2007, p. 15). If the end is indeed dependent upon the beginning, then the expectations a student brings to college will have a profound impact on the kind of person she might ultimately become upon finishing college.



Expectations have a way of shaping what a student might find at college in more ways than one would expect. They will certainly have an influence on how the student approaches her college experience, what she will seek, and how she will seek it. Additionally, expectations also have an interesting way of shaping what kind of experience the student will be offered. Student expectations have a powerful way of shaping the college curriculum, including what a higher education institution has to offer and how it chooses to deliver those offerings.

A paradigmatic shift has occurred among college students in recent decades concerning their views of the purpose of higher education. Perhaps at no other time in the history of higher education have students been more concerned with the economic advantages of a college education. Fewer students than ever before are able to identify reasons for attending college which are not ultimately career-related.

For as long as they can remember, this current generation of college students have been instructed by some of the most important figures in their lives to perform well in school in order to get accepted into a good college—a crucial prerequisite to any lucrative career. Thus the impetus for academic faithfulness became the future reward of gainful employment. This has radically shaped the college culture among incoming students, resulting in the most vocationally-oriented generation of college students in history.

The following sections shall examine the history of a phenomenon two centuries in the making, its impact on the student, and the unique role of those in Christian higher education and particularly student affairs.

### **A Brief History**

While vocationalism among higher education institutions has reached unprecedented levels in recent decades, it is not an entirely new phenomenon. The institution of higher education has been combating the siren call of vocationalism for nearly two centuries. For example, in 1828 the faculty of Yale University issued a report citing their disdain and disapproval of efforts to vocationalize their curriculum. The faculty at Yale was under fire for failing to “adapt to the spirit and wants of the age” and major revisions were being proposed to the classical curriculum in order to “better accommodate the business character of the nation” (Yale University, 1828, p. 6). The faculty of Yale, in response to these charges, issued a report which has long been regarded as one of the best articulations of the purpose of the liberal arts college.

The Yale Report described the object of a college education as preparatory, and thus designed to precede the study of a profession. A college education was never intended to provide an exhaustive body of knowledge on a particular subject, but rather the tools and resources necessary for a student to effectually be able to learn. It was considered an education in learning. This kind of liberal education was conceived to be the ideal preparation for professional training because it imparted the kinds of capacities and skills capable of “improving, elevating, and adorning any occupation” (Yale University, 1828, p. 29).

Furthermore, the exclusive study of a profession during the college years was not only considered counterproductive to the development of the student, but also detrimental to her future career ambitions as well. The Yale Report describes this phenomenon in the following statement:

We are aware that some operations may be performed by those who have little or no knowledge of the principles on which they depend. The mariner may set his sails to the wind without understanding the laws of the decomposition of forces; the carpenter may square his framework without knowledge of Euclid's Elements; the dyer may set his colors without being indoctrinated in the principles of chemistry. But the labors of such are confined to the narrow path marked out to him by others. He needs the constant superintendence of men of more enlarged and scientific information. If he ventures beyond his prescribed rule, he works at random, with no established principles to guide him (Yale University, 1828, p. 16).

Additionally, the faculty of Yale criticized the professional curriculum for attempting to teach everything, while effectually teaching nothing. They argued, "the pupil is hurried over the surface so rapidly that scarce a trace of his steps remains when he finishes his course. What he has learned, or thinks he has learned, is just sufficient to inflate his vanity, expose him to public observation, and to draw on him the ridicule of men of sound judgment and science (Yale University, 1828, p. 18).

While the efforts of the faculty at Yale were well intentioned and well articulated, the move toward vocationalizing higher education would only increase in the decades to come. By 1862, the United States Congress had passed the Morrill Act, which granted each state federal land for the purposes of establishing institutions that would "teach such branches of learning as are related to agriculture and the mechanical arts... in order to promote the practical education of the industrial classes in the several pursuits and professions of life" (Grubb & Lazerson, 2005, p. 3). The land grant colleges and universities would be incredibly influential on the shape of higher education in the succeeding decades. By the turn of the century, Charles Van Hise, president of the University of Wisconsin, noted in his inaugural speech that the sons and daughters of the state each had the right to "choose the advanced intellectual life adapted to his or her own need," referring primarily to the practical arts (Grubb & Lazerson, 2005, p. 3).

The time between the 1880s and 1930s gave rise to explosive growth in the practical arts. Grubbs and Lazerson (2005) note that, during this time, American higher education was increasingly beginning to define itself "in terms of its direct application to specific occupations" (Grubb & Lazerson, 2005, p. 4). Nowhere was this more evident than among the various professional schools. Joseph Kent (as cited in Grubb & Lazerson, 2005) noted that during this time period, various professions began using higher education as a way to professionalize their occupation, creating a wealth of new professional and occupational degree programs (p. 4). The Great Depression of the 1930s in particular was a period distinctly marked by a rise in the prominence of the practical arts, in keeping with a wealth of data suggesting that periods of economic prosperity are typically associated with stronger preferences for the arts and sciences, while periods of economic decline are more often associated with preferences for the practical arts (Brint et. al., 2005, p. 156).

Following World War II, the G.I. bill of 1944 gave way to a vocational revolution as returning G.I.s began entering the higher education market. Fueled by enormous government subsidies, soldiers began looking to higher education as a means of gaining the necessary credentials to enhance their civilian careers. States began rushing to create

low-tuition public universities and community colleges to meet the new demand for higher education. By 1947, nearly half of all higher education institutions were public universities, with an increasingly vocational focus and emphasis on the practical arts (Grubb & Lazerson, 2005, p. 6).

### The Current State of Vocationalism

Vocationalism in higher education continued to rise in prominence throughout the latter half of the 20th century, enjoying significant momentum during the last three decades. In that time the fastest growing fields have been in the practical arts in nearly every case. Business administration—the fastest growing major—now accounts for over one-fifth of all undergraduate degrees. One educational scholar, C. Adelman, described business as the “empirical core curriculum” (Brint, S., Riddle, M., Turk-Bicakci, L., & Levy, C., 2005, p. 157).

In a time of unprecedented expansion in higher education, Brint et al. (2005) note that nearly every liberal art major—except those closely related to the medical field—have not only declined proportionately but also in raw numbers (Brint et. al., p. 159). At the beginning of the 21st century it was estimated that at least two-thirds of all college undergraduates were studying the practical arts (Grubb & Lazerson, 2005, p. 7). By the 21st century, students’ expectations about the purpose of college had become almost completely vocationalized.

An important evidence of this phenomenon is the proportion of college freshman interested in developing a “meaningful philosophy of life” compared to those interested in becoming “financially secure.” Astin notes that nearly three quarters of enrolled freshman are now reporting that it is essential to be financially secure, whereas only three decades ago less than half rated financial security that high and over 80% described developing a meaningful philosophy of life as their most important goal (Grubb & Lazerson, 2005, p. 7). Astin’s survey truly marks the distinction between previous generations of college students, who viewed college as an education for life, and the current generation of students, who view college as an education for upward mobility.

Grubb and Lazerson note that student choice often drives what colleges and universities offer (Grubb & Lazerson, 2005, p. 7). As students increasingly began to favor the practical arts, liberal arts colleges began to adapt themselves to these changes. Breneman (as cited in Grubb, W. N. & Lazerson, M., 2005) in his study of the effects of vocationalism on liberal art colleges, noted that “we are indeed losing many of liberal art colleges, not through closures but through steady change into a different type of institution—driven by a combination of student choice and vocational pressure” (p. 8).

In Breneman’s studies (as cited in Grubb, W. N. & Lazerson, M. (2005), he concluded that one of the greatest transformations in higher education had been the “evolution of liberal art colleges into vocational institutions,” noting that only about 212 of the 540 colleges classified by the Carnegie Commission as liberal arts colleges truly deserved the distinction (p. 8). Grubb and Lazerson note that this vocational transformation actually created a new type of institution: the second-tier comprehensive college. Harris (2006), in his studies on market-driven institutions, notes that this type of “mission-creep” has a negative impact on the entire higher education system by decreasing student choice between institutions and effectively eliminating diversity within higher education (Harris, 2006, p. 187). Marsden (2001) lamented that liberal

education now represents “a specialized educational enterprise likely to have only limited appeal in a popular educational market” (Marsden, 2001, p. 3).

### **Effects of Vocationalism**

The key concern facing those in higher education is the effect of this trend, both on the institution of higher education and the students it strives to produce. In the previous section, vocationalism was shown to diminish diversity within higher education and eliminate student choice. Additionally, another ill-effect of vocationalism is the devaluing effect it has on the worth of the college degree.

Collins (as cited in Grubb & Lazerson, 2005) noted that the expansion of higher education after World War II—especially among non-elite students—created a process known as “credential inflation.” Returning soldiers increasingly began looking to higher education as a means of increasing their marketability in the civilian sector, resulting in a steady decline of the occupational value of the college degree (p. 9). As the job market became saturated with a sudden influx of college degrees, the associated worth of the college degree significantly diminished.

In response to this phenomenon, various professions began requiring prospective candidates to pursue additional education and specialized training, such as graduate education. Consequently, today’s master’s degree became yesterday’s bachelor’s degree. Students must now acquire more education than ever before in order to achieve a comparable lifestyle as previous generations, and those without a college education are becoming more marginalized than ever before.

Another important consideration is how vocationalism impacts the growth and development of the student. Newman (as cited in Franco, 2004), in his beloved work entitled *The Idea of the University*, described the university as a place of education rather than instruction, noting that education “implies an action upon our mental nature, and the formation of character” (p. 55). He contended that the purpose of a liberal education was not to “convey information,” but rather to “make [the student] into something” (Franco, 2004, p. 54). Arthur Holmes echoed this sentiment when he stated that the value of a college education has less to do with what it can do for you and more to do with what it will do to you—what kind of person you shall become having attended college (Holmes, 1975, p. 24).

Franco (2004) noted that vocational training can sufficiently teach the “skills necessary to make good lawyers, doctors, and investment bankers” but fails to teach the “intellectual habits necessary to make mature human beings” (p. 55). His assessment is reminiscent of Nietzsche’s lament that such education does not produce “finished, ripe and harmonious personalities,” but only “common, maximally useful labor” (Franco, 2004, p. 55).

