

# GROWTH

The Journal of the Association for Christians in Student Development

Dear Readers:

Welcome to the seventh issue of *Growth: The Journal of the Association for Christians in Student Development*. In this issue you will find four feature articles. Two of these present very noteworthy original research and a third article is a timely and useful meta-analysis of research literature concerning millennial generation students. The fourth piece, a reprint of a chapter from the landmark book, *Student affairs reconsidered: A Christian view of the profession and its contexts*, recalls the milestone in Christian higher educational scholarship that the publication of this work represented. In commemoration of the anniversary of this significant work, ACSD President, Barry Loy, offers a reflection on “how we are doing” ten years later. Finally, the book review section contains ten reviews of recently published books and an essay analysis on “Identity, vocation, and calling” by Dr. Roger Wessel.

We want to acknowledge two people for their assistance in making this issue possible. Special thanks go to Steve Christensen for his service as Layout and Design Editor and to Todd Ream who has done another superb job this year as the Book Review Editor. These two individuals have put many long hours into helping the Editorial Board to put this issue together and without their assistance this publication would not have been possible.

We also wanted to update you on some exciting new developments for upcoming issues of *Growth*. As you have no doubt noticed, the 2007 edition is coming out later this year. In the past the journal has been distributed in conjunction with the ACSD annual conference. Last spring a consultant group was convened to develop strategies to advance scholarship within ACSD. *Growth* was the primary topic of discussion and this group recommended a variety of structural and programmatic improvements. The ACSD Executive Committee adopted these recommendations at its June meeting and are currently in the process of implementing them. As you will see, this issue of *Growth* already reflects some of these changes.

*Continue* ➔

The two most immediate modifications are the distribution timetable and the organizational structure of the editorial staff. The journals will now be distributed during November of each academic year. The working group was concerned that a conference time distribution obscured the impact of the journal. The editors are hopeful that having *Growth* delivered in the fall will increase the readership and usage of the information contained in the journal. The editorial staff is expanding substantially. In addition to the general editor's role the following persons will be serving as content area editors.

Foundations—Jason Morris, Abilene Christian University

Leadership and Professional Development—Tim Herrmann and Skip Trudeau,  
Taylor University

Student Culture—Don Opitz, Geneva College

Student Learning and Assessment—Eileen Hulme, Azusa Pacific University

Spiritual Formation—Steve Beers, John Brown University

Diversity and Globalization—Brad Lau, George Fox University

Each of these individuals will be responsible for soliciting and encouraging manuscripts associated with their respective areas. We are confident that this new structure will enhance the quality and content of original research within the association.

We especially want to encourage you, the reader, to consider submitting manuscripts for consideration for the next issue of *Growth*, which will be published in the fall of 2008. Publication guidelines are included in this issue on page 84. 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 an article.

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

Sincerely,

Skip Trudeau, Co-Editor

Tim Herrmann, Co-Editor

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# Christian Higher Education and Christian Student Affairs

by David S. Guthrie

## Introduction

The following essay is a reprint of a chapter authored by Dr. David Guthrie found in the book, *Student Affairs Reconsidered: A Christian View of the Profession and its Contexts* (David S. Guthrie ed.). This groundbreaking work published in 1997 represented what many would consider the first major piece of scholarship of its kind produced by members of the Association for Christians in Student Development (ACSD). This particular chapter, “Christian Higher Education and Christian Student Affairs” was significantly provocative in its challenge for student affairs professionals to consider their roles as educators in a “wisdom development” model of educational practice. The editors of *Growth* are grateful to Donna Romanowski of the Calvin Center for Christian Scholarship for permission to reprint this chapter for this edition of the journal. It is followed by a ten year reflection of how this landmark scholarship has impacted the membership of ACSD by the organizations president, Barry Loy.

As stated in the previous chapter, the principles of student learning and the purpose of student learning that we have offered to this point are ostensibly instructive for more than Christian colleges alone. That is, an institution does not have to be a Christian college to define its religious commitments clearly and, based on them, provide a multidimensional, integrated, communal, process-oriented, wisdom-focused student learning experience. Indeed, some institutions currently do so.

At the same time, we believe that the preceding principles and purpose of student learning resonate with a Christian view of life. That more Christian colleges do not frame student learning according to these principles and purpose therefore particularly curious. Perhaps it is the case that other Christian perspectives logically permit a student learning enterprise that is unidimensional, fragmented, individualistic, prescribed, and/or in pursuit of outcomes other than the cultivation of wisdom. Or, perhaps it is the case that some Christian colleges have simply struggled to connect Christian assumptions with the educational experience, opting instead for a Christian faith that is “privately engaging, but socially [and educationally] irrelevant” (Guinness, 1983). Whatever the reason, we wish to incite discussion not only about principles of student learning that are based on a Christian view but also about how these principles may be implemented Christianly in Christian colleges. In effect, we want to be more specific regarding how Christian educators may appropriate wisdom-focused student learning in Christian institutions. In this chapter, therefore, we offer several general comments about Christian student learning that may assist Christian colleges in renorming and restructuring (Richardson, 1971; Mohrman, et al., 1989) their student learning projects. We also provide three suggestions that may help guide the efforts of Christian student affairs professionals.

## Christian Higher Education

We suggest that learning is a normative activity. By normative we simply mean that God intended learning as a good process that reflects part of what it means to function as human beings created *imago dei*. God meant for humans to learn; God's design was that learning would be a delightful capacity for humans to possess. Our Christian view pictures God creating humans to be wholly good, and part of what made humans so good was that God provided for them to be learners. We highlight this point because we are aware that, in some Christian circles, learning may be viewed with considerable suspicion as an instrument of evil. Those embracing this view may point to literature that indicates that colleges – even Christian colleges – are secularizing influences on students (Astin, 1993; Hunter, 1987).

We reject “the-more-you-learn-the-less-holy-you-become” approach in favor of the view that God created humans to be learners. We do recognize, however, that human learning can honor or dishonor God. Because our Christian view also underscores humans’ disregard of God’s provisions for life, we readily acknowledge the effects of such disregard on humans as they go about learning. Although God created humans to be learners, the result of human autonomy *viz-a-viz* God is that why, what, and how they learn may not conform to God’s designs for learning.

The significance of our Christian worldview for student learning is that unrequited learning is not the final word. Rather, the life and work of Jesus is the final Word. Jesus’ redemptive act recovers humans’ ability to learn in ways that conform to what God initially had in mind when God created humans as learners. For those involved in a college’s learning leadership – both faculty members and student affairs administrators – who are also committed to a Christian view of life, the very nature of our efforts becomes that of designing an integrated curriculum of in-class and out-of-class initiatives that will help students uncover what was envisioned when, with delight, God created them as learners. Although Christians will never get it completely right, they are obliged to remember, discern, and explore with diligences and “frolic” (Long, 1992, p. 62).

Although we have attempted to make references in the previous chapter as to how Christian colleges may interpret the purpose of student learning, several further observations are warranted. First, given the inherently religious nature of student learning, Christian colleges should strive to provide student learning Christianly with respect both to content issues and to organizational structures. This is simply to underscore the idea that neither the content of student learning nor the systems that undergird it are neutral. For example, for a Christian college simply to install the formal curriculum of a state university as its own is inappropriate. Much care must be taken regarding what, how and why various subjects comprise the in-class curriculum of a Christian institution. Similarly, organizational issues such as conduct codes, faculty reward structures, student discipline procedures, graduation requirements, and the like should be intentional, thoughtful byproducts of the Christian beliefs that guide a Christian college. This is not to say that good ideas about student learning – ideas that are consistent with a Christian view of reality – are the exclusive domain of Christian educators. To be sure, many who are not Christian believers have ideas about student learning that are Christian if you will – that is, they make sense within a

Christian worldview. Our point here is simply to highlight that the learning leadership of Christian colleges must work to produce and sustain student learning projects for which they can make apology based on their Christian perspective.

Second, Christian colleges must take care to promote multidimensional student learning. Christian colleges, to our mind, must not merely be colleges with chapel programs, theology departments, and dorm Bible studies; likewise, they must not merely be church camps where students also have to read some books and take several tests before departing. Each aspect of the student learning experience – whether cognitive, psychosocial, vocational, or moral – not only must find proper expression in the Christian college but also must be accepted and honored as a legitimate component of student learning by the institution's learning leadership.

Third, a univocal student learning experience should be a hallmark of Christian college education. At a time in which many colleges and universities lack educational coherence – both intradivisionally as well as interdivisionally – Christian colleges can distinguish themselves by providing student learning experiences that hold together. In-class and out-of-class learning coordination must not only occur in Christian colleges but these respective programs must also be complementary. Moreover, perhaps the time has come to discard the traditional organizational structures – academic division and student life division – in favor of a unified, collaborative student learning division in which both those who perform the majority of their work inside the classroom and those who perform the majority of their work outside of the classroom collaborate willingly and enthusiastically as a matter of course (Brown, 1990).

Fourth, there is no room for self-aggrandizing autonomy in the Christian college. The professor who is solely interested in her work, the student whose only concern is his career, and the student life professional who makes no effort to enjoy his faculty colleagues are misfits in a Christian college; for, at the Christian college, and an understanding of the community aspect of student learning should enjoy its richest expression. This is not to say that Christian college faculty, staff, and students cannot perform tasks individually or must always act like one big happy family. We simply wish to emphasize that, by virtue of the fact that Christians ultimately view one another as image bearers of God, they enter the learning project with a particular obligation to view and embrace others as valuable contributors to their learning and vice versa.

Finally, Christian colleges may do well to view student learning as part of the process of sanctification. Learning is surely a process. At a Christian college, however, the student learning process takes on a particular significance. There students are introduced to ideas, people, experiences, events and the like, such that they will begin to develop ways of thinking, acting, questioning, and living that are, in the truest sense of the term, godly. This is what wisdom development is all about from a Christian point of view. Willimon (1995, p. 55) offers:

*We are not calling [students] back to something they have previously known but have now forgotten; we are not attempting to open up the closed-minded provincialism of their childhood years; we are not providing cautious Christian nurture for youth who, having been raised in a Christian culture, now need a little spiritual nudge to cultivate the best that is within them. We are taking people to places they have never been, calling them to become part of a*

*countercultural adventure called discipleship, showing them how to perceive the world through a startling perspective called the gospel and adopting them into a new home called the church.*

Stated another way, student learning at a Christian college takes shape around the process of students' further developing frameworks of understanding that not only will be sufficient for orienting their lives but will enable them to engage life for life in a way that will honor God (Garber, 1994). As such, attending a Christian college may contribute to one's sanctification, particularly in the realms of thinking Christianly and in faithfully relating what one learns to what one does.

## **The Marks of Christian Student Learning**

One of the principle questions that we frequently returned to in this project was: "How might student learning look if it was done right from our [Christian] point of view?" We were particularly admonished to address this issue in response to Boyer's (1990, p. 283) thoughtful comments:

*At a time in life when values should be shaped and personal priorities sharply probed, what a tragedy it would be if the most deeply felt issues, the most haunting questions, the most creative moments were pushed to the fringes of our institutional life. What a monumental mistake it would be if students, during the undergraduate years, remained trapped within the organizational grooves and narrow routines to which the academic world sometimes seems excessively devoted.*

Therefore, we thought it fitting to relay brief "signs and traces" (Adelman, 1989) of Christian student learning that emerged in our conversations. Some of us preferred to think of student learning that is Christianly enacted as making connections, of linking learning and experience, knowing and doing, thought and deed (Hutchings & Wutzdorff, 1988; Kolb, 1984). Others liked the idea of learning, made popular by Bellah et al. (1985; 1987), as that which resists "the gravitational pull of privatization" (Palmer, 1990, p. 148) and hones commitment, engagement, and service to other persons as well as to public life. Others championed a biblical notion of maturity as an identifying mark of Christian student learning, meaning that educators assist students in developing into the persons – cognitively, emotionally, relationally, culturally, and so on – that God intends them to be. Still others spoke of right learning as that which inspires students to love or care for those things that God loves or cares for (Holmes, 1991), borrowing from Postman's (1993) recent idea that proper education develops "loving resistance fighters."

The common, identifiable strain that seemed to echo loudly among us was that Christian higher education is about enlivening and equipping students to participate in a "restoration project" (Plantinga, 1990, p. 3). This restoration project involves preparing students with the knowledge, skills, and tendencies (Wolterstorff, 1980) that are necessary in framing and living their personal and civic lives in ways that reflect their

ultimate commitments to God. In this sense, college is “a staging ground for action” since the goal is to help students make connections between “what they learn and how they [will] live” (Boyer, 1990, p. 54), such that God may be pleased by their efforts. Perhaps Brueggemann (1982, p. 89) sums it up best when he states: “Education consists in teaching our young to sing doxologies” to God for and in all areas of our earthly lives.

## **Christian Student Affairs**

Student Affairs professionals at Christian colleges face many of the same issues and pressures (e.g., marginalization, partnership in student learning) that confront their counterparts at nonsectarian institutions. In addition, they wrestle with how their Christian faith comes to bear in day-to-day practice. In this section, we suggest three guidelines to assist Christian student affairs professionals in their efforts.

### **Student Affairs as Legitimate Vocation**

From a Christian point of view, work of all kinds is legitimate activity. That is, God intends humans to labor in various and sundry tasks – including the student affairs profession. In contrast to those who may consider work a necessary evil, a Christian perspective suggests that humans are commanded to imitate God by laboring creatively as nurses, plumbers, residence hall directors, pastors, accountants, and so on. Realizing that God calls persons to their tasks provides a significant and compelling rationale for Christians who are involved in student affairs roles to consider their work as eminently purposeful.

In addition, because God has imbued work with such purpose, Christians employed as student affairs professionals do their work “on purpose.” They do their work intentionally, freely admitting that they possess an agenda. Working with college students for God’s sake, if you will, demands that the planning and executing of their work be accomplished with particular goals or outcomes in view; not just any goals or outcomes will do. Creating student affairs functions and programs for their own sake is inappropriate. While such an approach may keep student affairs professionals busy, it ignores the religious nature of their work. That is, Christian student affairs practitioners must consider as their unique task exploring and uncovering goals and practices of work – for residence life initiatives, disciplinary procedures, orientation programs, personal and career counseling, and so on – that reflect their allegiance to a Christian view of reality. Although we acknowledge that aspects of various educational theories and programs may resonate with biblical principles, it should never be the custom of Christian student affairs professionals to imitate contemporary thinking and practice without serious reflection and analysis from a Christian point of view. Moreover, as we stated earlier, perhaps a Christian view of student learning necessitates moving away from rote fulfillment of the typical functions of the profession in favor of investigating more integrated approaches to organizing and executing student learning initiatives and procedures while not ignoring particular tasks that still must occur.