Holmes may be the most explicit in his challenge of vocationalism in higher education, stating that “if the human person was only a worker then vocational training alone would suffice, but because the human person is more than just a worker it follows that vocational training is not enough” (Holmes, 1975, p. 25). In his assessment of vocationalism in higher education, he identifies a key understanding—that there is more to life than work. If education is to be rightly viewed as training for all of life, then an education that is purely vocational is an inadequate preparation for this end and fails to address what it means to be fully human. This careful assessment of the purpose

of a college education echoes the sentiments of such classical thinkers as Isocrates, Quintilian, Aristotle, and most notably Cicero, who contended that the purpose of the liberal arts is to train men in “all that is most human” (Davis & Ryken, no date, p. 4). Holmes articulates this thought in the most beautiful of ways, describing the liberal arts as “an open invitation to join the human race and become more fully human” (Holmes, 1975, p. 96).

### **Christian Higher Education and the Liberal Arts**

Throughout the centuries, Christians have articulated an all-encompassing vision for life. From Saint Irenaeus, who stated that “the glory of God is man fully alive,” to author Hans Rookmaaker (as cited in Staub, 2007), who wrote that “Jesus did not come to make us Christians; Jesus came to make us fully human” (p. xv), Christians have sought to live in such a way that takes full advantage of the depth and breadth of the human experience. It should come as no surprise that the first liberal art colleges were founded by Christians who desired to explore the rich depths of God’s creation and the fullness of the human experience. It is this compatibility of vision and purpose that have led most Christian colleges and universities to define themselves through a robust liberal arts education.

Numerous studies have indicated that faith-based institutions are best able to maintain a strong commitment to the liberal arts. Marsden notes that schools with a strong religious commitment are in a better position than others to provide the missing basis for coherence through their shared religious faith (Marsden, 2001, p. 4). Student affairs professionals make great contributions in this context. Recognizing that a liberal education is an education for life—rather than for upward mobility—the work of the student affairs professional provides the coherence that links together the formal curriculum with the human experience, providing it with sense and meaning. It is this seamless environment of learning that has always been a hallmark of the liberal arts institution.

Unfortunately, given their size, resources, and prestige, Christian colleges are also highly likely to be tempted by the alluring call of vocationalism. Winston (as cited in Brint et al., 2005) notes that, due to their smaller subsidy resources, faith-based institutions face the “largest incentives to reduce their overall cost structures or diversify their streams of revenue” by abandoning expensive liberal arts programs and replacing them with less expensive and more lucrative vocational programs (pp. 160-161).

While vocation and calling language are certainly prolific at Christian institutions of higher learning, it is important to note that the kind of vocationalism discussed in this paper is not that which recognizes the proper place of vocation within the Christian life, but rather that which views vocation as the totality of life and usurps other important elements of Christian faith. Vocation and calling are certainly important constructs of Christian life. Meaningful work has the capability of enriching our lives in many profound ways. Christian institutions of higher education should not shun the notion of vocation and calling, but rather should be vigilant in withstanding market pressures to become increasingly career-oriented or allowing vocation to eclipse other important ends of Christian faith and education.

## Conclusion

While it would be inaccurate to assert that a liberal education is a Christian one, one can be reasonably convinced that a Christian education must be a liberal education. The compatibility of vision and purpose naturally lead one to another, and Christian places of learning have an important role in preserving the rich tradition of the liberal arts. Christian institutions have both the unique challenge and opportunity to re-orient a generation of college students to the true purpose of a college education.

Student affairs professionals in particular share a vested interest in the preservation of the liberal arts tradition. It is within the context of a liberal education that the role of the student affairs professional finds its meaning and purpose. As institutions move from a liberal to a vocational emphasis, placement rates and starting salaries increasingly become the benchmark for success. In this context, such hallmarks of a liberal education as the development of the whole student will only become increasingly marginalized and pushed to the peripheral.

It is imperative to the institution of higher education and the development of the student that vocation be viewed as one of many important components of a holistic education. While the topic of vocation will always have an important place in the landscape of Christian higher education and the liberal arts, it must not dominate the goals of our students or our attention as educators. Vocation has the propensity to significantly enrich or detract from the lives of our students. May we always hold it in proper perspective, that we might continue to inspire students to lead lives that can only be described as “fully alive.”

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## Hooking Up

A Review Essay by Kimberly C. Thornbury

This past year, the covers of three books sitting on the edge of my desk caught the eye of almost every student who visited with me. The first, Kathleen A. Bogle's *Hooking Up: Sex, Dating and Relationships on Campus*, displayed the back of a coed whose lilac bra was being opened by hands not her own. The second book, Laura Sessions Stepp's work, *Unhooked: How Young Women Pursue Sex, Delay Love and Lose Both*, shows a size 2 college female taking off her gray (probably Gap) long-sleeved shirt revealing the top of bra underneath. The bra was colored blush, but the girl's cheeks were probably not that hue. The third, *Sex & the Soul: Juggling Sexuality, Spirituality, Romance and Religion on America's College Campuses* by Donna Freitas, was a stark contrast, with two young adults in khaki pants and "mom would approve" modest sweaters holding their partners fingers as they walk along.

"Dean, what are you reading?!" the bravest asked me with a shy giggle and feigned shock. And just like the books described, most were eager to hear about my reading list and talk about their views on sex, campus behavior, and attitudes. These books provided honest snapshots of the current sexual climate on college campuses, updated definitions, and chilling personal accounts that could educate even those who may consider themselves "worldly wise."

I admit to loving the music of ABBA long before *Mama Mia* made it popular with my generation, but the stories in these books "flesh out" (no pun intended) lyrics such as "Gimme Gimme Gimme a man after midnight..." as it relates to this generation of college students.

This review summarizes the themes in each book, and also reiterates the applications and select suggestions these three authors offered in conclusion.

Laura Sessions Stepp's book *Unhooked: How Young Women Pursue Sex, Delay Love and Lose at Both* provides a fascinating and in-depth look at the causes and affects of the hooking up culture. Her compassionate interviews that dig deep into the personal histories of nine college women. As a result, they are compelling and insightful. Stepp deals seriously with the religious background of each person in the case study, but does not necessarily speak to the differences between secular and evangelical college climates per se as do the other two books.

Donna Freitas' work, *Sex & the Soul: Juggling Sexuality, Spirituality, Romance and Religion on America's College Campuses*, primarily explores the differences in attitudes towards sex and behaviors at Catholic, evangelical, non-religious, private and public universities. Her work began from teaching an overwhelmingly popular course on college dating that resulted in this national research project. This book should be a "must read" by every CCCU admissions team member and parent of a child in high school. It does more to market and promote the mission of evangelical colleges than most admissions materials! Freitas also mentions that her previous work in student affairs and working and living in residence life gave her the experience that helped guide her conversations with students.



In her work *“Hooking Up: Sex, Dating and Relationships on Campus,”* Kathleen A. Bogle transcribes a good deal of frank dialogue between her and students while attending both a large East Coast state university and smaller Roman Catholic university in the northeast (which Bogle calls “Faith U”). However, Freitas makes a strong argument in her book that the faith and behavior/attitudes towards sex on Catholic campuses are minimally different than secular private or state schools, and are in sharp contrast to her findings at evangelical schools. Therefore, Bogle’s term “Faith U” (used when referring to her subjects attending a Catholic university) should not be interpreted with the same lens as it would for evangelical institutions.

### **Hooking Up as Fast Food (or “Hooking Up” Defined)**

Today’s college students do not automatically equate “hooking up” with sex. The term can mean kissing, vaginal intercourse, or anything in between with a partner to whom there are no expectations for future contact. In addition, students do not categorize oral sex as “sex” so again, students who claim not to have had sex typically mean anything short of vaginal intercourse. After all, today’s college freshman were only in early elementary school when President Clinton stated famously, “I did not have sexual relations with that woman...” only to discover post-facto the infamous stain. The Lewinsky affair reframed traditional definitions of sex for an entire generation.

Students hookup as quickly and effortlessly as they can become “unhooked,” so there is no need for the “DTR” (defining the relationship) conversation before or after the event. Stepp (2007), quoting guys about the definition of “hooking up,” explained it as “immediate gratification” and “fast food” (p. 21).

Hooking up typically will begin at parties or clubs, often with partners they may barely know through friends, someone they may have seen around campus or simply just met that night. However, many do not even necessarily have to “work that hard” (described as dressing up and heading out to a party) to begin hooking up. “Make out buddies” (a.k.a. friends with benefits) can enjoy subsequent passion following the sending of a simple text that says “wanna hang out?” More than 60% of teens admitted to having a “friends with benefits” relationship with “casual” hookups that are convenient for sure, and (on the surface) emotionally safe from long-term expectations.

### **Factors Contributing to a Culture of Hooking Up**

The books explain major factors that have contributed to the culture of hooking up, including feminism, a longer span of time between puberty and marriage, and a time-strapped lifestyle coupled with high personal (or parental) expectations in many areas of the student’s life that make hooking up an easy short-term escape. Other factors include lax parents that hand their children over to universities that place little boundaries on co-curricular experimentation, and a continued strong cultural value on female physical attractiveness.

Stepp (2007) argues that movement towards the empowerment of women, feminism, is a logical backdrop to the hooking up culture. The frank discussions of female sexuality and encouragement to “have a sexual appetite and act on it” (p. 154) have given women the freedom to be more sexually aggressive and explore realms previously off limits to “proper” women. Such behaviors were fuel to changing the patriarchal grip on women. It is fair to say, however, that not all strategies were adopted or lauded by all leaders

within this movement. Freitas (2008) takes it a step further and clarifies that feminism per se is not the cause, but rather the “ongoing marginalization and trivialization of feminism by younger women and men” (p. 213).

Coupled with feminism, the youth culture of the 1960s “had come increasingly to value the expression of personal choice rather than conforming to adult expectations.” (Bogle, p. 22—but see footnote 61 as she quotes this from Modell, quoted in Arnett, 1998, 301). Today’s college women were being told from an early age that “they can go for what they want, and they should” (Stepp, 2007, p. 40). However, after they act like guys, “some girls are surprised by the emptiness they feel when there’s literally nobody new left to hookup with. Some are surprised when they discover that, having gotten sex, they want love, and they’re unsure of how to find it or, if they find it, how to handle it. Some are bewildered when the boy says he wants more than sex, or when he does the walking away. Hooking up leaves them unable to navigate in a world where their wants aren’t the only consideration” (Stepp, 2007, p. 66).