## Student Affairs As Contextualized Endeavor

At the outset of the previous chapter, we stated that the work of student affairs practitioners must be viewed in the context of student learning and, subsequently, went on to explain what we mean by student learning. We now reiterate this vital point for student affairs professionals in Christian colleges. The efforts of student affairs staff in a Christian college must occur within the framework of wisdom-focused student learning that is shaped by a Christian view of reality. This has several important ramifications for those employed as student affairs professionals at Christian colleges. First, their job is to help students learn. We recognize that this view may conflict with the current self-emphasis of some Christian student affairs professionals as well as the present roles that others within the Christian academy typically ascribe to them. We contend, however, that although their efforts most often occur outside the classroom, the programs, interventions, role modeling, and services that student affairs professionals at Christian institutions provide must be educational. Moreover, since education is never undertaken neutrally, the learning opportunities that student affairs practitioners at Christian colleges offer must also reflect their religious commitments as Christians. Dalton (1993, p. 88) summarizes this underlying principle succinctly:

*The central issue for student affairs leaders, therefore, is not whether they should advocate certain essential values but which values should be advocated and how these values can be advocated in a clear and intentional manner [emphases his].*

Because student learning takes shape around the ultimate beliefs of individuals and institutions, it is incumbent upon student affairs professionals at Christian colleges not only to view and enact their work as contributing to student learning but also to do so in ways consistent with their Christian beliefs.

A second consideration, related to the first, is that student affairs professionals at Christian colleges must help students develop wisdom that corresponds with a Christian view of life. The idea that wisdom is the goal of student learning is as important to student affairs professionals as it is to faculty members. Our impression is that some believe professors to be the wisdom producers and student affairs staff to be the trouble preventers; the notion that faculty members are the real educators that student affairs professionals as “wise friends” (Willimon, 1993, p. 1018) who help students develop wisdom. As regards student affairs practitioners in Christian institutions, we suggest a strengthened resolve to frame their efforts as those who are assisting students become more wise in conformity to Christian intentions for such wisdom, irrespective of whether these efforts occur in a residence life program, discipline hearing, service-learning project, dining hall conversation, diversity seminar, or movie discussion.

Third, student affairs at Christian colleges should be multidimensional. We sense that student affairs professionals at Christian colleges may tend to construe their efforts as ministry. That is, they provide Bible studies, hymn sings, prayer groups, missions excursion, fellowship groups, volunteer programs, moral encouragement and correction, and servant role modeling. While we do not deny the appropriateness of these endeavors, it is mistaken to believe that this is what constitutes and distinguishes

student affairs at Christian colleges. In contrast to this approach, we believe that student affairs practitioners at Christian colleges must be fully engaged in helping students come to terms with emotional, physical, relational, cognitive, vocational, civic, ecclesiastical, aesthetic, and moral issues – in short, with life – from a Christian point of view. What distinguishes student affairs at Christian colleges is not limiting the scope of out-of-class programs to those determined to decidedly spiritual, but is rather providing multidimensionalized out-of-class initiatives for and with students, all of which are interpreted through a Christian lens.

Fourth, student affairs professionals at Christian colleges must help students make connections among classroom lectures, out-of-classroom involvements, and personal choices. As such, they function as integrators of students' learning experiences (Garland & Grace, 1993) – they help students weld lectures on biomedical ethics with an internship experience in a local hospital; they encourage students to connect service learning experiences with vocational decisions; they assist students in making sense of individual giftedness and choice of major; they challenge students to apply principles of journalism garnered in class to the production of a campus weekly; and the list goes on. This connecting of knowing and doing, this integrating of components that comprise student learning in college simply makes sense within a Christian view of education. And, although we believe that faculty members at Christian institutions should also assist student in establishing such connections, student affairs practitioners may play a critical role in this endeavor by virtue of their frequent, informal contact with students.

This leads us to a fifth consideration for student affairs professionals at Christian colleges, namely that they should exploit ways to foster a coherent, univocal curriculum with other institutional colleagues, particularly faculty members. This means that student affairs practitioners and faculty members should not only communicate regularly regarding their respective efforts, but should also plan and enact learning initiatives, both in-class and out-of-class, conjointly involving each other in consulting and strategizing, collaborating on research projects pertinent to student learning, and exhorting one another to do their work as to the Lord and on behalf of students. Among professionals in the field writ large, Christian student affairs staff should understand the necessity, importance, and benefit of a communal approach to wisdom-focused student learning. Rather than perpetuate, by design or default, a noncommunal educational approach, student affairs professionals at Christian colleges must press the issue of communally achieved coherent learning.

Finally, Christian student affairs professionals must understand the incompleteness of their efforts. Realizing that learning is processual, that growing in wisdom is a lifelong undertaking, and that helping students become biblically wise thinkers and doers does not eventuate after four years of undergraduate learning may be readily admitted but not nearly so easily accepted. Student affairs educators – including and perhaps especially those who are Christian – earnestly desire to believe that their theories of adolescent development are salient, that their educational programs work, and that their interventions and modeling produce appropriate effects. And they do – sometimes partially, and with some students more than others. Consequently, Christian student affairs professionals do well to accept the limitations of the various educational techniques that comprise their efforts and the naturalness and complexity of the already-but-not-yetness of the learning process as it unfolds unevenly, perhaps in fits and starts, in students' college experiences.

## Student Affairs as Ordinary Service

In our zeal to challenge student affairs professionals at Christian colleges to define and shape their work in the context of wisdom-focused student learning that is based on Christian moorings, we do not want to minimize the importance of understanding student affairs as ordinary service. After all the dust settles in the thoughtful pursuit of student learning initiatives that reflect their biblical commitments, Christian student affairs professionals must continue to distribute room keys, help students pack and unpack, and provide them with seemingly mundane, if not trivial, information about drop-add deadlines, linen pick-up, quiet hours, and student-organization reimbursement procedures. We suggest that these tasks and others like them are not insignificant undertakings. Rather, student affairs staff at Christian colleges must view them as opportunities to fulfill their callings not only as professionals but as humble servants of God and persons as well. In an effort to help students learn and grow in wisdom in ways that conform to biblical patterns, student affairs practitioners at Christian colleges must not neglect their obligations simply to serve students.

## Conclusion

That some colleges and student affairs professionals do not emphasize student learning, are not consciously aware of or are self-deceived by their ultimate commitments, pay scant attention to connecting beliefs and practices, and function with more than on curriculum are all readily apparent observations. To these realities, however, we add one more: students learn in college. In fact, through both in-class and out-of-class experiences, they may learn that college is not about learning; they may learn that college is not about coming to terms with their own beliefs, commitments, and perspectives – Christian or otherwise; they may learn that institutional mission statements are virtually irrelevant to institutional learning practices; and, they may learn that academic affairs and student affairs divisions have competing agendas. We wish that such learning did not occur; we particularly lament that learning of this sort occurs on Christian college campuses. Perhaps it is precisely because students may learn in these ways that our work as Christian educators is imbued with such critical importance – namely, to offer an alternative way to experience learning in formal classrooms, through student initiatives, and in college coffee shops. To that end, we hope that, in some small way, this book will engage Christian colleges and Christian student affairs practitioners (and perhaps other colleges and student affairs staff), to champion student learning as their primary concern, and to create a coherent, univocal curriculum of wisdom-focused student learning that is the intentional byproduct of their fundamental [Christian] beliefs about life. Then, perhaps the hope expressed so clearly by Long (1992, p. 221) may become more manifest:

*Learning belongs to the leavening and sensitizing dimensions of public life. It is at its best when it enlarges horizons, magnifies the capacity for empathy, commends the importance of dialog, and recommits us to search for life in working viability with others and with an awareness of that which individuals and groups experience as a ground for their most essential being. The importance of practicing the life of learning in that way in the company of a committed guild will never be outdated.*

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# Student Affairs Reconsidered: A Look Back

by Barry Loy

This year marks the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the publication of *Student Affairs Reconsidered: A Christian View of the Profession and its Contexts* (Guthrie, 1998) - the only endeavor by a group of Christians (8 ACSD members) to produce a distinctively Christian perspective on the profession of student development. The book was written during the last major upheaval of the profession – a time when many within the larger student affairs arena were beginning to question “human development” as the guiding paradigm for student affairs professionals. The acceptance, by in large, of *Reform in Student Affairs* (Bloland, Stamatakos, & Rogers, 1994) and the *Student Learning Imperative (SLI)* (ACPA, 1994) turned student development scholars and practitioners toward the concept of “student learning” and most recently culminated in the publication of *Learning Reconsidered: A Campus-Wide Focus on the Student Experience* (Keeling, 2004) and *Learning Reconsidered 2: Implementing a Campus-Wide Focus on the Student Experience* (Keeling, 2006). Both are monographs that encourage the utilization of campus resources to maximize student learning – the first is primarily descriptive and the second provides a blueprint for action.

Another important document with close ties to the *SLI* and appearing the same year as *Student Affairs Reconsidered* is *Principles of Good Practice for Student Affairs* (ACPA & NASPA, 1997) – a joint effort by ACPA and NASPA to take the *SLI* to a higher level by suggesting learning-oriented principles for those working in student affairs.

While *Student Affairs Reconsidered* gained some attention from the larger profession, receiving positive reviews in the *Journal of College Student Development* and the *Journal of Higher Education*, not surprisingly, given its Christian worldview, it never reached the audiences garnered by the *Student Learning Imperative*. It did, however, champion student learning as the primary focus for the student affairs professional, as did the *SLI*; albeit, with a distinctive Christian slant.

What influence, if any, did *Student Affairs Reconsidered* have on the student affairs profession? More specifically, did it inspire ACSD members to work toward creating “a coherent, univocal curriculum of wisdom-focused student learning that is the intentional byproduct of their fundamental [Christian] beliefs about life”? (Guthrie, 1997 b, p. 74) A related question, and perhaps a little easier to answer is, what impact has the “student learning” movement had on the members of ACSD? In an attempt to shed some light on these questions, I looked for clues within ACSD publications (Growth and Koinonia) and recorded the most pertinent evidence below.

## *A Preliminary Manifesto for Christian Student Affairs Practitioners* (Guthrie, 1998)

In the winter, 1998 issue of *Koinonia*, David Guthrie lamented the lack of a Christian voice in the national discussion on the merits of student learning as a new guiding paradigm for student development.

Later in 1998 in his keynote address at the ACSD annual conference at Calvin College, Guthrie reiterated this sentiment when he stated, “ACSD has been silent on the

student learning conversations within the profession, personally and organizationally” (Guthrie, 1998). He also added that “the book, *Student Affairs Reconsidered: A Christian View of the Profession and Its Contexts*, has provoked relatively little conversation, has generated even less usage, and some—maybe many—aren’t even aware of its existence, despite the fact that it’s written by eight ACSD members” (Guthrie, 1998).

*Collaboration: Putting Student Learning Theory into Practice*  
(Trudeau and Johnson, 1998)

Trudeau and Johnson (1998) demonstrated great esteem for *Student Affairs Reconsidered* when they chose it along with the *SLI* as foundational documents for defining student learning theory. They referred to the *SLI* and *Student Affairs Reconsidered* as “seminal” works and used them to provide a basis to argue for increased collaboration between faculty and student affairs.

*ACSD: Past, Present, and Future* (Loy & Trudeau, 2000)

In a *Koinonia* article written as a lead up to the twentieth anniversary celebration of ACSD, Loy and Trudeau (2000) identified *Student Affairs Reconsidered* as the first significant effort by members of ACSD to put in writing some serious thoughts about the Christian faith and the work of student affairs professionals. They also viewed this work as part of ACSD’s contribution toward the wider conversation regarding student learning - “unlike twenty years ago when ACSD simply adopted the prevailing secular view of the day, there has been a movement of ACSD professionals to develop a uniquely Christian perspective” (Loy & Trudeau, 2000, p. 5).

*The State of Christian Student Affairs* (2001)

In *Growth* (2001) Trudeau, Carpenter, Friesen, and Herrmann, using a SWOT analysis approach, provided a thoughtful commentary on “The State of Christian Student Development”. Using *Student Affairs Reconsidered* and other student learning literature as a foundation, their analysis pointed to both weaknesses and opportunities related to “student learning” and “wisdom development”. The authors described the lack of collaboration between student affairs professionals and faculty members in the pursuit of student learning as an enduring and historical weakness. Conversely, they viewed this “weakness” as an important opportunity given the shift in pedagogy away from traditional lecture based teaching to student-centered approaches - the time was ripe for student affairs practitioners to join with faculty members to improve student learning in and out of the classroom. However, the authors pointed to a corresponding “threat” that could impede “student learning” at Christian campuses – that given strained resources, many student development offices “are forced to focus on providing basic services rather than on the more esoteric application of theory” (Trudeau, Carpenter, Friesen, & Hermann, 2001, p. 12).

### *A Report Card for Christian College Student Affairs* (Guthrie, 2001)

In the inaugural edition of *Growth*, David Guthrie, responding to a request from the editors, evaluated, using *Principles of Good Practice in Student Affairs* as a measurement tool, the state of “Christian College Student Affairs”. In his section on student learning, he voiced his concern that Christian College Student Affairs programs are “still wrestling with what it means to undertake their efforts under the banner of student learning” (Guthrie, 2001, p. 28). Guthrie (2001) went on to express his belief that given job demands and the traditional “ministry” orientation of Christian student affairs professionals, it would be tempting for staff to continue operating without linking student affairs programs to the educational outcomes of their institutions. He closed the section with a quote from *Student Affairs Reconsidered*.

*... Student learning must be the purpose around which student affairs staff construct and implement their efforts. Residence life programs, student organization activities, disciplinary proceedings, orientation programs, volunteer projects – in short, all those initiatives typically administered by student affairs professionals – must have student learning as their goal (Guthrie, 2001 p. 28)*

### *In Search of the Seamless Curriculum* (Barnes, 2001)

In his clarification of the on going student affairs “paradigm” problem, Jay Barnes (2001) echoes Guthrie’s lament from 1998 when he asserts that the response to *Student Affairs Reconsidered* has been more silence than action. With his subsequent questions, Barnes implies that Christian student affairs professionals have done an inadequate job thinking Christianly about their work in student development (Barnes, 2001)

### *Student Affairs Divisions’ Incorporation of Student Learning at Small Colleges and Universities*. (Doyle, 2001)

In his dissertation research, Jeff Doyle (2001) found that Chief Student Affairs Officers (CSAO) at CCCU (Council for Christian Colleges and Universities) institutions ranked the philosophical underpinnings of their departments as follows:

- Number 1 (Student Ministries)*
- Number 2 (Student Development)*
- Number 3 (Student Learning)*
- Number 4 (Student Services)*

Almost half (45 %) of the CSAOs chose “student ministries” as number 1. These findings seem to support the view of Guthrie (2001) and others (Loy & Trudeau, 2000) that Christian student affairs practitioners tend to work predominately out of a student ministries orientation as opposed to student development or student learning.

*Student Affairs Divisions' Incorporation of Student Learning Principles at CCCU versus Non-CCCU Institutions* (Doyle, 2002)

In his review of literature on student learning, Jeff Doyle (2002) recognizes *Student Affairs Reconsidered* as a primary player in helping to establish student learning as an important new paradigm. He points out the distinctively Christian perspective offered by *Student Affairs Reconsidered* and the significance of its appearance in the same year as *Principles of Good Practice in Student Affairs* (Doyle, 2002).

Doyle's (2002) research findings also indicate that Chief Student Affairs Officers at non-CCCU schools were more apt to ensure that their staff had some formal graduate education in student affairs than their counterparts in CCCU institutions. Perhaps this finding helps explain why many Christian student affairs staff show more interest in "ministry" than "student learning" as a guiding professional paradigm. Many simply lack the educational preparation that would have introduced them to the student-learning model.

While the influence of *Student Affairs Reconsidered* may be hard to measure, the book did, as is evidenced above, elicit a thoughtful response from several members of ACSD. Many recognized the contribution of *Student Affairs Reconsidered* to Christian student affairs as well as to student affairs in general. Ironically, others underscored how most ACSD members had ignored this important contribution. In a recent informal survey (2005) of 24 Christian student affairs professionals, the author found the following:

*-Five had heard of Student Affairs Reconsidered and four had read all or part of it.*

*-Six had heard of the Student Learning Imperative and four had read all or part of it.*

*-Seven had heard of Principles of Good Practice for Student Affairs and seven had read all or part of it.*

*-Two had heard of Learning Reconsidered and one had read all or part of it.*

In summary, about 20% were acquainted with *Student Affairs Reconsidered* and less than 20% had read part or all of the book.

In closing, here are a few speculative observations that may serve as a stimulus for further research.

- Most of us in Christian student affairs continue to be more "ministry" orientated than "student learning" focused. Dallas Willard as an ACSD keynote speaker probably generates more enthusiasm than David Guthrie, Jane Fried, George Kuh or Susan Komives. In fact, I venture to guess that a good many members of ACSD could not identify the works of George Kuh, Jane Fried, Susan Komives or David Guthrie.



- Whether due to strained resources, lack of interest or training, absence of leadership, or other obstacles, most ACSD members do not care to stay current in the literature of our profession. Rather, they prefer to just provide basic services along with spiritual formation activities, social and educational programs, leadership training, and mentoring. While most do this very competently, they often do it without any tie to resources such as *Student Affairs Reconsidered*, *SLI*, or the *Learning Reconsidered* monographs. In other words, with little connection to the student-learning paradigm that presently guides our profession.

- When hiring, ACSD members tend to put less emphasis on professional preparation in the field of student affairs and more emphasis on hiring staff that have strong relational skills, expertise in spiritual formation, and program management.

- A great majority of entry-level professionals in ACSD do not intend to pursue a “profession” in student affairs. This is supported by the large turn over in the ACSD membership roles each year. It is no wonder that with such a turnover, motivation is lacking to delve into the professional literature of student affairs. Why dig into the professional literature if you are just passing through on your way to another vocation?

- We are primarily a group of practitioners who love working with students and lack the “scholarly” genes that most of our faculty colleagues possess. Most faculty members are scholars who relish the life of the mind. Though we are “bright”, we prefer to be “doers” and are not as reflective and thoughtful when it comes to developing and working from scholarly Christian perspectives of our profession.

All this drives me precariously close to the conclusion that many, if not most, members of ACSD don’t really believe that we need a comprehensive and nuanced understanding of the literature of our profession, be it Christian or not, to be effective student affairs professionals. Perhaps the old, haunting question about whether or not we truly are a distinct profession or just some sort of hodgepodge comprised of little bits of many different academic disciplines is worth reconsidering. Or, perhaps it is time for another group of ACSD members to join together to contribute a new “Christian View of the Profession and its Contexts”. My vote goes to the latter. If as mentioned earlier, *Student Affairs Reconsidered* is truly a seminal (containing the seeds of later development) work, we can look forward to many more thoughtful reflections on our profession. And given that it has been 10 years since the first, let’s get to it.

soli deo gloria

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# **An Examination of the Applicability of Tinto's Model of Student Persistence at a Christian Liberal Arts College**

by Rick Zomer

It is estimated that the number of students who will begin a course of study but fail to complete a post secondary degree is between 28.5% (Tinto, 1993) and 50% (Brawer, 1990). This qualitative study reviewed sixteen "at risk" students enrolled at a private Christian college who had successfully persisted into their senior year. Tinto's Theory of Departure was used as lens to examine the role of individual intentions and commitments and the impact of social and educational congruence on student persistence.

The most significant findings regarding study participants focused on the impact peers and faculty had in the following areas: educational development, social transitions, and faith development. In each of these cases, variations of mentoring relationships were reported by at risk students. This study concluded Tinto's model was applicable to the experience of at risk students at a private Christian college in that participants developed commitments and intentions while interacting with the social and educational systems of the institution.

## **Background**

Since the early 1970's, the issue of retention has received a great deal of attention from both college and university administrators and students. Partial rationale for this concern can be found in studies which estimate the departure rate for students who begin a course of study but fail to complete their degree to be between 28.5% (Tinto, 1993) and 50% (Brawer, 1996). While these figures are primarily drawn from public institutions, retention statistics for students enrolling at a private college or university are still of concern with the numbers ranging between 8% (Tinto, 1993) and 17% (Walter, 2005). High departure rates can negatively effect the institution in regard to the impact on budget, enrollment, and public perception (Braxton, 2001). It can also affect the individual student in terms of attitudes concerning long-term intellectual growth (Ferguson, 1990) and the student's ability to be exposed to important socializing agents such as peers, which are readily available on-campus (Perez, 1998).

In this climate, it should not be surprising that numerous theories have been proposed that seek to understand and respond to the issue of retention. Theorists have examined the impact student performance (Spady, 1970), involvement (Astin, 1975), and environment (Bean, 1980) can have on student departure decisions. While each of these studies have been cited in further examinations of the student retention issue (Graunke & Woosley, 2005; Metz, 2004), Vincent Tinto's (1975) theory has been often viewed as the groundbreaking work concerning the student retention issue (Metz, 2004).

## **Tinto's Model of Student Persistence**

Tinto (1975) grounded his writings in Durkeim's theory on suicide (1953) and Van Gennep's work on cultural rites of passage (1960). Tinto's incorporation of these concepts into the discussion of student departure led to the development of a two-dimensional longitudinal model (Tinto, 1975). He proposed that each individual came to campus with "pre-entry attributes" such as prior schooling, skills and abilities, and family background along with a combination of intentions, goals and commitments. Tinto defined student intentions by referencing the student's choice of major or intended career path and believed that commitments were demonstrated through religious, political, or social leanings. More specifically, it was the interaction of the individual student's unique attributes, intentions, goals, and commitments with the educational and social systems of the institution that led to a departure from or persistence at their institution.

Tinto posited that a departure decision was a longitudinal process and that a student who experienced isolation, adjustment issues, difficulty, or incongruence with the institution was more likely to depart than a student who did not. According to Tinto, these factors could be evidenced by students who fail to make connections with the campus culture, struggle to appropriately disengage from pre-existing relationships, experience educational difficulties, or discover they hold significantly different personal, political, or religious beliefs than those of the institution. Students who struggle in any of these four areas are more likely to persist, according to Tinto, if they have adequately assimilated their personal intentions and commitments with those they believe to be exhibited by the institution through the social and educational systems on campus.

## **Challenges to Tinto's Model**

Tinto's theory was the result of significant research done with national data on institutional retention and has been considered by some to be the most commonly accepted theory of student departure (Elkins, Braxton, & James, 2000).

While some have claimed Tinto's model has reached near "paradigmatic status" within the study of college student departure (Berger & Braxton, 1998), his research has also been criticized by others. Theorists such as Tierney (1992) and Tucker (1999) have critiqued Tinto's work for inappropriately applying the values of dominant student cultures to minorities or for trying to make generalizations that are too broad for his data source.

A major critique of Tinto's theory can be found in the writings of Tierney (1992). He challenged Tinto's work in several areas including the sources he used, the impact they have on the claims of his theory, and his misapplication of Van Gennep's (1960) anthropological writings. Tierney points out that Tinto's theory is primarily based on data drawn from a specific institutional type: the four year, public institution and, as a result, Tinto's work should only be applied to students attending that type of institution. He charges that Tinto's data source is too broad to be able to appropriately apply his theory to other types of educational settings such as historically black institutions, women's colleges, and small or private colleges or universities (Tierney 1992).

Tucker (1999) extended Tierney's (1992) critique of Tinto's theory by claiming the aggregate survey data he used was too broad to make inferences about an individual's departure decision. Tucker stated there was significant variability from one individual to another in terms of what went into a decision to remain or depart from an institution, so it was inappropriate to make specific claims from such a broad data source (Tucker, 1999). He called for a qualitative rather than survey-based examination of Tinto's theory so an individual's circumstances and input could be included in a review of the model.

In addition to Tierney and Tucker's critiques, Tinto's work has also been called into question by Braxton, Sullivan, and Johnson (1997). They reviewed his model and identified thirteen primary propositions of Tinto's theory. They applied his work within the context of specific institutions, and found that only five of his concepts had internal consistency. Their work furthered Tierney's (1992) critique by stating that Tinto's model had limited applicability to settings other than large, public, four year, institutions. While the authors did not call for Tinto's theory to be abandoned, they did state his model should be tested in other institutional settings before it could be applied to those environments.

### **Examinations of Tinto's Model at Private, Christian Colleges**

While Tinto's work is considered by some researchers to be the most commonly accepted theory of student departure (Elkins, Braxton, & James, 2000), little work has been done to explore the applicability of his model within the context of highly selective, private institutions (Berger, 1997; Elkins, Braxton, & James, 2000). Even less is known about the applicability of Tinto's model within the context of a private, Christian college, as a recent review of relevant research resulted in discovery of only three studies set within this context.

An early examination of Tinto's theory within the setting of a private institution was conducted by Cash and Bissel (1985). They sought to examine his model within the context of two small, church-related institutions, each with a student population of less than 2,000 students. The primary goal of the researchers was to examine Tinto's theory, specifically the portion dealing with individual commitment. Cash and Bissel speculated that this portion of Tinto's model might have greater significance within the context of church-related institutions since students who attended these types of colleges often pay significantly more money in tuition and fees than do students attending larger, public universities.

The researchers used a quantitative methodology with surveys given to students as part of the orientation program during their first week on campus. Cash and Bissel included variables such as family background, academic aspirations, expectations related to involvement with co-curricular activities, and interaction with faculty (Cash & Bissel, 1985). The researchers administered a second survey in the spring semester and matched responses to determine which students enrolled for a second semester, giving them an actual rate of persistence. Based on their data analysis, Cash and Bissel determined that the portion of Tinto's theory dealing with individual commitment was applicable to the church-related institution but that other factors may also influence departure. They called for further study within this environment.

An additional exploration of Tinto's model of departure is offered by Smith (2002) who set his study within the context of four private, Christian, liberal arts institutions. While Smith's examination was conducted in the same environment as Cash and Bissel's (1985), Smith (2002) extended the examination of the impact of Tinto's theory on retention in this setting by including data collected from students beyond the third semester of enrollment. Smith believed there was limited research on the impact of Tinto's model in church-related institutions, so he examined the impact social and academic integration had on student departure.

Smith (2002) implemented a quantitative approach to examine Tinto's model. The results of the study indicated a statistically significant relationship between social and academic integration and persistence at the church-related institution but acknowledged two significant limitations: students were not given operational definitions for either social or academic integration so each participant defined the terms in her or his own manner. In addition, a disproportionate number of females completed the survey. Both of these factors limit Smith's findings and result in the need for further research to be conducted within the context of the church-related institution.

A further attempt to study Tinto's departure model within the context of church-related institutions was conducted by Fulcomer (2003). He examined a majority of the student background characteristics included in Tinto's theory to determine the impact these variables had on retention at a private, church-related, liberal arts institution located in a mid-western state. Fulcomer referenced several factors such as high school grade point average (GPA), Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT) or American College Test (ACT) scores, contact with faculty, co-curricular involvement, career aspirations, and financial concerns in the thirteen research questions he developed to examine Tinto's model of departure.

Fulcomer used existing data from instruments that were administered at two specific points in time during the academic year. Information was used from the College Student Inventory (CSI) and The Freshmen Survey that were administered during the first week of the fall semester. The responses from these two instruments were compared to the data generated from the administration of Your First College Year, a survey created by the Higher Education Research Institution (Fulcomer, 2003). The researcher found a statistically significant relationship between ten variables and student retention, so Fulcomer concluded that Tinto's model of departure partially applied to his study participants (2003).

The findings of Fulcomer's study however, were limited due to its reliance on data from the Your First College Year, a survey instrument that was still in a pilot phase when it was used by the researcher. In addition, students who left the institution before the middle portion of the spring semester did not take all three surveys so information from these students was not included in the results.

### **A longitudinal study of Tinto's Model of Departure at a private, Christian College**

This study focused on sixteen individual students who were concurrently enrolled at Calvin College, in their eighth semester (senior year), and who were considered to be at risk of discontinuation based on specific variables identified during their first semester.