With an extended adolescence, both women and men have a lot more time to make these sexual choices. The time span between puberty to the average age of marriage is thirteen years. Bogle (2008) cites the average age a woman first marries is now 25, and for a man it’s 27. Perhaps they are waiting longer to get married due to pressures to succeed—there are grades to achieve before graduate school, graduate school itself, and long hours that must be put into the early stages of careers.

Research indicates that it is not entirely clear who is putting the pressure on these students to reach such high levels of achievement. Many are self-driven, but then again, parents have poured a lot of money in tuition and are hopeful their children can achieve career success worthy of their financial investment. A focus on a long-term relationship can distract from grades or career goals. Regardless of the source, pressure—the pressure to have good grades, volunteer or hold down a job, play sports, and participate in other co-curricular events takes a lot of time. Hooking up is so much easier—with no commitment or expectations, unlike other areas of their life. Stepp (2007) offers, “Girls hookup beginning in high school because it’s the only activity they can possibly manage and comes with no great expectations” (p. 236). Freitas (2008) echoes this argument. “Committed relationships can drain a person’s time, and most students just don’t have room (or don’t make room) in their schedules for hanging out regularly with a boyfriend or a girlfriend. So squeezing in no-strings-attached-sex after hours seems more efficient” (p. 134). All three authors noted the benefit of efficiency. Bogle agrees that young people don’t have time to date, leading us back to the attraction of having a “friend with benefits” in which all that is required for a hook-up is a quick facebook or text message.

The data shows that these sexual trends began while our students were in high school (or even junior high) where parents did not notice or set boundaries. Parents, and especially fathers, underestimate their role in their daughter’s lives. Says Stepp (2007), “Would they [fathers] do more if they knew that their daughters might drink less often, start dating later and begin sex later if they paid more attention? That’s what the research shows” (p. 45). Raising a teen takes some effort and it is not always easy to know what exact social circles your child is in, but Stepp (2007) reminds us that gone are the days of mom or dad picking up the phone and asking, “Who is it?” (p. 50). Even more archaic is an image of a landline phone ringing at the end of a “dorm hall” with all the girls on the floor peeking out of their rooms to see who the call is for, and from whom.

Standards relax even further when the 18-year-old enters the university. Administrators have moved away from an image of campus police. *In loco parentis* has been replaced at most colleges by a philosophy of *in loco grandparents* where the kids come, do what they want, and the school will just clean up afterwards. Stepp (2007) describes “College authorities, at one time surrogate parents, have become absentee landlords. Rules that both inhibited and protected students are gone” (p. 16). Co-ed floors and bathrooms, ineffective policies and programs to curb underage drinking, and offensive themed parties or sex-studded date auctions that continue as annual traditions are few examples of college leadership’s “hands off” approach on many campuses.

Bogle’s (2008) book also notes that the high value placed on a woman’s looks (as defined by the ability to be physically attractive to others) lends itself to this hookup culture. “For women, physical appearance plays a more central role in attracting the opposite sex than it does for men. Similarly, anthropologists Dorothy Holland and Margaret Eisenhart found, in their study of two southern universities in the early 1980s, that a woman’s status on campus was determined almost exclusively by her perceived level of physical attractiveness around men. Men’s status, on the other hand, derived from many different sources (e.g. fraternity membership, athletic status, academic major, intellectual ability.) Therefore, college men were valued for many attributes, while women had to rely solely on their looks” (p.33). And since women make up 58% of the college population, Freitas (2008) notes that women have to both be sexy and work hard to meet the high standard of effortless perfection (p. 148).

The need for confirmation and affirmation of one’s good looks brings other consequences besides hooking up. Bogle (2008) writes of a female coed quoting an oft-heard message about her particular campus, “[This college] gives out more eating disorders than diplomas” (p. 72). As a mother of two daughters (ages 6 and 8), I see firsthand the pressure towards this sexualization. Not only am I not interested in thongs for my 8-year-old or panties for my first grader that read “juicy” on the bumper, I am angry that such merchandise is available and marketed to my girls and their peers.

### More Factors, and Consequences

Raunchy theme parties, vocabulary such as “sexting and “sexiled,” and a new model for dating were three other examples I found compelling in the books. I am not sure if I would categorize them as factors that contributed to widespread “hookups” or consequences as a result of this hookup culture.

Each author described disturbing popular themed parties on (non-evangelical campuses) such as “CEO’s and Office Ho’s” and “Millionaires and Maids” where pornography seen on the computer screen is played out in real life. Freitas (2008) explains, “instead of simply watching porn, college men get to re-create these fantasies live among women with whom they go to class” (p. 145). The parties are obviously disturbing on so many levels even beyond women willingly walking across a snow-covered campus in lingerie to a party with the expectation they’ll hookup by the end of the night.) For women who grew up with Britney Spears, Christina Aguilera, the OC, and read *Cosmo* (The #1 magazine among college age women), they know the dance moves and outfits to wear to these parties. Stripper pole optional.

Freitas (2008) offers this questions for prospective parents: “An institution can have all the prestige in the world, offer the best education and impressive swath of majors,

and even have a great basketball team—but what if this same place has your daughter dressing up as a “secretary ho” on Friday night?” (p. 23).

In September 2007, when our current freshman class were juniors in high school, “news broke that nude photos of Disney’s “High School Musical” star Vanessa Hudgens surfaced on the Internet. The photos were alleged to be self-portraits taken with Hudgens’ cellphone and sent to her boyfriend, co-star Zac Efron.” <http://seattletimes.nwsourc.com/html/nationworld/2008845> The term is known as “sexting” and provides another example of increasingly willing females to showcase for men.

The term “Sexiled” is another common university term that means being exiled from your room so your roommate can finish hooking up. Yes, older movies have shown the proverbial “red rope” on the outside doorknob of a college dorm. College students having sex is not new or surprising. But the word “sexiled” entering common collegiate vocabulary represents a new trend. Unlike past generations, the college roommate mercifully need only wait out in the hallway a half hour. Hookups are recreational and sleeping over makes things awkward for both parties.

It is clear the model has changed. The “old model” dictated dating until one found someone of mutual interest. By slowing learning about each other’s interests, the couple would build a relationship in which a physical relationship may eventually ensue. The new model is widespread and seems to make sense to many college students: Hookup first and (maybe) see if there is potential for a longer-term relationship there. Obviously, hookups are not borne out of a desire for a long-term relationships, but if one is curious about companionships, “hooking up” is where many seem to “start” to find it.

### **Social Norms**

Hooking up is now a social norm, meaning that there is a perception among youths that most others are doing it. Studies show that the perception of the percentage of peers engaging in behavior such as sex acts, drinking, and drug use is actually higher than the actual statistics of those really engaging in those behaviors. However, college students are not far off on their views that sexual activity is indeed quite widespread. Laura Sessions Stepp (2007) used an independent organization called Child Trends to help her make “sense of the most reliable large-scale studies” and determined 75% of male and females (yes, equal percentages) ages 18-22 reported having sex (p. 9). Freitas (2008) quotes a figure that 73%-85% of college students are sexually active (Freitas, quoting from Christian Smith’s *Soul Searching*, p.254). Stepp (2007) explains the timeline. “By college, more of them are engaging in intercourse—nine out of ten by senior year compared with six of ten by senior year in high school” (p.220).

More shockingly, according to national data released in mid-2005, one out of every two teenagers between 15 and 19 has given or received oral sex. In the CDC sample, “teens from white, middle- and upper-income families... were more likely to have engaged in oral sex than other groups” (Stepp, 2007, p. 75). This may be the time to remind the reader that although the abortion rate has dropped, the United States STD rate is consistently high, “higher, in fact, in the United States than in any other developed country” (Stepp, 2007, p. 236).

The high percent of sexually active teens puts the college virgin clearly in the minority at most campuses. At non-evangelical schools, “being a virgin is a sign that something is wrong with you, rather than something valuable” (Frietas, 2008, p. 132). Many women

at non-evangelical campuses in the book describe losing their virginity not in warm, romantic tones but rather as “getting it over with” (Freitas, 2008, p. 133). Drop off dry cleaning: check; Arts and Western Civilization: check; lose virginity: check, “I heard from a lot of women and men who decided one night to rid themselves of this stigma, this ‘mark’ [as one interview regarded it] that kept them from being normal adults having a ‘normal’ college life” (Freitas, 2008, p. 134).

### **Role of Alcohol**

The use of alcohol served as a dominant theme in each book. “Of the hundreds of young women I interviewed about hookup experiences, less than a half-dozen said they were sober at the time” (Stepp, 2007, p. 122). One of the more disturbing accounts in the books was a section by Stepp (2007) as she explained the phenomenon of coeds taking pictures of each other after “last call” at the bar was announced. Students would take photos of each other, enter cell numbers and post the day of the week into the contact information. As she inquired about this trend, a medical student explained, “We need the pictures so we can remember who we were with the night before” (p. 124). [It’s noted that these students need only to remember who they were with if the partner happens to call after the encounter.]

“Gray rape” is an emerging term used by defense lawyers to describe situations where a woman has sex despite her wishes, but because she was drunk or wore a certain outfit or even initiated the hookup (with no intention of actual intercourse) the responsibility lies (at least in part) with her. Many women who clearly voiced that they did not want to have sex, but were drunk enough to forget all the details of the evening, do not report rapes or feel worthy of reporting the crime (Stepp, 2007, p. 248). Again, alcohol was a common theme or precursor to hooking up.

### **Effects**

For all the casual talk about hooking up, the authors’ narrative indicates that most women do not like ongoing hookups and the effects. From tainted reputations to major depression, the ongoing encounters are rarely without consequence. Many express anxiety over this practice, and admit to shame, fear, and regret. Although they are pressured to separate sexual activity from romance, it can be challenging for most women. “Reconciling sex and the soul is not only extremely difficult for them, but rare” (Freitas, 2008, p. 216).

Contrary to stereotypical images, not all men embraced this sexual freedom. Many were eager to find another, better model for relationships, but did not know how to return to romance. “You don’t know how to do things differently once you realize you want more” (Stepp, 2007, p. 173). Further, “Surprisingly little research has been done on what kinds of relationships lead to good marriages. But the traits that characterize good marriages are firmly established and include trust, respect, admiration, honesty, selflessness, communication, caring and, perhaps more than anything else, commitment. Hookups are about anything but these qualities. It’s as if young women are practicing sprints while planning to run a marathon” (Stepp, 2007, p. 253). The marathon is a metaphor for long-term relationships, if not marriage. Marriage was not seen as an end goal for many women who have seen four sexy women in NYC make it through life with their “urban tribe” rather than a consistent lifelong partner. Laura Sessions Stepp

(2007) found that “while two out of three young men said it was better to get married than go through life single, fewer than half of the young women felt that way” (p. 9).

By definition the hookup is designed with little to no future expectations of the partner. While women know this technically, their hearts may not have gotten the message. The fact is, the shorter the hookup, the more likely depression will show up (Stepp, 2007, p. 241). In the book *College of the Overwhelmed*, author Richard Kadison reveals that “for every five young people who reach 24, one will have been diagnosed with major depression” (Stepp, 2007, p.242). Obviously the causes for such deep depression are certainly varied, but it is true that a lifestyle of short-term sexual encounters leads to depression in many women.

### **The Evangelical Difference**

Freitas’ work clearly explains how overall behaviors and attitudes are significantly different at evangelical colleges as compared to their secular or Catholic institutions. In my heart, I initially opened the pages with despair, expecting to find little to no difference in sexual behavior between campuses. To my pleasant surprise, the difference was stark and hopeful. “The only exception I found to hookup culture was at America’s evangelical colleges” (Freitas, 2008, p. 14). Freitas (2008) describes evangelical colleges as “religiously infused” with a “quest for purity and chastity [that] reigns supreme on these campuses” (p. 14).

Not only was Freitas positive about her findings of sexual restraint, but also her observations of the entire campus culture are noteworthy. “Walking onto the campus of an evangelical college for the first time was like entering a world almost entirely apart from the other schools I visited. At these institutions, faith is neither ignored nor suppressed. In fact, at these schools, faith is everything. It is the bedrock on which both the curriculum and the social life are built, and where religion is not only powerful, it is public” (Freitas, 2008, p. 62). In addition, she observed with enthusiasm the diversity of thought, backgrounds, career goals, geography and other demographics of these students. The author continues, “there is nearly as much diversity inside evangelical culture as there is outside of it. And time after time during my interviews, these [negative] stereotypes were shattered” (Freitas, 2008, p. 62).

The following summary from Freitas’ work should encourage those of you working in evangelical institutions and may capture the work you do each day on your campus.

Catholic, nonreligious private, and public colleges and universities — what I call the spiritual colleges—stand to learn something from their evangelical counterparts; evangelical colleges are interesting models for the kind of mentoring communities that Sharon Daloz Parks advocates in *Big Questions, Worthy Dreams: Mentoring Young Adults in Their Search for Meaning, Purpose and Faith*. To create a community where faith matters not just in theory but in reality, faith has to be a public value, not a private one. Professors need to embrace the idea of themselves as “spiritual guides” of sort and their syllabi as “confessions of faith.” The campus should be a culture forged by a shared identity, mission, and values of its own, each forming a sense of itself as something special and set apart from the broader culture (and that does not trade solely on its sports teams for these dimensions).



The only institutions at which I encountered a shared identity and common values—which I now believe are keys to a healthy college experience, especially when it comes to reigning in hookup culture—were the two evangelical schools (p. 67).

One of the reasons for the strong sense of community at these evangelical campuses is the positive effect of the “sacred canopy,” a term coined by Peter Berger (Freitas, 2008, p. 14). For someone who hears about our intuition’s “bubble” from students, I may ask our students to use the rich term “sacred canopy” instead and embrace the shared vision, environment of mentoring, and exploration of ideas and thoughts with Christ-centered intellectuals.

### **Evangelical Challenges**

Despite her affirmation of her experiences at evangelical colleges, Freitas does not shy away from some of the challenges she saw for these women. Sometimes a pressure for that “Mrs.” Degree can be challenging when women must be passive and men may be slow to take leadership in relationships. On evangelical campuses, many guys don’t ask girl on a date because in that culture, the relationship automatically is viewed as serious. (Many ACSD campuses share the joke that if a new couple is seen together at Wal-Mart, engagement must be right around the corner.) Freitas talks about a solution coined “frugaling.” She defines it as something in between dating and non-dating on the evangelical campus. It happens when a guy and girl get to know each other in a group setting, and then are, over time, seen talking together one-on-one in public without ever having the DTR (defining the relationship) talk. She also explains the dating rituals at evangelical colleges with precision, which include “Campus walks” (“which can start out as frugaling”) (Freitas, 2008, p. 116). The term one may hear is NCMO, or the “non-committal make out” at evangelical colleges (Freitas 2008, p. 119). Perhaps that term sounds more restrained than “hooking up.” Other challenges include the value of getting a “ring by spring” which seemed to cause real anxiety and fear for many senior women whose prospects did not include engagement.

Freitas captures the purity ideal on evangelical campuses, and the rings, books, speakers and techniques used to wage battle against sexual temptation and remain “heroic virgins.” Her interviews with those who have failed to remain sexually pure are insightful, both with those who choose to remain sexually active and others who become “born again virgins” —those recommitting themselves to now remain chaste until marriage. She also talks with the rare “sexually active seeker” those who continue in sexual activity but are still desire a growing spirituality.

Sex on evangelical campuses is seen as a battle between faith and sex (where seemingly one will win out at the end). At non-evangelical campuses, the students tended not to feel such conflict, as issues of sexuality and faith are compartmentalized and isolated, and faith can have little influence over sexual behavior.

Despite this strong battle for both men and women, there is promised light at the end of the tunnel. “Although evangelical college students have quite a battle ahead of them prior to marriage, they do occasionally discuss the wild sex lives they expect to have (and are promised they will have) once they make it to the altar” (Freitas, 2008, p. 197).

Understanding the challenges of the battle and the emotions of students who have “lost the battle” are discussed at length in Freitas’ work.

### **What Your Students Need to Know**

Freitas explains a longing for boundaries among students at colleges. I felt bolstered by the fact that our expectations of students’ behavior, positively affect campus culture. Despite complaints about restricted “open visitation” policies and strong limits on alcohol, such standards do seem to provide an external force (at least someone else to blame) to help students avoid tempting situations. Stepp (2007) explains, “for adolescents thinking about having sex, opportunity matters—a lot” (Stepp, p. 216).

The students interviewed in these books shared a desire to bring back romance (which most often was described by the students as “talking for hours” with their romantic partner, but less knowledge about how to bring this about or sustain this (or even develop healthy relationships). Sex weeks on campus with “tents of consent” are not as helpful to these students as honest, ongoing conversations about dating and relationships. Freitas’ work, as I mentioned previously, emerged from a class she taught on dating. She was nervous no one would take the class initially, and surprised when it filled up within minutes with non-registered students begging to be let in. In her book, Stepp mentions a handful of colleges that offer such relationship courses, but notes that dating and relationship classes are not widespread (possibly due to the perceived “softness” of the course material and the potential judgement from fellow academic colleagues).

Many of our campuses have avenues for such discussion, for example chapel, spiritual formation classes, residence life programming, book readings with professors, lecture series, and informal mentoring relationships that build trust and ask deep questions about sexuality and relationships.

If parents have not provided good models or conversation partners about sex and intimacy, students will still yearn for advice elsewhere. “[Parents] do what they feel comfortable doing: help a maturing child devise a budget, furnish an apartment, maybe find a first job. Giving advice about emotional intimacy is something else, particularly if their own experiences have been less than perfect. As a result, kids grow up depending on parents for help with everything except what may be life’s most fundamental need: to love and be loved by a life partner” (Stepp, 2007, p. 193). Watching *He’s Just Not That Into You* to learn how to negotiate relationships is best tempered with some ongoing conversations about Biblical intimacy. Student Development professionals can take the lead in these conversations. “There’s a thick wall between the classroom and everything else. Brilliant students may hone sophisticated reasoning abilities in their courses, but they don’t know seem inclined to take those abilities with them once class ends. They either don’t know how or haven’t been offered the tools to apply what they learn to their personal lives” (Freitas, 2008, p. 224).

Laura Sessions Stepp (2007), reflecting on her interviews, asked “Who was reminding them that sex, in any form, is more powerful when you don’t throw it around, more satisfying when it’s savored with someone you love? Who was asking them to think seriously about their goals for happiness beyond the law degree or to consider that having sex with lots of men might limit their ability to conceive children? Who was helping them see that loving relationships are uniquely satisfying and manageable and



need not tie them down for the rest of their lives?” (p. 7). The rhetorical answer was of course that perhaps the university might reconsider their role in helping students discuss and work through these huge questions.

Freitas’ book especially can energize even the weariest of student development professionals. She writes how issues of faith are private and personal, and not explored publically at non-evangelical schools. Her interviews of faith led her to conclude, “if a college does not intentionally cultivate and invite personal, religious expression, students end up navigating a campus atmosphere that makes faith talk awkward, and even unwelcome, and the so-called benefit of this diversity [is] lost in students’ real experiences” (Freitas, 2008, p. 33). Our work is to not only welcome discussions of faith but also link arms with faculty to create an entire campus where all of these issues are purposefully discussed to the Glory of God. The books have bolstered my sense of mission (and not just in the area of “hooking up”) but in all our efforts to provide non-compartmentalized worldview models and guidance for our students.

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## **Stephen T. Davis; *Disputed Issues: Contending for Christian Faith in Today's Academic Setting.***

(Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2008)

Reviewed by Caleb Farmer

In *Disputed Issues: Contending for Christian Faith in Today's Academic Setting*, author Stephen Davis responds to a variety of challenges to Evangelicalism that, according to popular belief, have the potential to compromise the integrity of the Christian faith. In each chapter, Davis makes his case against a clearly articulated position, demonstrating its implausibility through cogent argument. Davis sets out to show that orthodox Christian belief can, in fact, be defended against the attacks that are constantly coming its way.