The researcher worked with Calvin's Center for Social Research, the Institutional Review Board, and the Office of the Registrar to gather data for the study. The researcher collected the results from the administration of the College Student Inventory (CSI) given to first year students during the first week of the 2002 fall semester. The high school GPA, SAT, or ACT scores were then retrieved for students who were identified by the CSI as being at risk of discontinuing. For the purpose of this study, students were considered at risk of discontinuing if they had a high drop out proneness score on the CSI (6 or higher on the 9-point scale) and possessed one of the following attributes: an SAT composite below 840, an ACT composite below 20, or a high school GPA below 2.5. Research has shown that the students who do poorly on the SAT or ACT are more likely to discontinue from their institution and that high school GPA is a consistent predictor of student persistence or withdrawal (Feldman, 1993). As a result, it was deemed appropriate to combine these factors with the results of the CSI to obtain a pool of at risk students for this study.

Once the list of highest risk students was generated from institutional data, it was cross-referenced with student enrollment records to determine which students were still enrolled at Calvin during the spring 2006 semester. The researcher used contact information contained on the college's web page to contact students identified as potential participants and invited them to participate in the study. An email was sent to each student including an explanation of the goals of the study and an invitation to participate in a personal interview lasting between 60 and 90 minutes. Interested students were asked to respond to the researcher via email and schedule a time for an interview. In an attempt to maximize the breadth of the data from the individual interviews, students who had indicated a desire to participate in the study were sent a follow up email. It included three questions that the researcher requested each student reflect upon prior to their interview in order to prepare for the study. Participants were asked to examine how their personal intentions and commitments might have been shaped during their college experience and their responses were reviewed by the researcher during the interview. The goal was to provide participants with an additional opportunity for reflection outside of the interview process and gave the researcher the ability to expand on these issues during time spent with the student.

Study participants signed a consent form allowing for the interviews to be taped and transcribed verbatim. The transcription process was handled by a third party hired by the researcher in an attempt to ensure accuracy and limit potential bias. The researcher and the student both had the opportunity to review the written record at a later date to ensure accuracy and to allow for any follow up questions or comments by either the researcher or the participant.

## **Analysis and Results**

Upon completion of the interviews, data were analyzed using a phenomenological approach in an attempt to understand each student's experience (Creswell, 1998). The goal within this quantitative approach was to uncover the essence or meaning an individual attributed to her or his experience in a systematic or logical manner (Moustakas, 1994) using themes or clusters of data. This information was then used

to determine if the experience of the study participants was consistent with the suppositions presented in Tinto's (1975) theory of student departure. More specifically, the researcher wanted to determine if the study participants' individual attributes, intentions, goals, and commitments interacted with the institution's social and educational systems, which in turn, allowed them to persist despite having characteristics of a student identified as at risk.

Analysis of the data identified two dominant categories that participants viewed as significant in their ability to persist: the influence of peers and the impact of college faculty. Fifteen participants specifically mentioned the impact of peers within various components of the educational experience. Likewise, thirteen of the sixteen respondents mentioned a faculty member directly, with the remaining three individuals commenting indirectly about faculty impact. These two dominant categories contained five major themes and several sub-themes. The peer influence category consisted of educational, social, and spiritual components, while the faculty impact category included faith development and transitional issues both inside and out of the classroom.

The impact of peers on study participants' educational experiences was expressed in three specific areas, the first dealing with the impact peers had on the study participants' ability to persist. Twelve of the students indicated that they had considered leaving the institution at some point for reasons such as finances, academic difficulty, homesickness, or a lack of feeling connected to the institution. Nine of these students listed peers as the primary reason for their decision to remain enrolled despite the challenges they faced.

Study participants also reported that peers played a significant role in their selection of a major and their ability to make the educational transition from high school to college level work. Thirteen of the students reported that they came to college without a major or changed it at some point during their first seven semesters on campus. While some of these individuals mentioned the impact faculty had in this decision, peers were identified as the dominant group that helped students select their field of study. They were also listed as being the most significant influence in the participant's educational transition to college. Students reported observing the work ethic, study habits, and time management skills of their peers and used their example to aid them in their educational transition.

In addition to crediting peers with assisting them in their educational transition, study participants also reported that faculty members played a significant role in this process. Student themes in this area clustered around issues such as selection of a major, the process of learning about the values, beliefs, and norms of the institution, and the transition to college level academics. Thirteen of the study participants indicated that a faculty member had played a significant role in one of these areas of their college experience. A second faculty-focused theme from the research involved the process of faith development within the lives of the study participants. Sub-themes within this area included the impact professors had through discussing faith issues inside or outside of the classroom, the opportunity to be involved in mentoring relationships with faculty, and their willingness to help students with personal challenges or issues.



## Discussion

While none of the dominant themes in this study match the specific terminology used by Tinto (1975), it is interesting to note the connections between his language and the themes and sub-themes of this research. Tinto suggested persistence could be positively impacted by a successful interaction between a student's intentions and commitments and the educational and social systems of the institution. Both the student and institutional aspects of Tinto's model are evident in the responses from the study participants. The results of this study lead to a discussion concerning the appropriateness of using Tinto's theory as a lens to describe the experiences of these students.

Themes dealing with educational, social, and spiritual development can be viewed as part of the process through which participants determined their intentions and commitments during their college experience. For example, the number of participants who identified or changed their major can be viewed as students progressing through the process of determining their educational intentions. Likewise, the emphasis placed on spiritual growth during college is evidence of students developing their individual commitments. According to Tinto, positive progress in both of these areas leads to student persistence (Tinto, 1993).

In addition to the concept of student intentions and commitments, there are several examples from this study demonstrating the development of social and educational congruence and the impact it had on the participants. Of the sixteen students in the study, nine discussed the process of making the social transition to college, a finding which can be tied to the concept of social congruence. Tinto theorized that an individual's social congruence was evidenced through interaction with the student culture on campus and through informal interactions with peers (Tinto, 1993). The individuals who discussed social transition issues in this study exclusively mentioned peers as the primary influence in this process, a finding which is consistent with Tinto's model.

While peers were the only group referenced in terms of social congruence, there was a split between the impact of peers and faculty on participant experience with educational congruence. Of the eleven participants who discussed their academic transition to college, six named fellow students as having the largest influence on their educational experience with another five individuals referring to faculty as having the largest impact.

## Limitations

Despite attempts by the researcher to make reasonable efforts to anticipate potential issues in the process of conducting this study, there were still limitations present in this project. The first relates to the number of students who were eligible to take part in this study. Participants had to register a high drop out proneness score on the CSI (a score of 6 or higher on the 9-point scale), an SAT composite below 840 or ACT composite below 20, and a high school GPA below 2.5 in order to be considered at risk. Using these criteria, only 26 potential students were eligible to participate in the study; a figure that accounts for only 2.4% of the 1,049 students who first enrolled at the institution in the fall of 2002. Additionally, of the sixteen students involved in the study, 25% were non U.S. citizens which can be viewed as a disproportionate number since the incoming

class in the fall of 2002 had a 6.7 % international student population (Calvin, 2005). Likewise, 68% of the study participants were women, which is 12% higher than the overall number of female students enrolled at the institution for the fall 2002 semester. These figures underscore potential limitations derived from the composition of the study sample.

A second limitation comes from the use of the term “at risk student” and the degree to which its inclusion in the research questions impacted the subject’s perceptions of the study. The CSI was one of the primary instruments used to identify students as at risk for this study but many of the participants did not initially recall taking the survey during the fall of 2002. As a result, some of the participants were unaware that they could be considered at risk and one of the individuals commented that the use of the term carried a negative connotation that did not characterize her college experience.

### **Implications for Practice at Private, Christian, Liberal Arts Colleges**

The individual experiences of the study participants demonstrate that the components of Tinto’s model are present within the experiences of at risk students attending small, private, Christian, liberal arts, colleges. Student intentions and commitments were found to interact with the institution’s social and educational systems which impacted persistence. While confirming Tinto’s model, these findings also provide insight into institutional practices in regards to at risk students.

This study illustrated the positive impact peers and faculty can have on at risk students. In addition to emphasizing the impact peers have in areas such as a student’s selection of major and academic motivation, this study also demonstrated that a significant amount of faculty impact was felt from experiences outside of the classroom. These findings should cause institutions to think about innovative ways to get peers intentionally involved with at risk students, and to be further encouraged to seek to find ways to increase faculty interaction with at risk students outside of the classroom.

The role of “traditional” support staff that is often offered to at risk students, such as career or personal counseling and other Student Life Staff could also be examined in light of the findings of this study. Few participants mentioned being impacted by these individuals despite the fact that they have often been looked to by private, Christian, liberal arts institutions as a key resource for at risk students. As a result, these colleges may need to look for innovative ways to get career and individual counselors and other Student Life professionals to more intentionally interface with at risk students.

Finally, the strong theme of peers and their impact on at risk students could be used to rethink how specific Student Life policies are conceived. Decisions such as housing assignments could be reviewed to determine if there are more appropriate ways to serve at risk students. It may be appropriate to intentionally assign at risk students a roommate who experienced a high level of academic achievement in high school in an attempt to provide the type of support and motivation mentioned by participants in this study. The size of many private, Christian, liberal arts institutions allows for this type of care to be taken in the housing selection process. However, this may involve institutions increasing the data they include in housing assignments or expanding the information they require on housing applications. It may also require the Housing Office to work

collaboratively with the Admissions Staff and the Registrar's Office to ensure at risk students are identified early and their academic information is used appropriately in the roommate selection process.

A final recommendation for improving peer contact with at risk students at private, Christian, liberal arts institutions would be to look for ways to be more intentional with the efforts of Resident Assistants and other Para-professional staff. These individuals are hired to build community within the residence halls and are selected, in part, due to the interpersonal skills they possess. Resident Assistants could be trained to serve as peer mentors and be assigned an at risk student to meet with during the student's first semester or year on campus. Funding for the Resident Assistant position already exists so there would be minimal additional cost to the institution and involvement with peer mentoring could be made a condition of admission for at risk students. Such an arrangement would provide a context for peer contact in areas such as educational transitions, persistence decisions, major selection, and social transitions.

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# **An Exploratory Study: College Students' Sleep Patterns and their Perceived Academic Functioning**

by Valerie Stokes and Amy Schweinle

## **Abstract**

We explored college students' sleep habits and their perceived academic functioning. Differences in amount of sleep and shifting bedtime-waking patterns were explored as were the relationships between sleep patterns and students' perceptions of academic functioning, including attendance, grades, concentration, and homework completion. Results suggested that students not only slept consistently less than the average recommended sleep amounts but also, perhaps more importantly, they exhibited an inconsistent sleep pattern throughout the average week. Further, they did not indicate awareness that their sleep patterns affected their academic functioning. Implications and intervention strategies to address students' sleep patterns are discussed.

## **College Students' Sleep Patterns and Academic Functioning**

Experiencing a loss of adequate sleep (i.e. less than 7 hours per night) on a consistent basis can lead to sleep deprivation (National Commission on Sleep Disorders Research, 1993). Sleep deprivation can have adverse effects in the general population. Sleep deprivation, sleepiness and insomnia have been shown to be related to work-related accidents (Leger, 1995), vehicle accidents (Horne & Reyner, 1996), higher rates of minor psychiatric disorders in medical students (Hildago & Caumo, 2002), diabetes, mood disorders, obesity (Stickgold, 2004), cardiovascular dysfunction (Somers, 2004), and shifts in mood (Engle-Friedman, Riela, Golan, Ventuneac, Davis, Jefferson, & Major, 2003).

College students are known to reduce their sleep to a sleep deprived state (Jensen, 2003). Students are sleep-deprived as often as one in every three days (Engle-Friedman, et al, 2003) and Hicks, Fernandez, and Pelligrini (2001) noted a decrease in the median hours of sleep in university students over past twenty years. Problems with sleep quantity and quality are increasing among college students (Hicks, Mistry, Lucero, Marical & Pelligrini, 1990). This lack of sleep quantity can be related to increased worry (Kelly, 2002) and lower life satisfaction (Kelly, 2004), hallucinations (Souper, Kelly, & VonBergen, 1997), and affected academic functioning (Kelly W.E., Kelly K.E., & Clanton, 2001). For example, Trokel, Barnes and Eggert (2000) found a negative correlation between GPA and weekday/weekend wake-up times, weekday/weekend bedtimes and number of hours of sleep on weekend nights. A notable finding was that "for each hour of delay in reported average wake-up time, the predicted GPA decreased by 0.132 on a standard 0.00 to 4.00 grading scale" (Trokel et al. 2000, p.128).

The detriment in GPA may be a function of reduced overall cognitive functioning. Glennville, Broughton, Wing & Wilkinson (1978) concluded that even lack of sleep for one night in a twenty-four hour period affected reaction time and short-term memory. Engle-Friedman et al. (2003) reported reduced ability in math task effort, slower reaction time and selection of less difficult tasks when under sleep loss conditions, even though sleep-deprived students perceived their effort equal to non-sleep deprived. Sleep-deprived college students have difficulty recognizing that their performance is affected by loss of sleep (Pilcher & Walters, 1997). Reduced sleep is related to a decline in cognitive functioning, which may be of special concern for college students who are in an environment requiring high levels of cognitive functioning. This distinction may be especially important for the numbers of college students who tend to stay up late and rise late in the morning. As such, they may be likely to miss their potential peak cognitive performance for studying and/or alertness in the morning (see Lee, Kim, & Suh, 2003).

Research on college student sleep habits initially focused primarily on sleep quantity and quality, with more recent emphasis on habits of sleep timing patterns; particularly, variability in sleep patterns between weekdays versus weekends. Pilcher, Schoeling, & Prosansky (2000) noted college students' reported a greater "sleep rebound" on the weekends as compared to an older adults group. The present exploratory research confirmed these findings and examined the roles of sleep time, bedtime and wake time for college students' perceived academic functioning as defined by class attendance, grades, concentration, and homework completion. It is not enough to study sleep quantity and sleep quality, we must also study sleep timing patterns, including bed and wake times and napping. Thus, the following questions were addressed: (1) Are there differences in sleep patterns between weekday and weekend nights across gender? (2) Do students perceive their sleep habits to be detrimental to their academic functioning? (3) Do student's nap behaviors influence their functioning and sleep patterns?

## Method

### *Participants*

The sample consisted of 583 undergraduate college students enrolled and residing on campus at a small, rural Midwest college. Ages ranged from 17 to 29 years ( $M = 19.37$ ,  $SD = 1.27$ ), with 26% ( $n=151$ ) male and 74% ( $n=432$ ) female. The sample percentages for the overall campus gender distribution are 38% and 62%, respectively. One respondent was excluded due to age of more than four standard deviations from the mean and a notable outlier.