These issues are broken up into three parts; the first regards so-called “higher critics” of the New Testament, who have historical, textual, and believability disputes with the Scriptures. In this section, Davis points out flaws in the approach of the Jesus Seminar, as well as discusses presuppositions in exegesis. Davis then moves to theological issues, speaking out against arguments using Christian doctrine. Two topics Davis addresses in this section are religious pluralism and process theology. In the third set of topics, Davis wrestles with scholars who take aim at philosophy of religion. This section includes discussions on the mechanics of eternal life and fitting genocide into a worldview where God is in control.

Davis does a phenomenal job setting up each chapter to show his meticulous logic and calculated defense. In each argument, Davis is thorough in his position, unearthing as many counterpoints as possible. This comprehensive call to logic and intellect raises the bar for Christians who are in a position to defend Christianity. There just is not room for those that rely on circular logic, for instance, to be spokespeople of the faith, and Davis represents well the sort of thought that is called for today.

At the conclusion of chapter 6, Davis challenges Christians to think, integrate their faith, and ask questions. Not only has Davis left no room for a debate that ends on faith, but he reaffirms belief in a logical God, a God that intellectually-minded Christians can follow without being ashamed when they are called to provide the reasons for their behavior. This is a message that the students in our colleges and universities should hear loudly and clearly. Students from an evangelical background will profit from the textual styles as well as the content of *Disputed Issues*.

However, this book is not without its faults. Davis' book suffers from the absence of contrasting views, and he almost seems to state that he is the winner at the end of several arguments. The book would have benefited from an opposing voice, one with as much passion and intelligence as Davis. The frustration of the one-sided argument hits its pinnacle in his chapter titled, “Have the Infidels Refuted the Resurrection?”. Here he refers to specific passages of an opposing viewpoint but never explains the specific points that the opposing view employs. Rather, he simply uses a number system of “8-12” to identify the argument of the conflicting view. This creates

confusion and does a disservice to the whole point being made. This problem seems to dissipate as the book continues and clarity returns shortly thereafter, but this is, nonetheless, a serious hindrance to the reader.

*Disputed Issues* is a valuable book for student affairs practitioners who spend their time with intelligent and curious students. It is not a book that has every answer to the questions the world is asking about the Christian faith. In fact, if Davis' goal is to convert the world to Christianity by proving its logic, he has failed and is addressing the wrong set of questions altogether. Instead, *Disputed Issues* is a book that sets out an aggressively-minded brand of apologetics. According to Davis, people should not be afraid of questions that challenge Christianity and should have the courage to answer those questions without fear of who is opposing their beliefs.

Even still, much can be learned from how these arguments are modeled, and what types of issues are being addressed in the academic world. Student development practitioners would truly benefit from reading *Disputed Issues*, as many students ask questions based on several of these exact issues after hearing them discussed in their philosophy and theology classes. Some of these questions challenge the Christian faith that they may have depended on their entire lives. Because Davis' book is a great example of a systematic defense of the Christian faith, as he relies on logic and evidence and never retreats to a solely faith-based defense, *Disputed Issues* is a great tool for those who require a scholarly answer to some of the most important questions students face.

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## **C. John Sommerville; Religion in the National Agenda: What We Mean by Religious, Spiritual, Secular.**

(Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2009)

Reviewed by Leslie C. Poe

If you find yourself searching for a modern commentary on the influence of religion in national systems of politics, education, culture, and science, the title of this book might appear to be just the ticket. But you would be wrong. Instead, you will want to pay more notice to the subtitle, for in his latest work C. John Sommerville focuses very lightly on the national agenda and very heavily on the various definitions of religion and its peers in the repertoire of spiritual jargon. Instead of preparing for political and cultural observation, approaching this text requires the stretching of your best philosophical and linguistic chops.

Sommerville, a noted historian from the University of Florida, adds to his rich body of work on the secularization of modern culture (including the secularization of the academy) with this 204-page attempt to define religion and analyze how definitions influence dialogue and practice in several areas of national concern. He begins by acknowledging the confusion surrounding the terms “religion” and “spirituality,” a frustration that finds its root in the ambiguous, culturally specific, and highly individualistic nature of religion. Sommerville attempts to reconcile that confusion with a nominal definition, a definition of the word rather than the thing, “which is all that can be done with something as elusive as religion” (Sommerville, p. 2). In the midst of a review of many great thinkers’ attempts to solidify a definition—Paul Tillich, Wilfred Cantwell Smith, Rudolf Otto, Clifford Geertz—Sommerville offers his: “a certain kind of response to a certain kind of power” (Sommerville, p. 28).

At this point, Sommerville begins to examine the interaction between definitions of religion and specific areas of public affairs, beginning with education. This chapter is of particular relevance to most readers of *Growth* due to his address of secularism in public education (and increasingly in many historically sectarian institutions). His critique of the absence of religion in the curriculum of non-sectarian education is compelling, for he proposes that to censor religion is to essentially teach secularism; something is always being taught. This argument continues in his address of religion as it relates to law, political variety, science, and theology. Sommerville concludes by offering definitions for “secular,” a term that happens to be as ambiguous as “religion.”

In essence, *Religion in the National Agenda* is an attempt to define the ambiguous and to examine how such ambiguity affects those who relate to the term. Christian student affairs professionals at both faith-based and secular institutions will find chapter 3, “Why Religion and Education Challenge Each Other,” most applicable. For those at faith-based institutions, Sommerville’s attention to the dangers of religious study will be thought-provoking. Within Christian higher education, are we allowing students to *learn* religion or merely requiring them to *study about* religion?

Studying something translates it into terms more familiar and seemingly more basic. Such study will naturally question religion rather than letting it question us... The difference between learning and studying is in the attitude—the humility—involved (Sommerville, pp. 54-56).

Any institution that integrates faith into its academic and co-curriculum should take note of Sommerville's distinction, a warning against the trap of producing graduates who know much about religion but who have failed to be transformed by it in the process.

For Christian student affairs professionals at secular institutions, Sommerville's words may serve to put a vocabulary on the anti-religious aura that is so tangible on so many campuses. In environments where any mention of religious belief—particularly Christianity—is labeled as intolerance, Sommerville points out the paradox of such an argument:

There is an irony in the fact that this amounts to proselytizing for tolerance! Understood properly, toleration means allowing for proselytizing, not censoring it. For proselytizing implies the freedom of one's audience, rather than seeking to coerce it... One feels there is a lack of confidence in the kind of intellectual exchange that ought to characterize university discussion when we show this desire to censor positions in advance (Sommerville, p. 119).

Modern education has championed the cause of tolerance, yet sends an underlying message of tolerance for everything but religion.

Religion is the one area in which Americans' commitment to individual freedom falters. Courts which cannot allow even release time religious instruction for those who choose it have required students to attend lessons in sex education and values clarification over religious objections (Sommerville, p. 73).

Furthermore, Sommerville proposes that intentional neglect of religion in the dialogue of education may be a liability; instead of closing minds, religion actually opens the mind to increased possibilities. "Whereas logic tightens our thinking, religious awareness may promote mental flexibility" (Sommerville, p. 80). For children, college students, and adults, the concept of God and the virtues related to religion expand mental horizons beyond the limits of rationalism and secular humanism as covered in the majority of classrooms.

Those working with college students at both types of institutions are likely to have noticed the growing tendency of students to describe their personal system of beliefs without use of the term “religion,” instead preferring terms like faith, spirituality, relationship, and community. In some instances, students view “religion” with hostility and have symbolically and intentionally removed the term from their descriptions of personal belief and practice. Sommerville’s examination of definitions and meanings behind these terms may shed light on these trends within current student populations. Another intriguing element of Sommerville’s address is the prevalent concerns of imperialism, multiculturalism, and general emphasis of Western ideas related to religion. While he is sensitive to the unique geographic and cultural underpinnings of religious experience and jargon, he seems to caution the contemporary tendency to over-emphasize these influences.

While these and other valuable insights may be gleaned from this book, most student affairs professionals will find it broad, abstract, and beyond practical application for everyday practice. With the exception of those who are at home with philosophy, the average reader is likely to be overwhelmed with the roundabout linguistic breakdowns and back-and-forth arguments within the majority of the book’s chapters. *Religion in the National Agenda* is not beach reading; most paragraphs require concentration and multiple readings. If philosophy and abstraction is your cup of tea, by all means pull on your best galoshes and wade through the philosophical muck! But if you are looking for a book to inspire your everyday work with college students, look elsewhere.

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## **John H. Schuh and Associates; Assessment Methods for Student Affairs.** (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 2009)

Reviewed by Robert C. Pepper

We are all well aware of the importance of assessment in the work on our campuses. We read articles, attend conference presentations, and speak with peers on the topic in an effort to improve our skills and answer the question, “How are you assessing student learning in your area?” or “Are the programs and services your department provides effectively meeting the needs of students?” These are just two examples of the many questions that stakeholders ask in this age of tight budgets and increased accountability. In this climate, we no longer need to be convinced of the benefits of assessment; what we need is additional education, training, and effective models that will inform student affairs administrators how to conduct assessment.

In response to this growing demand, the literature on assessment in higher education and more specifically on student affairs is growing. John H. Schuh and Associates (2009) provide student affairs practitioners with an excellent resource with their volume *Assessment Methods for Student Affairs*.

This is the third book that Schuh has contributed to on this important topic (Upcraft & Schuh, 1996; Schuh & Upcraft, 2001). While Upcraft is not a contributor to this book, he did write the Foreword and Schuh credits him with contributing many of the ideas in the book. Schuh called on five of his colleagues at Iowa State to serve as contributors to the work. It is obvious to the reader that they were not only selected for their respective areas of expertise, but also for their ability to communicate in very clear terms as the book is both insightful and easy to follow.

Unlike other resources on assessment, this book is not theoretical as the authors assume that the readers agree that assessment is important if not necessary. It is also not written for statisticians or qualitative methodologists. It does not argue for specific methodologies or methods; rather, it is a resource for practitioners. The authors make an important distinction that readers should keep in mind when reading this book. They do not use the terms “assessment” and “evaluation” interchangeably. Building on previous publications, they define assessment as “any effort to gather, analyze, and interpret evidence which describes institutional, departmental, divisional, or agency effectiveness” (Upcraft & Schuh, 1996, p. 18). This is different from evaluation, which is defined as “any effort to use assessment evidence to improve institutional, departmental, divisional or agency effectiveness” (Upcraft & Schuh, 1996, p. 19).