### *Instrument*

The self-report sleep survey contained 11 questions covering sleep quantity, sleep satisfaction, bedtime and wake time patterns, napping and pertinent demographic information including age, gender, residence, academic status, GPA and major. The items included interval numbers (e.g. actual hours), likert scales (e.g. 1-7 satisfaction), and nominal personal data (e.g. age).

The survey contained items addressing the following: amount of sleep, bedtime and wake time, nap time and academic functioning. Students reported the average amount of sleep they received on weekdays and on weekends, after prompting to recall the previous night's sleep. They also reported their average bedtime and wake time for both weekdays and weekends. Students also reported the number of naps per week and the actual hours slept during the daytime. To assess the perceived impact of sleep on academic functioning, students were presented with a list of four academic areas (class attendance, grades, study concentration, and homework completion) and were asked to identify which they perceive were affected by their sleep pattern.

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

Prior to distribution, the survey and protocols were reviewed and approved by the Institutional Review Board. The survey contained a written statement that participation was voluntary and anonymous. All students living in on-campus housing were given the opportunity to participate through residence life programming. The response rate was 49%. Confidentiality was assured and students provided consent prior to completing the survey.

## **Results**

The primary goals of this research were (a) to determine if there is a difference in the role of amount of sleep versus sleep schedule and (b) if these affected perceived academic functioning. It is not only important to detect differences in sleep, but also whether or not these differences affect functioning and if students perceive it as a detriment to functioning. If so, do students compensate for the detriment?

### ***Differences in Sleep Patterns***

The first step was to determine if there were; indeed, differences in amount of sleep and sleep schedule across the week, and by gender. Differences in amount of sleep, bedtime, and wake time were evaluated with a split-plot factorial ANOVA with day of the week (weekday or weekend) as a within-subjects variable and gender as a between-subjects variable. Each dependent variable was considered in turn. Table 1 (see page 30) presents descriptive statistics for each of these analyses.

***Amount of Sleep.*** Students slept significantly longer on the weekends than on weekdays (an average of 28.45 minutes longer),  $F(1, 577) = 488.59$ ,  $MSE = 1.31$ ,  $p < .001$ , see Figure 1 (see page 31). This pattern was not significantly different for males than females; interaction,  $F(1, 577) = 2.93$ ,  $p = .09$ . Further, amount of sleep did not significantly differ by gender,  $F(1, 577) = .63$ ,  $p = .43$ .

**Table 1**

Means (and Standard Deviations) of Indicators of Students' Sleep Patterns

	Amount of Sleep			
	Weekday	<u>n</u>	Weekend	<u>n</u>
Male	6.44 (.99)	151	8.27 (1.44)	150
Female	6.50 (.98)	431	8.06 (1.49)	429
	Bed time			
	Weekday	<u>n</u>	Weekend	<u>n</u>
Male	5.29 (1.01)	150	6.31 (.95)	148
Female	4.87 (.99)	431	5.79 (1.09)	429
	Wake time			
	Weekday	<u>n</u>	Weekend	<u>n</u>
Male	5.22 (.91)	139	7.65 (1.48)	147
Female	4.86 (.87)	413	6.92 (1.22)	426



**Figure 1**

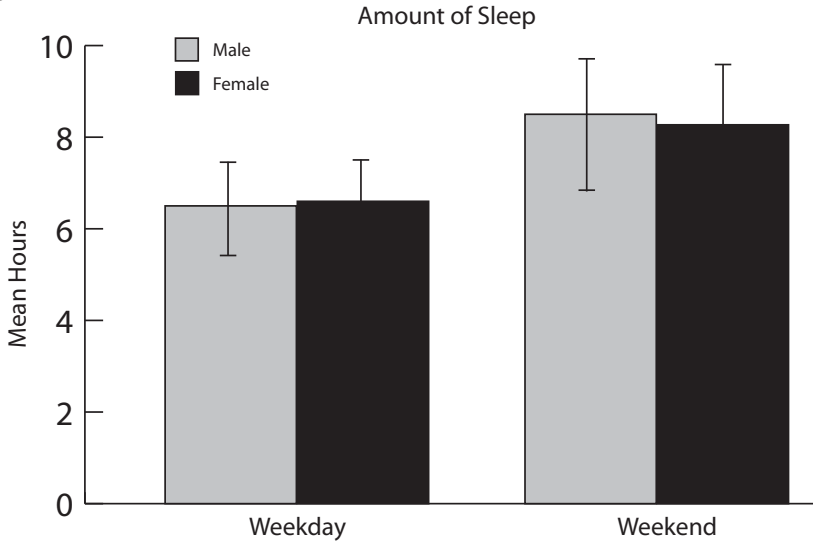


Figure 1. Mean amount of sleep on weekends and weekdays for male and female students. Error bars reflect standard errors.

**Figure 2**

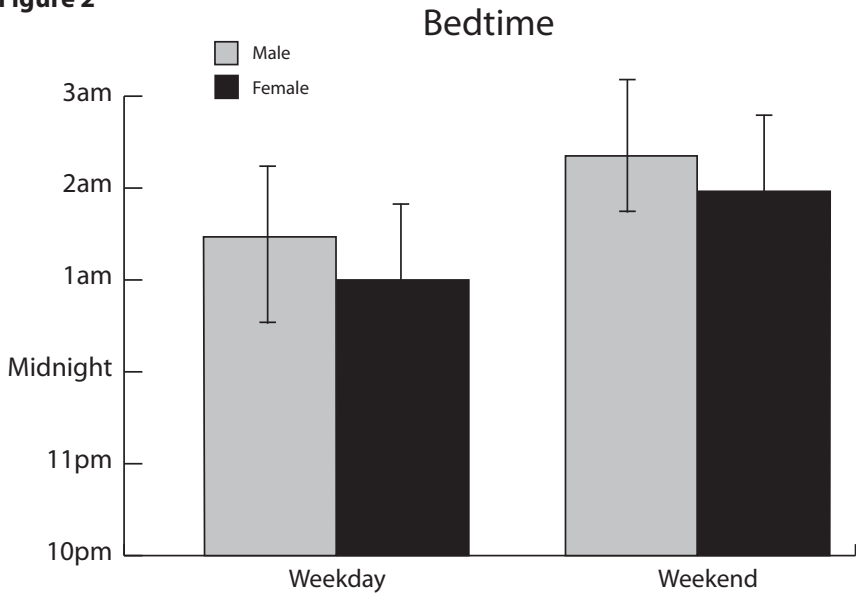


Figure 2. Mean bed time on weekends and weekdays for male and female students. Error bars reflect standard errors.

**Table 2**

Perceived impact of academic function, as well as napping, by weekday/ weekend sleep time, bedtime and wake time.

	Weekday			Weekend		
	Sleep time	Bedtime	Wake time	Sleep time	Bedtime	Wake time
Class attendance	-.01	.14*	.15**	0.10	.12*	.19*
Grades	-.01	-.01	-.01	0.0	-.01	-.01
Study concentration	.10*	-.12**	-.05	-0.01	-.01	-.05
Homework completion	.09*	-.05	.04	0.02	-.04	.01
Nap time	-.12**	.23**	.07	.11*	.08*	.21**

\*p < .05, \*\*p < .01. Point-biserial correlations were used with academic functioning variables while Pearson correlations were used with nap time.

**Figure 3**

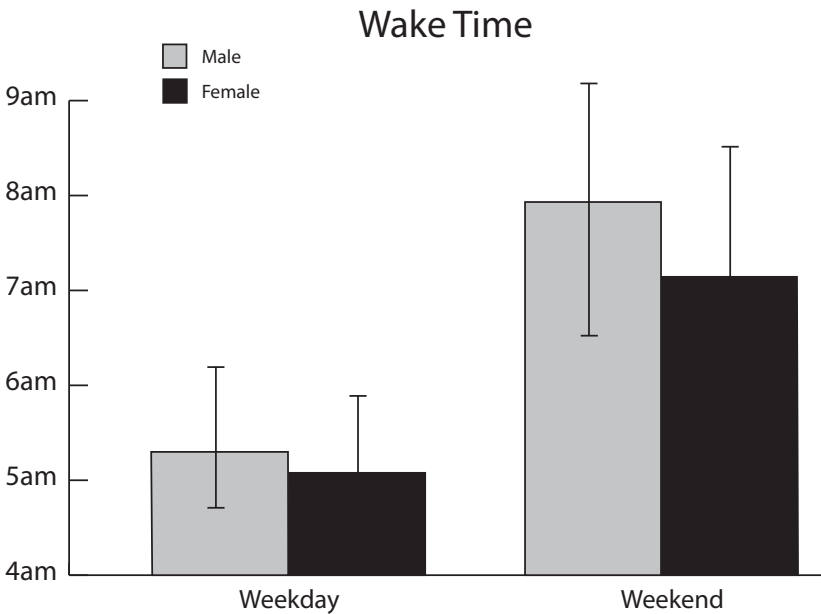


Figure 3. Mean wake time on weekends and weekdays for male and female students. Error bars reflect standard errors.

**Bed Time.** Students reported the time they typically went to bed on weekends and weekdays. Students reported going to bed significantly later (an average of 57.19 minutes later) on weekends than on weekdays,  $F(1, 575) = 434.53$ ,  $MSE = .49$ ,  $p < .001$ , see Figure 2 (see page 31). Also, males went to bed about 27.44 minutes later than females, which was significant,  $F(1, 575) = 16739.95$ ,  $MSE = 1.63$ ,  $p < .001$ . However, the interaction of gender by time of week was not significant,  $F(1, 575) = 1.80$ ,  $p = .18$ , indicating that the pattern of sleep on weekdays and weekends was not drastically different for males than for females.

**Wake time.** Students reported the time they typically awoke on weekends and weekdays. The effects of day of the week and the interaction of gender by day were significant; day,  $F(1, 542) = 1344.37$ ,  $MSE = 0.77$ ,  $p < .001$ ; interaction,  $F(1, 542) = 9.50$ ,  $p = .002$ , see Figure 3 (facing page). There was also a significant effect of gender,  $F(1, 542) = 37.14$ ,  $MSE = 1.67$ ,  $p < .001$ .

Both males and females awoke later on weekends than on weekdays (a difference of 2.43 hours for males and 2.06 hours for females, on average); males,  $F(1, 542) = 523.11$ ,  $p < .001$ ; females,  $F(1, 542) = 1120.32$ ,  $p < .001$ , but the difference was less for females than for males. Males woke about 22 minutes later than females on weekdays and about 44 minutes later than females on weekends.

These results suggested that these students do not have consistent sleep patterns across the week. The amount of sleep, bedtime and wake time significantly changed from weekday to weekend. Students shifted their sleep schedule later on weekends and sleep more. Given that their sleep patterns were inconsistent, we next sought to determine which aspects of their sleep schedule were related to perceived detriments in academic functioning.

### ***Sleep Habits and Academic Functioning***

We wondered if students perceived their sleep patterns were a detriment to their academic functioning, specifically class attendance, grades, concentration, and homework completion. The relationships between students' self-reported academic functioning (class attendance, grades, study concentration, and homework completion) with reported amount of sleep, bedtime, and wake time for both weekday and weekend were evaluated with point-biserial correlations because the academic functioning variables are dichotomous, see Table 2 on page 32.

**Weekday.** Overall, because all the correlations were low or not significant further indicated that students did not perceive the impact of sleep patterns on their academic functioning. Specifically, bed and wake times, but not amount of sleep, were related to class attendance. Whether or not students felt their sleep affected their grades and homework completion was not related to their reported sleep patterns. However, their perception of effects on concentration was positively related to amount of sleep, but negatively related to later bedtime. Students who went to bed later, perceived they still had concentration while 'pulling a late nighter'- staying up late to study. Thus, students may draw more heavily on their bed and wake times to determine if their sleep patterns affect class attendance (perhaps because they miss early classes for sleeping late) and on the amount of sleep and bed time to determine adverse effects on concentration.

***Weekend.*** With two exceptions, none of the correlations were significant, indicating that students did not perceive that their weekend sleep patterns impacted their academic functioning. Students did not perceive that their grades, study concentration, or homework completion might be affected by the hours of sleep, time they go to bed, or the time they arose on the weekend.

Even though there were relationships between reported sleep amounts and sleep schedules with academic functioning, students did not actually view their sleep as a detriment to long-term functioning. Of the 583 respondents, significantly fewer people felt that their sleep patterns affected their class attendance ( $n = 211$ , cumulative binomial  $p < .0001$ ) and grades ( $n = 252$ , cumulative binomial  $p = .0006$ ) than would be expected by chance. The number selecting homework was not significantly different from chance ( $n = 307$ , cumulative binomial  $p = .907$ ). However, they did feel that their sleep affected their short-term functioning; more students than expected felt that their sleep patterns affected their concentration ( $n = 486$ , cumulative binomial  $p > .999$ ). Thus, students were aware that their sleep patterns affected their concentration, but did not feel an adverse effect on homework, class attendance and grades.

Although they did not indicate awareness of the long-term effects of sleep deprivation, they might have demonstrated behaviors indicative of this. The presence of a nap pattern may have represented the student's intent to accommodate for their lack of sleep.

### ***Napping and Academic Functioning***

We hypothesized that students might use naps to compensate for their weekday lack of sleep, we've used the term somnorexia – sleep restriction - to illuminate this pattern. Correlations between the student's hours of naptime per day with amount of sleep, bedtime, and wake time for both weekday and weekend were evaluated. For each student, global academic functioning was determined as the total number of areas of academic functioning (i.e., class attendance, homework completion, grades, concentration) they perceived to be affected by sleep. The amount of nap time per day was negatively associated with perceived global academic functioning, ( $r = .102$ ,  $p < .01$ ), see Table 2.

During the school week, the fewer hours students slept and the later their bedtime, the more hours they napped during the day. Yet, there was no relationship with students' wake time and napping during the week. However, on the weekends, ironically, more hours of napping were associated with increased amount of sleep at night. Students who went to bed later, woke up later, and slept more, also napped more. This may reflect a sleep bulimia pattern of sleep binging on the weekend - students slept more at night and slept more during the day.

## **Discussion**

These results support the notion that students tend to sleep less than recommended for a healthy sleep pattern (National Sleep Foundation, 2000). Not only do they receive inadequate amounts of sleep, but they are also inconsistent in their sleep patterns. The overall tendency is to sleep less during the week, then “play catch-up” on the

weekends contrasts the results Buboltz, Brown, & Soper (2001) found in their study of college student sleep habits and patterns. The pattern found in this study reflects sleep restriction during the weekday, somnolence, and binge sleeping habits on the weekend. More importantly, not only do students evidence a reduction in sleep, but also inconsistent sleep schedules across the week, waking later and napping more on weekends. The inconsistency is even more pronounced for males than for females. Even though prior research (Oexman, Knotts, & Kock, 2002) indicates that shifting sleep schedules create problems in functioning, students appeared unaware that their inconsistent sleep patterns caused them long-term academic problems.

Unfortunately, the students did not report awareness of the adverse effects on their long-term academic functioning. Although students were aware that it was a detriment to concentration while studying, they did not distinguish that it was related to their actual sleep patterns. Even though students may not view it as a problem, their behavior of daytime napping may be indicative of compensation for lack of sleep. Daytime sleeping may create a cyclical pattern of less night-time sleep coupled with daytime sleepiness resulting in a poor sleep pattern. This suggests that it may be hard to convince them that change is necessary when they do not perceive any long-term effects and they have a compensation coping strategy of napping.

### ***Limitations***

Our study was limited due to the geographic location of the small, private college located in the rural Midwest. This exploratory study was based on a survey developed specifically for the purposes of an institutional self-study report. The obvious shortcoming was the self-report data was not a previously tested instrument. Future studies could employ psychometric instruments, SQI (Sleep Quality Index) or the PSQI (Pittsburgh Sleep Quality Index). Further research needs to address why students evidence these patterns of sleep – for example, individual differences, related mental health concerns, and perhaps a systemic campus culture of sleeplessness by examining class and residence type. Also, experimentally-based research could address causal relations not only between amounts of sleep but patterns of sleep and wake with academic functioning to determine which factors are most important.

### ***Implications***

Given the results of the present study, colleges and universities might consider exploring the habits and patterns of their own students' sleep patterns. Currently, we may rely too heavily on the common notions that student sleep patterns are normal or may disregard this as a problem because of misinformed beliefs that "this is the way it's always been" on our college campuses. Further, college students may not be aware of the long-term potential impact of the sleep pattern on academics, lifestyle and relationships. Student development administrators and residence life staff might explore how the college systemic environment can encourage better sleep patterns by minimizing late night meetings, enforcing quiet hours in residence halls at night, and increasing student awareness that sleep patterns may have detrimental effects to their functioning. By addressing the larger issue – the campus culture of sleeplessness – perhaps we could improve students' academic functioning and well-being. We should strive to encourage students to live healthy and active lives, which definitely includes a good night's sleep.

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# Promoting Student Activism among our Millennial Students

by Brian E. Cole

## Abstract

This comprehensive literature review investigates student activism to provide a generational backdrop to the varied types and methods of college student activism in the Millennial generation. After the explosive student uprisings of the 1960's and 1970's, it would be easy to deduce that in the absence of such high profile activities, student activism post-1980 is non-existent or insignificant. However, current literature suggests student activism is alive and well, although it often looks quite different. This makes student activism among Millennial students as important and worthy of study as any earlier generation. But to understand recent activism, one must be aware of the social context and players involved. What are the characteristics and activist tendencies of Millennial students in the context of higher education in the United States, and what can be expected from them? What is the role of higher education administrators in supporting the development of these students?

## Promoting Student Activism among our Millennial Students

Student activism has been a well-documented part of colleges and universities since the beginning of higher education, most of which was dedicated to the civil rights, Vietnam War, student representation, and social revolution protests of 1968, or what is now known as the "Year of the Student" (Boren, 2001). Much has been studied and written about these student movements, particularly in the characters, issues, and activist strategies during this tumultuous period in history (Boren). As institutions and the larger society have changed since that time, the effort of students to have a voice on campus has changed as well.

Student activism has an identity problem. Multiple definitions and differing perceptions of what constitutes activism exist, making it difficult to illustrate prescriptively what kinds of activities are considered activist. For the purpose of this study, it is not so important to debate specific activities included in the definition. Rather, it is precisely the point of this study to identify how activist attitudes become manifest differently on campus, detailing specifically within the Millennial students generation. In order to be open to variations, the definition presented by Ropers-Huilman, Carwile, Lee, and Barnett (Student Activists, 2003) of student activism as "involvement in and commitment to social change or social justice" (p. 6) will suffice.

After the explosive student uprisings of the 1960's and 1970's, it would be easy to deduce that in the absence of such high profile activities, student activism post-1980 is non-existent or insignificant. However, student resistance is a continuous and global



occurrence that is influenced by and interrelated to previous resistance movements (Boren, 2001). Millennium students are as important and worthy of study as any earlier generation of college student. But to understand recent activism, one must be aware of the social context and players involved. One must be able to answer the questions: What are the characteristics and activist tendencies of Millennial students in the context of higher education in the United States? In understanding these characteristics and tendencies, what kinds of activism can be expected by this generation of Millennial students? What is the role of higher education administrators in supporting the development of these students?

An exhaustive critical literature review through targeted educational and student development journals, as well as ERIC searches on key terms of student activism, higher education, millennial students, and social justice provided the history of student activism and the broad social values and behaviors of students of the previous and current generation. Web searches of institutional sites and direct communication with various professional student development staff gave insight into the current response of a few institutions in working with student activists.

## Results

### *Millennial Students Defined*

To fully understand recent activism, one must understand the Millennial generation of students. As a definition, Howe & Strauss (2000) identify Millennials as those born from 1982 to the present, showing up on college campuses in the year 2000. Howe and Strauss also assert the early Millennial generation is distinctly different from late Generation X students in terms of political and civic attitudes and actions. As such, the following descriptors and characteristics of the Millennial generation and its activist issues and approaches point to generalizations that may be helpful in understanding and working with them.

### *Millennial Student Characteristics*

Howe and Strauss (2000) cite that, in contrast to the way and environment in which Generation X was raised, Millennials grew, and are growing, up in a time which emphasizes child and youth issues. The nation's fertility rate rose, and in turn the focus on children has become an important political issue in the United States. Instead of being expected to be independent, children of this generation were protected with attention and social marketing that convinced them to behave. The entertainment media followed suit and transformed the medium to include major offerings to children and youth, including a resurgence in Disney movies and an exploding children's book, magazine, and music industry.

Howe and Strauss (2000) list seven common beliefs and behaviors for Millennials that distinguish them from previous generations. They are 1) *special*, where older adults have convinced them they are vital to the country and their parents; 2) *sheltered*, and are the benefactors of this country's largest youth and children's safety movement; 3) *confident*, with optimistic and trusting attitudes; 4) *team-oriented*, from children's television programming, team sports, and schools' emphasis on group learning, Millennials are

working better together and in teams; 5) *achieving*, with school accountability and an emphasis on educational standards they are likely to be the nation's most educated and best-behaved; 6) *pressured*, where they feel an obligation to push themselves to succeed and take advantage of opportunities offered to them; and 7) *conventional*, achieving great satisfaction in their positive behavior and feeling comfortable adopting the values of their parents, Millennials support social structures and rules. Millennials live in a well-connected world, whether that is socially or academically. They prefer to learn in teams and with structure, experiential activities and technology (Oblinger, 2003).

According to Howe and Strauss (2000), each rising generation rebels by attempting to change society in accordance to its values. Each generation “solves a problem facing the *prior youth generation*, whose style has become dysfunctional in the new era; corrects for the behavioral excess it perceives in the *current midlife generation*; and fills the social role being vacated by the *departing elder generation*” (p. 62). For Millennials, they solve the problems of the prior youth generation, the Generation Xers, of independence and organizational distrust by attempting to organize, form teams, and set high expectations in volunteerism. They correct the perceived behavioral excesses of the current midlife generation, the Baby Boomers, of argumentation over action, narcissism, and impatience by focusing on action over talk, valuing community, and displaying patience and trust. Finally, Millennials fill the social role being vacated by the departing elder generation, the WWII or G.I. generation, of the community leaders, team players, and builders of institutions (Howe & Strauss).

One of the more explosive issues protested in the previous two generations involved race relations. While these generations often had first-hand experience in the struggle for racial equality, Millennial students are politicized by what they are taught from educational influences (Hamilton, 2003). To Millennials, race has become less divisive given the many different variations of culture and skin color in today's society. To them, race has ceased to be very relevant, given the fluidity and complexity of today's racial makeup. They see less purpose in old racial struggles, as a result (Howe & Strauss, 2000). Instead of working on the racial agenda of the previous generations, their agenda is to strive for inclusion instead of focusing on separateness imposed upon them by previous generations. By the time their generation came along, the conversation of race represented the past rather than describing what they see as the present reality. While racial rights are important to them, other issues like literacy, homelessness, and sexual identity issues compete for their attention (Howe & Strauss).

### ***Millennial Student Activism***

How will these Millennial characteristics continue to manifest themselves as activism on our campuses? Early indications point to their support for institutions and structures, rather than a resistance to them (Howe & Strauss, 2000). When they disagree with an ideology or practice, they are more likely to work within the system to create change than to disrupt the workings of the institution. While it is important to recognize the presence, attitudes, and actions of other generations on our campuses, the bulk of them is, and will increasingly be for some time, Millennial students.

According to Ropers-Huilman, Carwile, and Barnett's (2003) study of students of this generation, activists articulate a desire for institutional leaders to explain the roles and processes through which students could become involved with decision-making. They

desire clear guidelines for this involvement, largely due to their belief in the necessity of the system; however flawed it may be (Ropers-Huilman et al). They are eager to work through systemic channels to improve their lives on campus as well as to understand how institutional decisions influence larger society.

Howe and Strauss (2000) prefer the term “revolution” to “rebellion” in describing how Millennials push against the established order, valuing the idea of community over the individual. This starts by improving upon systems by communicating with those who govern them. Ropers-Huilman et al. (2003) found that student activists generally found institutional administrators as antagonists who were inaccessible and withheld vital information about campus issues. In response, the student activists desired regular dialogue with decision-makers, access to information about their function, and rationales for their decisions on campus issues so they could better understand the restraints of their job functions and to work more effectively with them. However, most of the activists understood the difficulty and limitations of administrators to create significant change from within the organization (Ropers-Huilman et al, Working the system).

## **Discussion**

### ***Overview of Student Activism***

For the most part, student activism in the United States historically has not been respected. Students have been expected to engage in academic pursuits and not in illegitimate dissenting activities (Altbach, 1999). However, there are those in academia who believe student activism should not only be tolerated, but encouraged to help promote community improvement and instill civic responsibility in students. “The goal of democracy is not the creation of artificial homogenization or false harmony, and movements play an important role through fostering dissent and conflict” (Hamrick, 1998, p. 456). The presence of such activity can be viewed as evidence of a vibrant community in which democratic learning and civic involvement is not only allowed but encouraged (Hamrick). According to Pan (2002), higher education administrators need to come to a common understanding that universities should be the primary place in society for ideas that are contentious and controversial. Higher education not only has to embrace these differing ideas, but to lead society as promoter on dialogue of current issues, particularly of social justice (Pan).

### ***Student Activism on Christian Campuses***

Despite the volumes of work dedicated to student activism, past and present, there has been a dearth of material dedicated to how student activism is manifested on evangelical Christian campuses. By design, these types of institutions are fundamentally different than their public and private secular counterparts, in mission and practice (Holmes, 1987). One feature of these colleges is an emphasis on personal “fit” within the campus culture. Parental influence and student perceptions of these colleges being safe and moral places, as well as being tied to a specific sponsoring faith denomination, contribute greatly in admissions decisions (Piper, 2002). With a relatively like-minded student body, one might conclude that the amount and nature of student activism would

be different than other institutions as a result. Student activism on these campuses would therefore more likely take the form of the mobilization of students around a social issue external to the campus community, such as a mission trip, support of local service agency or in response to a natural disaster, than organized dissent over a campus policy or institutional program.

Much emphasis and energy is focused on leadership development at Christian colleges and universities. However, the culture and climate at these institutions often does not welcome student leadership when it contradicts the established order or institutional policy. What is appreciated and encouraged is leadership in the reinforcement of established campus and social norms, as well as consistency with the theology of the institution's sponsoring or affiliated church denomination. Instead of the viewpoint that an activist activity could further leadership development of the individual and be a learning experience, the insurgency is often seen as a threat to the campus and those involved are often subject to the college or university's disciplinary process.

### ***Institutional Support for Student Activism***

Sax (2003) asserts while Millennials work well in teams and have shown increases in volunteerism, this has not translated into a generational commitment to social activism, although interest in political interests has increased since the contested 2000 presidential election and the terrorist attacks on September 11, 2001. There have been declines in student participation in environmental concerns, community leadership, and racial issues since 1992. Instead, Millennials prefer to avoid difficult situations and people and work to improve their communities within a cooperative and structured environment (Lowery, 2004). While past generations of college administrators have sought ways to manage and suppress student activism, today's institutional leader could do well to intentionally promote such activism with well-designed programs and staff who directly advise students.

If one were to agree that student activism is a positive outgrowth of a maturing civic attitude and a personal and corporate investment in social justice issues, it is important to understand how higher education administrators and faculty can best support it. To do so, it is important to understand the characteristics of the students they work among. The bulk of students currently in college are the Millennials, with unique interests and strategies to create change. With their consumer-oriented outlook and ability to work well in teams and within social institutions they trust, it is imperative that a relationship is built that empowers the students as adults, and prioritizes them above all else (Gaston-Gayles, Wolf-Wendel, Nemeth Tuttle, Twombly, & Ward, 2005). An open and constant line of communication is needed to be open to minimize problems and encourage student growth. In the study by Ropers-Huilman, Carwile, and Barnett (*Working the system*, 2003), they found that student activists' main purpose was not to challenge the institutional system, but rather to be democratic participants in it. Ongoing communication with administrators and other members of the system was the only way they felt this could be accomplished.

One institutional administrator with direct contact with the students is the student affairs officer, who assumes a role as advocate and friend to the student (Gaston-Gayles, et al., 2005). This role provides students a person within the decision-making authority structure with whom to share ideas, dissatisfaction, and struggle. While it is sometimes difficult to balance the perceived needs of the students and the institutional mission, the trust built among the students is valuable in providing them an outlet for their frustrations.