Chapter 1 provides the theoretical framework for the remainder of the book. The authors state that the following six factors have contributed to an increased focus on accountability and assessment: student learning, retention, political pressure, accreditation, cost, and benchmarking. With these factors in mind, the authors remind administrators of the value of assessment in strategic planning and measuring organizational effectiveness. Chapter 1 continues with advice on how to begin assessment and describes several kinds of assessment including measuring participation, needs, satisfaction, student outcomes, and cost. Finally, the authors provide a list

of questions to consider prior to beginning assessment and several illustrations of institutions that are conducting assessment in student affairs.

Chapter 2 examines how student affairs practitioners can use existing data sources in their assessment efforts. They remind readers of the data that is already available that may fit the needs of their project. This may be internal data collected by others at the institution (for example, admissions or the National Study for Student Engagement, NSSE) or data that is external and more generally describes higher education trends (for example, National Center for Education Statistics, NCES). The point they make is that data may already be available for the student affairs administrator that answers the question they are asking.

Chapters 3-6 focus on defining the purpose of the assessment, collecting data, assessment types, the selection of the sample, instrumentation, the benefits of qualitative and quantitative research methods, and a review of data analysis. These chapters provide the reader with very straightforward and brief descriptions of these complex terms and concepts. In addition, the authors include several checklists, tables, and examples that assist the reader in very practical ways.

Chapter 7 provides specific details and suggestions about preparing written reports and presentations. The emphasis is on presenting the findings and capturing the attention of the readers, most of whom will be stakeholders. As in previous chapters, the authors provide some actual examples that take their recommendations from the theoretical to the practical. This chapter is rather basic and is in many ways common-sense for those who have prepared these types of documents. For example, do we need to be reminded to check the LCD projector and microphone prior to giving a presentation? This chapter would be very helpful for those who have not prepared reports or presented findings, but for the seasoned professional it is little more than a refresher of best practices.

The authors address ethical considerations in Chapter 8. They remind readers to work within federal, state, and institutional guidelines when conducting assessment. As was the case for Chapter 7, much of Chapter 8 is little more than a review for those who have conducted social science research. This chapter does include a few case studies that bring the ethical issues to life, but the authors do not present any new concepts or ideas.

Chapter 9 reminds those conducting assessment that the goals, purpose, and question being studied should dictate the methodology used in the assessment. Specifically, this chapter argues that in some cases a mixed methodology is the most effective way to address the question. A single case study is used throughout the chapter to demonstrate the value in mixed methodologies.

The book concludes with Chapter 10 and the author's best guess for the future of assessment. They include a continued emphasis on accountability, assessment, and transparency. They further contend that there will be an increase in the use of comparative data, the use of data in decision-making, and more sophistication in assessment studies. If their predictions come to fruition, then it behooves those of us working in Christian higher education to continue in our assessment efforts so that we have better data for benchmarking, comparative studies, and long-range planning.

Perhaps the most helpful part of the book for me was the invaluable resources in the Appendices. I found Appendix 3, a listing of commonly used assessment instruments, and their purpose as well as information collected to be the most helpful. I plan on



referring to this chart and adding more instruments to the list as I come across them for easy referencing in assessment meetings and long-range planning sessions.

In *Assessment Methods for Student Affairs*, John Schuh and Associates provide an excellent resource for student affairs administrators and those who are responsible for assessment. Given the increased emphasis on assessment, this book is timely while at the same time practical and easy to follow. I would recommend this book for those who have never conducted assessment and to anyone planning on conducting assessment prior to beginning a new project.

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## James K. A. Smith; *Desiring the Kingdom: Worship, Worldview, and Cultural Formation.*

(Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2009)

Reviewed by Laura M. Rodeheaver

From the background of the Reformed tradition, James K. A. Smith offers a manuscript that builds a landscape for the mission of Christian higher education. The premise: Colleges and universities are called to be inextricably connected with the Church by imitating their engagement with worship practices. As a result of this calling, the goal of Christian higher education is “the formation of a peculiar people – a people who desire the kingdom of God and thus undertake their vocations as an expression of that desire” (Smith, 2009, p. 34). Smith guides the reader through philosophical and theological arguments to reveal the importance of liturgical practices within education that form students’ desire for God. Accordingly, the reader is inspired by the biblical message of being transformed into humans who image Christ, yet is in want for more practical means of transferring this truth to the daily workings of an American university.

The philosophical foundation for Smith’s work begins with Descartes’ conception of the human being as thinker. Next, Smith moves to the deeper consideration of the human being as believer who interacts with the world through a belief-constructed worldview. Ultimately Smith arrives with the human person as lover. With credit to Augustine, Smith explains how human beings’ interactions with the world are driven by desire. Christians would answer this desire with a love for the “gospel whose power is beauty, which speaks to our deepest desires, and compels us to come not with dire moralisms but rather a winsome invitation to share in this envisioned good life” (Smith, 2009, p. 21). As lovers, human beings are not moved to love through intellectual pursuits. Instead, lovers’ “ultimate love is oriented by and to a picture of what we think it looks like for us to live well, and it is that picture which then governs, shapes, and motivates our decisions and actions” (Smith, 2009, p. 53). Here a distinction is made between intellectual motivation and social imaginary. Smith determines that the formation of our ultimate love does not occur consciously, but instead is driven by practices that are most often aimed at our affective region. These practices, which occur communally, shape us to love a certain vision of the good life.

In the next section of his manuscript, Smith fleshes out the definitions for and distinctions between rituals, practices, and liturgies. The focus is on liturgies as “*rituals of ultimate concern*: rituals that are formative for identity, that inculcate particular visions of the ‘good life,’ and do so in a way that means to trump other ritual formations” (Smith, 2009, p. 86). Smith also defines secular liturgies as “a *mis*-formation of our desires – aiming our heart away from the Creator to some aspect of the creation *as if* it were God” (p. 88). In order to help the reader understand the misdirected power of secular liturgies, Smith takes considerable time to unwrap liturgies within consumerism, a certain ‘military-entertainment’ complex found in movies, sporting events, etc., and today’s universities. Not surprisingly, these pervasive liturgies are dangerously antithetical to the good life mirroring the principles of the kingdom of God. In contrast to these

cultural liturgies, Smith reveals how efficacious the liturgies of the Church could and should shape our overarching aims. Under the argument that the Church's doctrines or beliefs flow from "the nexus of Christian worship practices; worship is the *matrix* of Christian faith, not its 'expression' or 'illustration,'" Smith discusses the strength of social imaginary imbedded in a long list of the Church's worship liturgies (Smith, 2009, p. 138). The list includes practices such as baptism, song, confession, prayer, etc. Smith declares that these liturgies must be a part of the mission of Christian higher education in order to:

form radical disciples of Jesus and citizens of the baptismal city who, communally, take up the creational task of being God's image bearers, unfolding the cultural possibilities latent in creation – but doing so as empowered by the Spirit, following the example of Jesus' cruciform cultural labor (Smith, 2009, p. 220).

This drafted mission is a high calling for education to go beyond assisting students in conceptualizing a Christian worldview to shaping students into a 'peculiar people' through meaningful liturgies. Briefly, in his last chapter, Smith expounds on three areas of the university, including connecting chapel with the classroom, living space with the classroom, and forms of service-learning to engage the body with the mind as practical examples of how to shape students to long for the principles of the kingdom of God.

Through his dialogue on practices of worship, Smith offers a certain layer of depth to the Christian higher education community. In a powerful way, Smith validates previous research that highlights the impact of the student experience on students' character. Chickering & Reisser (1993) lay forth significant elements of education that lead to successful student development, resting on a fundamental belief "that by taking developmental needs as an organizing framework, we will better prepare all our students, and our ourselves, for the kinds of lives as workers and citizens required by the social changes rushing toward us" (Chickering & Reisser, 1993, p. xvii). In Astin's *What Matters in College?* (1993), the constructs of community orientation and social activism are positively associated with the development of students' meaningful philosophy in life (Astin, 1993, p. 155). Astin (1993) further reports practices or what he refers to as "involvement variables," that influence the building of a meaningful philosophy. The work of these well-known leaders is evidence that the world of higher education has acknowledged the need to engage more than the students' mind in college. As Smith articulates what engagement looks like with students attending Christian universities, the value of the mind and its role in shaping students is largely absent. It would have been beneficial to be shown the partnership between the mind and heart in this endeavor, as well as greater practical detail for how to implement this vision in the Christian higher educational setting.

Smith's argument for the influence of Christian liturgies as counter-formation to the cultural liturgies surrounding humans does not adequately struggle with the complexity that sin nature and willpower bring into this world of affective liturgies. And in the midst of these complexities, what is the extent of the Holy Spirit's role? In Ephesians 3:14-19, Paul offers a prayer for the church, praying that the Spirit would strengthen their inner beings, "so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith" (v. 17, NIV). Paul also prayed that with the same power, the church would grasp and know the

dimensions of God's love. The Greek word for "know" was also used "as a Jewish idiom for sexual intercourse between a man and a woman," revealing the intimate depth of this understanding (Strong's, # G1097). Paul comments that this love surpasses or transcends knowledge of moral living (Strong's, # G1108). All of Paul's prayer, to have Christ inhabit their hearts and to know the depth of God's love for them, was for the ultimate purpose of being filled with the "fullness of God" (v. 19).

In this passage, Paul is praying for the power of Christ to be in the *kardia* of the people, which Smith speaks of as the heart, the affective part of human nature that is shaped through liturgies. Paul's prayer is in line with Smith's call to worship, which is "a call to be(come) *human*, to take up the vocation of being fully and authentically human, and to be a community and people who image God to the world" (Smith, 2009, pp. 162-163). Through the grace of Jesus and the power of the Holy Spirit, Christians together as a body can experience the fullness of God as was the desire of Paul and is now the expressed desire of Smith. What a charge to shape our universities to be agents in welcoming students to participate in this transformation of becoming the peculiar people of God.

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## **Kevin Roose; The Unlikely Disciple: A Sinner's Semester at America's Holiest University.**

(New York, NY: Grand Central Publishing, 2009)

Reviewed by Jessica Rimmer

*The Unlikely Disciple*, authored by the Brown University undergraduate Kevin Roose, is quick to gain the reader's attention. His writing style is full of wit, sarcasm, and honest humor. Even the tongue-in-cheek title is designed to poke fun at the evangelical Christian sub-culture. *The Unlikely Disciple* is the story of a brave Brown University sophomore who chose to spend a semester 'abroad' at Liberty University in order to better understand a culture within America that he and his friends did not appreciate or know. The catch is, he is undercover. As best as he can, Roose poses as a new convert to Christianity. I expected to be offended by Roose's experiences, both by his perspective and by the conservative Liberty culture into which he was entering. Surprisingly, I was captivated by the openness of Roose's retelling of his experience at Liberty University. I walked away with compassion for Roose and respect for Liberty that I did not know before I read this book.

It is important for the reader to understand the point of view of the author. Roose comes from an eclectic and decidedly liberal background. Therefore, his perspective on the Liberty student culture was humorous and consciously from the outside. His experience at Liberty University could be likened to that of most Americans traveling to a foreign culture for the first time. Occasionally, Roose's lack of experience with theology hampers his ability to understand his fellow Liberty students. Insider language and traditions that could be considered the norm for students who have grown up 'churched' become amusing and at times a little sad.

*The Unlikely Disciple* is an easy read for a general audience. Those who naturally read from the author's own perspective would have a much different experience with the book than those who identify with the Liberty University culture, or at least understand it. What is remarkable from both sides is how much Roose was able to take an authentic journey in a culture to which he is not native. Though the passage may have been made under a guise, the ways in which it seemed that Roose was affected were genuine. As a reader, it was easy to become endeared to Roose and his trip through a foreign land.

This book is an important work for any Christian to read. Rarely do you get to see an honest review of day in and day out conservative Christianity. For the Christian reader, this book does pack that kind of value. Likewise, it is pertinent to those of us who are working in higher education. Though our students may not be doing certified research about our universities, it reminds Christian professionals of the larger reality that people are looking at our encounters with Christ to see what we are all about. Roose unintentionally offers an important reminder that we are being watched by people who rightfully and sometimes incorrectly interpret our actions. This book was a veiled call to authenticity to all of us who are ourselves unlikely disciples.

I look forward to reading future books by Kevin Roose. I have a hope yet that his faith journey is not over.

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## **N. Lantinga, (Ed.); Christian Higher Education in the Global Context: Implications for Curriculum, Pedagogy and Administration.**

(Sioux Century, IA: Dordt Press, 2008)

Reviewed by Kevin Kehl, Ed.D.

The emphasis on preparing today's college graduates for the global workplace has found its way into the mission statements, curriculum, and co-curriculum of many institutions in secular as well as Christian higher education. The International Association for the Promotion of Christian Higher Education (IAPCHE) pursued the seemingly daunting task of addressing the role of Christian higher education in the age of globalization in its most recent international conference. Since its inception in 1975, IAPCHE has been dedicated to discussing questions that encourage a desire of lifelong learning. The text reviewed in this article is consistent with the organization's original mission to "confront difficult issues and promote biblically grounded, critical analysis of distortions of the truth in the contemporary world" (Hulst, 2006, p.24).

While the individuals at the first international conference of Christian higher education were primarily drawn together to serve the needs of practitioners and institutions within the Reformed Christian tradition, today the organization's aim is to "serve Jesus as Lord by fostering worldwide, the development of integral Christian higher education through networking and related academic activity" (Hulst, 2006, p. 28).

Presentations given at the seventh International Conference of IAPCHE held in Nicaragua in 2006 have been published by Dordt Press, and are designed to draw Christian higher education practitioners into conversation with the global context within which we find ourselves in the 21st century. The aim of these conversations is to help make the work of preparing students for Christian service in their respective vocations relevant. This is best illustrated through the format of keynote presentations followed by critical, yet thoughtful responses from other experts in the same academic discipline or related content area.

The opening keynote speaker and author of the first chapter contextualizes her own thoughts while she frames the presentations to follow when she says, "Latin American Educators have reiterated that education is an act of love and that it is formed in dialogue between teachers and students with their environment" (Murillo, 2006, p. 13). Presentations and the responses to follow are organized around three questions:

- How does Christian higher education bridge gaps between competing cultures/worldviews?
- What can Christian higher education do to promote educational well-being?
- How does Christian higher education connect kingdom citizenship to specific regional issues and crises? (Murillo, 2006).

These questions help to define and limit the text while openly admitting that it cannot be a comprehensive discussion regarding Christian higher education in a global context.

While there are significant theoretical and practical contributions made in response to each of these questions, their treatment is by no means even or complete. On the other hand, readers may be challenged in their thinking, as presenters and responders engage in difficult discussions that require openness and honesty. One example of this can be seen in Jose Ramon Alcantara-Mejia's (2006) discussion of transculturation the humanities in response to the question of strategies that Christian higher education can use to bridge gaps between competing worldviews. He states, "From a Christian perspective, a globalized Christian higher education cannot follow the economic-imperial model that only legitimizes the Western model. On the contrary, a Christian perspective values and legitimizes other cultural points of view" (Alcantara-Mejia, 2006, p. 109). While these comments deserve additional thought and reflection on what it means to legitimize a particular economic model or cultural point of view, they do serve as a reminder that our policies and practices are often ethnocentric in their orientation.

The implication for professionals in Christian higher education student development is that they must grapple with issues to maximize resources for multicultural and international student services. Facilitating the expression of many other cultures through campus conversations and programming may help to facilitate opportunities for students to be transformed into the likeness of Christ found in other cultures. Practitioners serving Christian higher education in the area of student development might also note that the format of the presentations found in this text serve as a model for dialogue. This is best illustrated in Elisabeth Hulscher's (2006) response to R. Ruard Ganzevoort's presentation on "Teaching Religion in a Pluralistic World." While Ganzevoort (2006) aims at trying to help Christian educators to avoid the extremes of ethnocentrism and religious relativism while living simultaneously among many cultures, Hulscher states that most cultural differences lie deep within individuals at the level of value orientations. Her comments are profound when she states that understanding one's own value orientations as well as the differences of others, is essential if we are to thoughtfully act in response to God's working through us to serve our fellow humans and the world (Hulscher, 2006, p.131). Again, administrators including supervisors and managers might consider the possible positive consequences of leading faculty and staff through readings and other activities that would lead to a greater awareness of value differences among students represented in the institution.

In addition to the important contribution this book makes to the global phenomena of Christian higher education, it also provides some excellent practical suggestions and action steps for promoting Christian higher education in a variety of cultural settings including (but not limited to) specific examples within Africa, Asian, Central America, and North American (learning and serving abroad). These actions could lead to the development of a relevant curriculum, professionally prepared educators and improved management of resources.

Upon a thorough investigation of IAPCHE's history, the authors, and contents found in this book, readers will discover or be reminded that Christian higher education is a worldwide movement. I recommend that administrators, faculty, and especially student development professionals read this book as they take to heart the current impact of diverse cultures on Christian higher education. We would all be well advised to note that what happens in Africa and Asia as well as the Americas will have a growing effect on the development of Christian higher education throughout the world.

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## James M. Kouzes and Barry Z. Posner; *The Student Leadership Challenge: Five Practices for Exemplary Leaders*.

(San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 2008)

Reviewed by Anthony D. Zappasodi

As student development professionals, I believe it is safe to assert that we desire to passionately, knowledgeably, and effectively lead the student groups and organizations for which we are responsible. We spend hours training and mentoring the student leaders with whom many of us work so closely. As semesters stretch into years, an observant eye gathers a few tips and tricks to offer these student leaders, best practices from what has worked well and what has failed miserably in the past. For many of us, it is often difficult to find sufficient time for the professional development that could help provide more than this anecdotal information to help our student leaders increase their leadership skills. If we are able to create this time for some scholarly reading, we often lack the freedom within our schedules to translate this literature into a form relevant to our student leaders. While the heart of such theories may not foundationally change when applied to student populations, the communication styles and points of application for the current generation of college students can be wholly different than those directed to professionals.

James Kouzes and Barry Posner's *The Student Leadership Challenge* helps to fill the gap of relating a tried-and-true model of leadership to today's generation of college students. *The Student Leadership Challenge* is written to student leaders—students who lead students—with the goal of providing the same model of leadership found in Kouzes and Posner's *The Leadership Challenge* in a more college student-friendly package.

As with their model originally developed throughout the 1980s, *The Student Leadership Challenge* contains five practices correlated to exemplary leadership and is based on “personal-best leadership experiences.” For this student version, Kouzes and Posner refocus their original research at student leaders with the help of the *Student Leadership Practices Inventory (SLPI)*. The authors illustrate the five practices by weaving their narrative around many stories of real-life student testimonials that demonstrate the five practices in action. Kouzes and Posner's *Five Practices for Exemplary Leaders*, which were identified through their original research and confirmed with use of the SLPI, are: “Model the Way,” “Inspire a Shared Vision,” “Challenge the Process,” “Enable Others to Act,” and “Encourage the Heart.”

First, “Model the Way” speaks to the process of determining and defining personal values and beliefs in order to set a direction for others to follow. As personal values shape the organizational values, leaders set the example by holding to these core values in both word and deed. A leader's example is seen in how and where resources, time, and attention are spent. Paying careful attention to signals sent to constituents further communicates what is important and thereby allows a leader to more effectively hold constituents responsible for the shared values of the organization.

As the second practice, an exemplary leader “Inspire[s] a Shared Vision” that is based on organizational values. This vision, which should be rooted in relationship with the other members of the organization, encapsulates the possibilities of where the



organization could be in the future. It is also important that this be a shared vision, developed as something that others desire to be associated with, and that helps members of the constituency reach personal goals. Such buy-in will ease the process of enlisting others to the cause. Specifically, communication of purpose, especially with full use of emotions, is critical to enlisting others.

The third practice deals with the change inherent in leadership. Exemplary leaders challenge the status quo while searching for opportunities. While “Challeng[ing] the Process,” ideas for innovation are often found from looking outside of the group. New ideas are appropriately encouraged, and innovation leads to experimentation as mistakes and failures are used to promote learning. As a group or organization grows and changes, it is important for a leader to create a series of smaller, more manageable goals, dividing the larger organizational vision into a series of obtainable, yet challenging, victories for the constituents.