This interaction also gives the students insight into the inner workings of the system, and how change is best enacted (Gaston-Gayles et al.). However, a more powerful role of student affairs, as well as faculty members, is initiator and change agent in building and supporting socially-conscious programs.

Reason and Broido (2005) express that it is not only beneficial for the student affairs professional to be involved in the institutional and cultural change process, it is a responsibility. These professionals have the best position to work with directly with students and help foster an environment conducive to such change. Some effective strategies for student affairs administrators in creating environments that support change are promoting diversity amongst the student body, staff, and faculty; helping to create safe campus environments; advocating for social justice courses that reflect the larger curriculum and co-curriculum; helping to abolish unjust policies, laws, and practices; understanding the campus decision-making structures and processes; patronizing establishments that support social justice and boycott those that do not; and persevering through the absence of immediate results, as change is often slow in higher educational institutions (Reason & Broido).

It seems one of the best positions within the student affairs hierarchy to support student activism would be through the student activities office, specifically the advisor to the student government. This person often interacts with other campus groups and special interest clubs and could be an instrumental role model in educating students about effective change processes. This hands-on professional is often in the prime position to communicate regularly with these students, but is low enough in the institutional hierarchy not to feel direct pressure or influence from upper administrators about the nature and content of these student interactions. This role could also be filled by a staff or faculty advisor to officially-recognized clubs. At Christian and other faith-based colleges and universities, often the campus ministries office fills this role in providing opportunities to participate in service and social justice.

Institutions can also create or dedicate specific personnel to engage students in civic and campus activism. In the summer of 2006, Northwestern University created such a new position, the Coordinator of Student Organizations for Social Justice, to work with such groups as the College Democrats, College Republicans, Greens, Feminists, Amnesty International, as well as groups concerned with HIV/AIDS, the environment, and global peace (D. Dirks, personal communication, January 12, 2007).

Institutions can also accomplish this by creating institutes and departments that focus on engaging students in community involvement, such as the Office of Community Engagement at Rollins College. Created in 2001, this department focuses on “global citizenship and responsible leadership” by providing a variety of programs, service opportunities, and courses to foster a “lifelong commitment to social justice, civic engagement, and social responsibility.” Rollins supports this department with a professional staff, undergraduate and graduate student assistants, and a faculty visionary board to help provide Rollins students with an opportunity to serve and engage in community change processes during their time on campus (Office of Community, n.d.). The creation of such departments and institutes, as well as staff positions, dedicated to educating and guiding budding student activists seems to be a worthwhile investment for institutional and student affairs departmental funds, staffing, and programming energy, in order to create well-informed and civically involved students.

### ***Future Research***

A limitation of this study is the lack of empirical data associated with the attitudes and actions of the Millennial generation. Being only seven years into this generation, there have not been many scholarly studies published to this point. While it is interesting to investigate the general nature of differing generations and their influence on higher education, it is an inexact science. To project how a new generation will respond to dissatisfactions on campus or in the broader community based on a few isolated activities and a limited scope of opinion of their generational characteristics leaves much room for differing interpretations. While these studies are a good starting point, it is necessary to continue the work of empirically studying the Millennial generation, as well as their activist tendencies on higher education campuses.

A good starting point would be an empirical study to collect information on the known occurrences of activism on campus, particularly at Christian institutions. Analyzing individual campus issues, as well as each step in the student response to them, would give insight in how the Millennial student activist process works in the face of real issues. It would also be advantageous to interview students and administrators who were directly involved in that process to glean perceptions and attitudes of these participants. After this data is collected, perspective could be gained by a comparison with the current body of work of student activism of previous generations.

Further research in how departments of student affairs address and support student activism is also needed to identify what is currently being done on our campuses. While there are some formal structures at some institutions to support student activism, the level and type of guidance varies among institutions, ranging from a support function written into a staff or graduate student job description, to an unspoken or informal relationship with a staff or faculty advisor that supports the notion of student activism. Until it is clear how student activism is currently being supported researchers cannot determine what is working and what is not. Additionally, it is also important to determine how this effectiveness will be measured.

### **Conclusion**

Student activism has taken many different forms since the inception of the first modern higher education institutions. This groundwork was important as students tackled large social issues, such as slavery, wars, civil rights, and environmental concerns. Each generation's characteristics and environment helped shape the prevalent issues at time, and the methods of protesting to create change.

To help higher education administrators understand and work with these occasions of activism, it is imperative that they understand the nature of characteristics of their current student body. How an administrator would work with the Millennial generation, with attitudes of teamwork, trust and optimism of social institutions and a desire to participate in the government of them with an open dialogue with policy-makers, is much different than working with previous generations. Higher education administrators, especially student affairs officers, whose heightened professional prestige is largely due to a response to student activism during the civil rights era, must become scholars and experts of the current generation's students in order to effectively promote community improvement and civic responsibility.

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# Identity, Vocation, and Calling: College Students' Development Toward Meaning

An essay on college student identity, vocation, and calling that reviews recent books from the Lilly Endowment's Programs for the Theological Exploration of Vocation.

by Roger D. Wessel

The traditional undergraduate collegiate experience is a transitional phase from adolescence to adulthood when the search for identity, vocation, and for some spiritually astute individuals, calling, often rise to prominence in the lives of college students. How do young adults identify and form personal identities? How does the identity impact decisions about current and future vocational and career opportunities? And, does a Christian vocational calling, a special hybrid of identity and vocation, often described as a life-mission, exist? If so, how does one identify, understand, and actualize it?

The search for meaning, or life-purpose, is common. The Christian's desire for finding the "will of God" for his/her life is desirable, yet may be confusing to some. How does the contemporary college student figure all of this out? Aaron Shust's (2005) popular song, *My Savior, My God*, demonstrated the complexity.

*I am not skilled to understand  
What God has willed, what God has planned  
I only know at His right hand  
Stands one who is my Savior.*

Jesus directed his followers to pray that the Heavenly Father's "will be done on earth as it is in heaven" (Holy Bible, n.d., Luke 11:2, NKJV). The prophet Jeremiah reminded God's people of His intention for them: "For I know the plans I have for you, plans to give you hope and a future" (Jeremiah 29:11, NIV). How do you figure out your personal identity, find peace about who you are (or choose to be), decide on a vocation or career that is right for you, and understand if God has a plan for you that somehow is a combination of identity and vocation?

In this essay an overview of college student developmental theory is provided as a philosophical context for understanding how identity emerges from the undergraduate collegiate experience. Reviews of several books are presented, some that directed the author's personal search for identity within the Christian calling construct, and more contemporary works that have emerged from the Lilly Endowment's Programs for the Theological Exploration of Vocation. The essay is written from the perspective of a university faculty member or Student Affairs' educator who, through his/her interactions with college students, may be asked some variation of the following questions.

- "How do I find out who I am?"
- "How do I know what I should major in?"
- "How do I understand what I should do with my life?"

Reviews on books are provided that college educators may use to help their students find answers to these questions.



## College Student Developmental Theory

How does attending college influence student development? Feldman and Newcomb (1969) and Pascarella and Terenzini's (1991, 2005) collection of studies documented research to date on college student development and how college affects students with focus on their cognitive skills and intellectual growth, psychosocial change, attitudes and values, moral development, and career and economic impacts of college. College student development has Kurt Lewin's (1936) work as its theoretical foundation. He suggested that behavior is a function of a person in his/her environment. College student developmental theorists describe how college students develop in higher education settings.

Three developmental conditions for college students were proposed by Nevitt Sanford (1966): readiness, challenge, and support. Readiness is a function of maturity and beneficial conditions including challenge and support in the environment. Individuals are not ready to display certain behaviors until there is an optimal dissonance of challenge and support.

College student developmental theories fit into clusters. For example, cognitive developmental theorists focused on universal patterns that individuals go through as modes of thinking are established (Perry, 1970). Vocational theorists (Holland, 1973) postulated that individuals have, and occupations require, a certain set of traits for success and that the closer the match between the personal characteristics and job requirements the greater likelihood for success. Psychosocial theorists often built upon the works of Erik Erikson (1968) who described a life cycle and sequential stages for development.

Schuh (1994) suggested that Arthur Chickering's (1969) psychosocial theory of identity development had generated as much research as any theory in the field of college student development. His theory focused on the life content of traditional-age college students, what they thought and experienced. Chickering (and Reisser, 1993) theorized that during a developmental vector college students face a developmental issue that needs resolution before the next stage can begin. Rejecting the simplicity of sequential models, Chickering described college student development as a sequential order of personal building blocks. In vector one college students focus on developing intellectual, physical, and interpersonal competence so that they will have a strong sense of confidence. Gaining control of one's emotions (vector two, e.g., anxiety, aggression, sexual attraction, depression) enables processing experiences in a healthy way and integrating feelings with actions. In the third vector college students move through emotional and instrumental autonomy so that they recognize and accept the importance of interdependence. The development of mature interpersonal relationships (vector 4) enables tolerance and appreciation of differences and a capacity for intimacy. These initial vectors are prominent in the lives of traditional-age college freshmen. With this foundation established, the student is then ready to move on toward the establishment of an identity (vector 5) where an inner sense enables personal stability and comfort with body, gender, and self. Developing purpose is the sixth vector where the individual clarifies interests, alternatives, and sets direction for life. In the final vector, developing integrity, an individual personalizes values by which to live and accepts social responsibility.

James Fowler (1981) postulated a six stage faith developmental theory that had a triadic connection between self, others, and a central power (i.e., God within the Christian tradition). Within the past few years, faith and spiritual development has experienced a renewed emphasis among college student developmental theorist. Chickering, Dalton, and Stamm (2006) stated that the collegiate experience needed to be broadened to include spiritual development. There were several reasons for including spirituality within the student affairs profession.

*The first is based on a very traditional and closely held assumption of the profession: the value of holistic student development . . . Another reason is that these concepts are being addressed in other related helping professions and in academic disciplines that have traditionally informed our practice. (Love & Talbot, 1999, p. 362)*

Sharon Daloz Parks (2000) viewed spirituality as a search for meaning, transcendence, wholeness, purpose, and “as the animating essence at the core of life” (p. 16). Love and Talbot (1999) identified “the quest for spiritual development [as] an innate aspect of human development” (p. 364). Tony Marchese (2006) encouraged individuals to:

*Gaze deeply into our soul [so] that we can discover our own “code” that reveals the equation for personal fulfillment and vocational realization. . . . look inward at our own unique design; this reflection is essential for the identification of our calling. (p. 16)*

*Merging Identity, Vocation, and Christian Calling (Friesen and Maxson, 1980)*

Finding personal identity and God’s “will” for one’s life, two rather overwhelming tasks, have been a developmental struggle for many individuals. My personal story included one of trying my best to understand if God had a specific vocational plan for my life that somehow I had to follow if I were to have God’s blessing. My struggle was a combination of trying to identify how I was to receive the plan and what that plan was. A favorite college professor (from Lee University, my alma mater in Tennessee) shared his wisdom and directed me to Friesen and Maxson’s 1980 book on *Decision Making and the Will of God*. The subtitle of the book, *A Biblical Alternative to the Traditional View*, revealed the book’s purpose. Garry Friesen is a professor of the Bible at Multnomah Bible College in Oregon, and Robin Maxson is the senior pastor of the United Evangelical Free Church in Klamath Falls, Oregon.

Within the first paragraphs of the book’s introduction Friesen and Maxson’s view of finding God’s will for one’s life emerged.

*Most Christians find knowledge of God’s will difficult to come by. It’s not that they don’t know what to do. It’s just that after they have followed all the steps, the clear picture that is supposed to materialize, doesn’t. I have met many believers who were frustrated because they were convinced that God loved them and had a wonderful plan for their lives, but for some reason, He was not telling them what it was. Are Christians like so many laboratory rats, consigned to explore every dead end in the maze of life, while the One who knows the way through just watches? No. God does guide His people. It’s important to know that. The question is: How does He guide. (p. 15)*

The book was organized into four parts. Part one presented the “traditional” view of finding God’s will. After defining God’s sovereign will (“God’s predetermined plan for everything that happens in the universe,” p. 32) and moral will (“God’s moral commands that are revealed in the Bible teaching men how they ought to believe and live” p. 33), he offered the “traditional” view of God’s individual will as the “ideal, detailed life-plan which God has uniquely designed for each believer. This life-plan encompasses every decision we make and is the basis of God’s daily guidance” (p. 35). This is the perfect and ideal will of God for an individual. Using a target analogy, it is often described as being the bull’s eye, the perfect and ideal will of God for one’s life. For those who prefer a theological definition of predestination as defined by Calvin (1536/1960) and others, an external locus of control, the “traditional” view is a good theological fit. In part two of the book they critiqued and refuted the “traditional” view and demonstrated its flaws.

The power of the book comes in part three where the Biblical alternative was presented. Friesen and Maxson’s approach frees the readers of the fear of missing God’s perfect will in their lives and provides freedom and responsibility for making wise life choices. They answered the question, how does God guide believers in the process of decision-making, by providing four basic principles.

*1. In those areas specifically addressed by the Bible, the revealed commands of God (His moral will) are to be obeyed. 2. In those areas where the Bible gives no command or principle (nonmoral decisions), the believer is free and responsible to choose his own course of action. Any decision made within the moral will of God is acceptable to God. 3. In nonmoral decisions, the objective of the Christian is to make wise decisions on the basis of spiritual expediency. 4. In all decisions, the believer should humbly submit, in advance, to the outworking of God’s sovereign will as it touches each decision. (pp. 151-152)*

In the final section of the book the authors provided assistance with deciding on “the big ones” (p. 281), major individual life decisions: singleness, marriage, vocational ministry, missions, vocation, education, philanthropy, and human relationships.

The book’s conversational tone makes it easy for college students to read. Thirty-seven illustrations demonstrate main points of the authors. The authors’ revised work (Friesen & Maxson, 2004) offered the contemporary college student an updated and expanded look at how to make sound, individual decisions, especially about life-choices as important as personal identity and vocation from the Christian worldview.