Exemplary leaders use the fourth practice, “Enable Others to Act,” by establishing trust, listening to others, fostering collaboration, and strengthening others. A leader recognizes that a title or position does not make him or her more important than anyone else within the organization; trust leads to action. Providing others with the opportunity to use their discretion within a structure of accountability creates ownership. Similarly, sharing knowledge, information, skills, and resources stimulates confidence.

The final practice of exemplary leaders is to “Encourage the Heart.” Kouzes and Posner are quick to distinguish that this is not the last step of a process, but rather a practice that should be ongoing throughout the day-to-day operations of the organization. With expectations set high to bring out the best from the organizational members, a leader should regularly recognize contributions. Encouraging positive feedback communicates to a constituency that the leader cares about the group members and values their effort. This furthers the trust relationship and spurs members to give their all. Beyond personal encouragement, it is important to also celebrate as a group. Group ceremonies and celebrations are opportunities to renew commitments and reinforce specific behaviors that enhance group values.

Kouzes and Posner’s model is written in light of several basic assumptions. Primarily the authors approach the subject from the viewpoint that leadership is learned. This assumption implies that leadership is a behavior that anyone can do, and upon which can be improved. This leads into the second assumption that leadership development is primarily self development. The authors assert that as leaders discover and define what they care about and value, they strengthen their ability to lead others. Finally, Kouzes and Posner emphasize that leadership is not about a position or title; leadership is the responsibility of everyone. Exemplary leadership is foundationally rooted in relationships, and not exclusively within a top-down structure. The authors assert that a leader establishes credibility through such relationships by means of his or her actions.

As this text is essentially a rewrite of their original work, Kouzes and Posner provide students with a more palatable version of their established leadership model. At less than half of the length of the original work, *The Student Leadership Challenge* is one that students should find as an easily manageable read with to-the-point payoffs.

While this composition is not a revolutionary way to look at leadership, the packaging is such to create a valuable tool for our student leaders. With sections for reflection following the explanation of each practice, student leaders will be on their way to discovering and defining personal values, leadership aspirations, and leadership styles.

The one item of disappointment that I have with Kouzes and Posner's work is within their assumptions. The authors stress the importance of a leader's credibility that is derived from his or her actions, but Kouzes and Posner fail to mention personal motivation or character. If the Love within us makes a difference, then our actions should be a manifestation of that Love. In this case actions may be the tangible measurement of the soul. However, for followers of Christ, the driving factor of credibility should not point back to self, but in the end, should point to the Love that really makes a difference.

In general, I would recommend this book to student leaders. As a book for personal study, I would hope for more in-depth exploration of several topics within the text, but in fairness, this book is aimed at student leaders, not professional staff who lead students. With the interactive sections in the book, this could be a good tool for use as a part of student leadership training or as part of a leadership development course or seminar.

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## **M. Fullan & Geoff Scott; Turnaround Leadership for Higher Education.** (San Francisco, CA: Jossey Bass, 2009)

Reviewed by Chris Abrams

“While academia is slow to adopt change in any form, university leaders are under tremendous pressure to institute change on their campuses in order to keep pace with rapidly evolving conditions. Change leaders at all levels of the university need to grapple with both the content and the process of change” (Fullan & Scott, 2009, inside flap).

In *Turnaround Leadership for Higher Education*, Michael Fullan and Geoff Scott attempt to explain how leaders in the academy can meet the ever-changing needs of higher education. *Turnaround Leadership for Higher Education* is the second “turnaround” book by Michael Fullan. In 2006, he authored a book simply entitled *Turnaround Leadership*, in which he focused on the leadership needs of traditional K-12 education. In *Turnaround Leadership for Higher Education*, the authors endeavor to explain how current leadership and the readiness of a culture to change at any given institution must mirror each other in order to bring about the type of change that will ultimately aid the institution.

Fullan and Scott’s text is divided into seven chapters, each of which examines the challenges facing the modern university in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, the failed strategies for change of the past, a new agenda of change, building quality and capacity, leadership capacity, leadership selection, and finishing with their move from “ready, ready, ready” to “lead, lead, lead.”

According to Fullan and Scott, the challenges that face the university in the 21<sup>st</sup> century are the opening of access, changes in funding and pressure to generate new sources of revenue, the export market and new growing competition, user pay and changing patterns of participation, the changing expectations of students, and growing diversity while maintaining standards.

After discussing the challenges that face higher education, Fullan and Scott explore strategies that have failed in the past. According to the authors, the majority of the failures of the past can be linked to the unwillingness of the academy to change. Discussed in the section is the academy’s tendency to spend all of its time talking and never getting around to doing. The authors state approximately six reasons why the academy is “change averse,” including inefficiency, poor decision making, disengagement from the core purposes of the institution, unresponsiveness, unclear accountability, unaligned structure and process, unproductive planning and review, too little focus on implementation, poor leadership, underdeveloped quality management systems, unclear standards and new focus on outcomes.

Next, *Turnaround Leadership* explores their new agenda. According to Fullan and Scott their new agenda can be boiled down to four overarching areas: 1) practical reasoning or a more integrated conception of the role of knowledge that combines collaborative engagement with real world issues, analysis, and application, 2) putting teaching and learning at the center of the traditional triumvirate of research, teaching, and university engagement and service, 3) turning inquiry on itself to establish quality processes, data, and implementation, and 4) building and corresponding leadership

capacity based theory and knowledge” (Fullan and Scott, 2009, p. 43). According to these two gentlemen, if higher education is to meet the needs of a changing higher education population as addressed earlier, it will need to adopt their new agenda.

In Chapter 4, Fullan and Scott address how to implement change. According to the authors, there are 12 elements of a change-capable university. A change-capable university:

- is undefensive
- is evidence based
- sets priorities
- can make hard decisions
- makes clear who is responsible for each role within the institution
- acknowledges that all staff have a role to play
- is outcomes focused
- only uses complex, hierarchical systems when necessary
- makes sure all meetings are justified
- operates in a responsive, collaborative, team-based, and focused fashion
- trials improvement strategies in controlled conditions
- is strategically networked

Fullan and Scott believe that through these elements, institutions can more easily facilitate change.

The authors then turn their focus to the leader, how the turnaround leader goes about leading, and the characteristics required to be a change agent within higher education. They state that turnaround leaders listen, link, lead and/or model, teach, and learn, and that possess multiple types of competencies and capabilities. The authors address competencies as both role-specific and generic, and capabilities as personal, interpersonal, and cognitive. According to Fullan and Scott, the greatest probability for turnaround leadership exists where these characteristics intersect.

In Chapters 6 and 7, the authors make a case for how to select leaders who have the capacity for change and how to train those leaders so they can meet their fullest leadership potential. The authors conclude by debunking many of the myths of leadership in higher education and restating society’s needs for strong higher education and higher education’s need for a learned society.

*Turnaround Leadership* is one more note in a symphony of books, journal articles, and presentations on the need for change and stronger leadership in higher education. Like many before them, Fullan and Scott do an excellent job explaining to the academy that without change, failure is eminent. They also offer some well researched and articulated ways to bring about change in higher education.

However, Fullan and Scott are both members of large institutions of higher education: the University of Toronto in Toronto, Canada, and the University of Western Sydney in Sydney, Australia. Are their strategies one size fits all? The University of Toronto serves more than 50,000 students where the average CCCU institution serves 1,100 students. Does denominational affiliation have something to say about how leaders effect change at a CCCU institution? At Malone University, the institution where I serve, the Friends/Quaker tradition compels us to strive for consensus and operate with corporate leadership. Does that fit into Fullan and Scott’s findings? I am not sure that

Fullan and Scott's examinations of leadership and change have looked beyond the types of institutions they represent.

Secondly, like many before them, Fullan and Scott do not ask the primary question around the changing higher education landscape: What is the purpose of higher education? Will Fullan and Scott's ideas help the academy meet its purpose? It will if change is the goal, if growth is the goal, if more people receiving degrees is the goal, if generating new revenue is the goal, or if beating the competition is the goal. But are these the goals? No one would argue the importance of these elements; we all know institutions need financial resources to survive. However, until we answer the purpose question, it is difficult to know if the proposals offered by Fullan and Scott are what is needed in higher education. Nevertheless, in addressing their challenges for the 21<sup>st</sup> century, Fullan and Scott do an excellent job and their text should be viewed as an important work for future conversations about change in the academy.

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## **Publications Policy**

*Growth: The Journal of the Association for Christians in Student Development*

All articles should be consistent with the Doctrinal Statement, Article III of the Constitution and By-Laws of the Association for Christians in Student Development.

Material in the following categories will be considered for publication:

1. Research articles that have relevance to the field of Christian Student Development.
2. Theoretical or applied articles that have relevance to the field of Christian Student Development.
3. Research, theoretical or applied articles dealing with the integration of faith and learning within the field of Christian Student Development or within the broader field of Christian Higher Education as a whole.
4. Reviews of articles in other journals relevant to Christian Student Development.
5. Reviews of books relevant to Christian Student Development practice.
6. Reactions to current or past journal articles.

## **Submission Guidelines**

Authors submitting a manuscript should:

1. Send an electronic copy (double-spaced) in either a PDF format or Word document only, to Skip Trudeau, Co-Editor of *Growth: The Journal of the Association for Christians in Student Development*, Taylor University, 236 West Reade Ave., Upland, IN, 46989-1001.
2. Follow the guidelines on format, style and submission procedure provided in the Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association (5th ed.).
3. Manuscripts should adhere to the following length parameters:
  - 10-15 pages for original research articles
  - 7-10 pages for applied research articles
  - 3-4 pages for article reviews
  - 3-4 pages for book reviews
4. Avoid submitting manuscripts which have been previously published or that are being considered for publication in other journals. If an article has been rejected by another journal it may then be submitted to *Growth*.
5. Include an abstract of no more than 150 words on a separate sheet of paper.
6. Include the current vita information for each author: address, title, degree(s) and institutions where earned and specializations.
7. Include telephone number, fax number and electronic mail address.

All submitted manuscripts will be promptly acknowledged and processed in a timely fashion. The review process generally requires a minimum of three months.