## **Programs for the Theological Exploration of Vocation**

In 1999 the Lilly Endowment’s (2006) long-term commitment to religious communities was demonstrated by encouraging colleges and universities to

*1) assist students in examining the relationship between faith and vocational choices, 2) provide opportunities for gifted young people to explore Christian ministry, and 3) enhance the capacity of a school’s faculty and staff to teach and mentor students effectively in this arena. (Programs for the Theological Exploration of Vocation, 2006, About PTEV, History, ¶ 1)*

During 2000-2002 the endowment invested more than \$176 million in Programs for the Theological Exploration of Vocation (PTEV) among 138 colleges and universities. A portion of these resources were used to support the development of books that addressed identity, vocation/career, and calling. The books are found on the PTEV resources “text bibliography” section of the website. A search was conducted of three prescribed categories provided on the website (i.e., for use with students, vocation, and young adult development) for 2005 or 2006 books that addressed vocation and/or calling. Books that college students may read, informally or as a course assignment, as they reflected on vocational identity issues were identified. The following books were chosen.

- *The Skeptical, Passionate Christian: Tools for Living Faithfully in an Uncertain World* by Michael F. Duffy
- *A Sacred Voice is Calling: Personal Vocation and Social Conscience* by John Neafsey
- *Here I Am: Now What on Earth Should I Be Doing* by Quentin Schultze
- *Call Waiting: God’s Invitation to Youth* by Larry L. McSwain and Kay Wilson Shurden
- *Leading Lives that Matter: What We Should Do and Who We Should Be* edited by Mark R. Schwehn and Dorothy C. Bass

Additionally, although not a part of the PTEV collection, Richard N. Bolles’ 2006 edition of *What Color is Your Parachute: A Practical Manual for Job-Hunters and Career Changers* was chosen because of its prominence in the career field and the author’s advice for Christians seeking to find their mission in life. For this review the author’s purpose, book’s organization, and my personal review of each of these books are provided.

*The Skeptical, Passionate Christian: Tools for Living Faithfully in an Uncertain World* (Duffy, 2006)

Michael Duffy, Associate Professor of Theological Studies at Hanover College in Indiana, examined how faith and vocation interact in the lives of Christians in *The Skeptical, Passionate Christian*. He struggles with how passionate faith and critical analysis are compatible by exploring the idea of vocation and how the Christian should discover God’s calling. In the first half of the book he described the Christian’s relationship to theology: defining faith and theology, partners in Christian conversations, and exploring theological issues. In the second half of the book he addressed vocation and how it unfolds in the lives of Christians.

In the fifth chapter, Duffy developed his hypothesis: does God call and does He call you and me? “Should we, as Christians, seeking to live well in an uncertain world, base our lives, at least in part, on the conviction that God calls each one of us to accept certain specifiable roles or sets of responsibilities” (p. 86). In the remainder of the chapter he pondered the answer through a series of questions. Do we have a relationship with God? Is God personal? Does God intervene in our lives? Does God have a plan for us, collectively or individually? Does God reveal how we should live? Does God reveal our vocational roles? What does it mean to talk about general and unique roles or responsibilities? What does it mean to “call?”

Amidst all the questions, I yearned for answers and some of them began to appear in the sixth chapter. “God is continually calling to us. We can discern and follow God’s leading” (p. 109). Duffy provides several examples from the Old Testament (Abraham, Moses, Samuel, and Jeremiah) and the New Testament (rich young ruler in Mark 10, Saul, and the Ephesian Christians in Ephesians 4).

However, some Evangelicals may be confused with the disparity of some of Duffy’s conclusions: consider these examples. In response to the question of what does God want me to do, Duffy suggested that “God may or may not call us to be Christians as opposed to having some other religious faith orientation or none at all” (p. 151). In response to the question of how do we know what God wants us to do, Duffy suggested that discerning God’s plan would include hearing and reading the scripture, “being told directly by God or Jesus, paying attention to where we are in the moment, and examining our gifts and our roles in our communities. . . . having discussions with people we trust, praying” (p. 151). His final “conviction” about all this was that

*God demands action from us. There are at least three kinds of demands: general demands to all Christians, more specific demands to individuals to fulfill certain roles for which they are gifted, and unique demands in the moment. These are God’s ways of loving us and loving the world. With training, we can learn to hear God’s demands, to trust and respond to them, and to love on God’s behalf. (p. 151-152)*

The book seems ideally suited for the theologically inclined who enjoy pondering deep, repetitive questioning. Most undergraduates, not so theologically inclined, may quickly set aside the work in their dualistic desire for specific answers.

*A Sacred Voice is Calling: Personal Vocation and Social Conscience* (Neafsey, 2006)

*What does it mean to find and follow a personal calling? How do we know what we are meant to do with our precious time and talents and treasure during our short lives here on earth? How, exactly, do we “hear” calls anyway? What happens if we miss our calling – maybe because we fail to hear it or don’t have the courage to follow it? Is there any reliable way to tell the difference between the “still, small voice” of our authentic calling and all of the other distracting, competing, counterfeit voices in our culture and in ourselves that tend to get us on the wrong track? (p. ix)*

Neafsey, a practicing clinical psychologist and a theology teacher at Loyola University Chicago, Illinois, approached vocation from the Roman Catholic tradition. His book reflected the admonition of the prophet: “What does the Lord require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God” (Holy Bible, n.d., Micah 6:8, NIV).

The unique contribution of the book is the emphasis on the individual’s conscience, especially the social conscience often displayed through moral and political dimensions. In fact, Neafsey believes that vocation can be understood as a call *to* conscience.

*In a global situation of expanding injustice and inequality, and in a nation caught up in a way regarded as unwise and unjust by most of the world, it seems to me that an uneasy conscience may be one of the best places to listen for the whisper of the Spirit that calls us to a better way. (p. xi)*

Neafsey's broadened definition of vocation essentially included every level and dimension of our lives: anything that we do with our time, talent, and resources.

*Vocation is not only about what we do but about who we are. . . . Our fundamental human vocation is to become just, loving, and humble persons during our short lives here on this earth. Conducting ourselves with justice, love, and humility always begins with how we treat our loved ones and the people in the circle of our everyday lives. (p. 5)*

He described the calling of God as the inner voice of God that mysteriously guides our path toward our true destiny. Finding our calling is finding our true self, the innermost self, or conscience. The path to finding calling is self-realization, "an ever-growing consciousness of the unfolding truth of who we are" (p. 7). God uses our search for self to guide us toward the goal for which we were created.

What sets Neafsey's work apart is the social context in which he approaches vocation. His book is organized to support that approach. Apart from the introductory and concluding chapters, the book unfolds as a series of eight short essays, each providing context on how to find the inner self: listen to the sacred voice, discern the direction of the heart, be authentic to the truth, have compassion and be passionate, seek a worthy dream, learn from suffering, be aware of the "moral tug" of our conscience, and response to inhumanity in our world.

A favorite chapter of mine addressed discernment and how it is the inner compass of the heart. Neafsey, using Michael Himes' (1995) work on discerning a call to serve, identified three key questions that revolve around joy, talent, and service that provide vocational direction: "what we most enjoy doing, what we are good at, and what others most need from us" (p. 43). The unique contribution of this suggestion is the commitment to the common good. Neafsey reminds us that our response to God's calling is contextualized in the needs and demands of society. Another favorite section of the book addressed how God may use dreams to provide guidance. There are multiple examples of Old and New Testament personalities that received confirmation from God in their dreams. The purpose of dreams, as unpacked by the prophet Daniel, was "that you may understand what went through your mind" (Holy Bible, n.d., Daniel 2:30, NIV) or as translated in the New King James Version, "that you may know the thoughts of your heart." Dreams may be a way to confirm God's purpose for our lives.

College students may greatly benefit from reading *A Sacred Voice is Calling*. The book may be a helpful tool for college students developing a personal identity or serve as a contemporary resource for a Christian thought class focusing on personal development.

*Here I Am: Now What on Earth Should I Be Doing* (Schultze, 2005)

Quentin Schultze, the Arthur DeKruyter Chair in Faith and Communication at Calvin College in Michigan, offers a simplistic response to the question of "what on earth should I be doing?" He suggested that God calls all of us on two levels.

*One is the vocation shared by all followers of Jesus Christ. The Bible says each of us is called to care for God's world . . . "being a blessing to others." . . . The other level of calling includes each person's many stations – the particular places, relationships, and work in and through which a person cares. (p. 9)*

This short book (109 pages including suggested readings and notes) is organized into nine chapters (i.e., listening to God, participating in renewal, succeeding wholeheartedly, caring responsibly, celebrating leisure, flourishing in communities, loving for good, and offering a legacy) that reiterate the themes of vocation and station. It is easy to read.

Schultze advised the reader that identifying vocation is “more like an unfolding relationship than a carefully planned trip. As we come to know God better and to know ourselves in relationship to God, we also discern where and how to serve – but rarely with absolute certainty” (p. 13). He identified our “shared” vocation to be “caring followers of Jesus Christ who faithfully love God, neighbor, and self” (p. 15): in the broadest sense, being an ambassador of God on the earth. He distinguished our stations as jobs, situations, and relationships. This reviewer struggled to follow his view and didn’t find comfort from his suggestion that “God’s callings have always been incredibly diverse and often rather ambiguous even in hindsight” (p. 18).

Throughout the book Schultze provided many scriptural references and life stories to explain his perspective on vocation and calling. The strength of the book is that it is packed with stories of how God works in the lives of people. For the individual who finds comfort reading life experiences of others, this book may be helpful. For the reader desiring a deeper understanding of personal identity and vocational choice, this book may be disappointing.

*Call Waiting: God’s Invitation to Youth* (McSwain & Shurden, 2005)

Larry McSwain, a professor of ethics and leadership at Mercer University in Georgia, and Kay Shurden, a family therapist, wrote *Call Waiting: God’s Invitation to Youth* for teenagers trying to find vocational direction in their lives. The book includes stories from the Bible, young people, and the authors. It is designed so that the reader is led to reflect on the readings – each chapter has pages for personal reflection on their stories or what they have read. The short book (82 pages) is organized into seven chapters and three appendices (i.e., for group leaders, guiding principles, and a guide on how to use the book with small groups). It is designed to be used as a guide in a series of lessons on how to understand God’s call to youth. As it relates to that goal, the authors accomplished their purpose.

In the first chapter McSwain and Shurden brought definition to the Christian call as “something that all Christians share but that each of us has in a special way” (p. 2). In subsequent chapters the definition is explained as an invitation from God, getting to know yourself, partnering with God, living out the call in a local church, embracing adolescence, following God’s call as it unfolds throughout life, affecting life choices, and affecting what we do for a living. Each chapter follows a similar pattern of introducing a guiding principle, looking at a Biblical example, and then space for individual reflections on how to apply what has just been learned.

In a favorite chapter of mine, McSwain and Shurden explained to teenagers that the groundwork for identity in adulthood is laid during adolescence. They suggested that the teenager should struggle to define an identity by asking a lot of questions and dreaming big. The prophet Jeremiah was used as an example of how God’s call unfolds throughout life. Then each author shares personal stories about how their lives were redirected based upon personal decisions.

The book is simple and easy to read. It is not a book for the individual pursuing a deep and thorough explanation of the topic. The authors accomplished their goal of providing a handbook for teenagers to reflect on and make decisions regarding God's calling in their lives.

*Leading Lives that Matter: What We Should Do and Who We Should Be* (Schwehn & Bass, 2006)

Mark Schwehn, a professor of humanities, and Dorothy Bass the director of the Valparaiso Project on the Education and Formation of People of Faith, both from Valparaiso University in Indiana, designed this anthology for people desiring to lead lives that matter, acknowledged American's practical and pragmatic culture. Thus, the readings were chosen because they help the reader to think about the immediate practical issues within a framework of underlying philosophical issues.

*We sense that what we do to earn a living somehow emerges from who we really are, and . . . shape[s] who we will be. A person's thinking about what to do to earn a living, in other words, is entangled with her identity and how she understands it. A person's choice of livelihood is framed by a sense of who he is and what he hopes to become. (p. 2)*

The editors included the writings of authors from multiple traditions, both the sacred and the secular. They observed that “over the course of Western history worldly and religious life, the secular and sacred, have often informed, enriched, deepened, and constructively corrected one another” (p. 3). Most of the sacred writings are taken from the Christian tradition and most of the secular writing came from the democratic tradition.

The book had selected readings from 65 authors. It was organized into two broad sections. The first section, titled “vocabularies,” addressed authenticity, virtue, and vocation. It offered readings on the question of how one should think and talk about one's life. The second section, titled “questions,” was divided into seven chapters that addressed the following major life questions:

- Are some lives more significant than others?
- Must my job be the primary source of my identity?
- Is a balanced life possible and preferable to a life focused primarily on work?
- Should I follow my talents and decide what to do to earn a living?
- To whom should I listen?
- Can I control what I shall do and become?
- How shall I tell the story of my life?

This book makes a significant contribution to the reader who is struggling with identity, searching to get answers to important life issues, finding direction for the future, and understanding purpose in life's experiences. For example, when discussing vocation, the editors expose the reader to a diverse set of writings: Jesus' admonitions concerning servanthood to Zebedee's sons; Lee Hardy's essay on *Making the Match*:



*Career Choice*; the importance of *Choosing* by Gray Badcock; Dietrich Bonhoeffer's *The Place of Responsibility*; Frederick Buechner's writing on vocation; and *Vocation as Grace* as introduced by Will Campbell.

In the chapter that answers the question, "can I control what I shall do and become," Schwehn and Bass directed the readers to the writings of William Ernest Henley, Thomas Lynch (*Passed On*), Stephen Dunn, the book of Jonah, Sullivan Ballou (*a Letter to His Wife, 1861*), Yevgeny Yevtushenko, and Thomas Merton. To answer the question, "must my job be the primary source of my identity," the reader learns from Russell Muirhead (*Just Work*), Dorothy Sayers, Robert Frost (*Two Tramps in Mud Time*), Margaret Piercy, H. G. Wells (*The Door in the Wall*), Abraham Herschel, William Wordsworth, and Gilbert Meilaender (*Friendship and Vocation*).

The book concludes with an epilogue containing *The Death of Ivan Ilych*, by Leo Tolstoy. Its placement as the conclusion of the book demonstrates the editor's skill in providing the reader with opportunity for exercising judgment and wisdom in leading a life that matters. "One cannot think very well or very long about practical matters without sustained attention to the fundamental questions . . . [of] the shape, the meaning, and the significance of our entire lives" (p. 8).

The editors achieved their objective of making available some of the "best thinking and writing that human beings have done over the centuries about the very questions that most trouble human beings when they wonder about how to lead lives of substance and significance" (p. 7). After absorbing the content from the book I felt as if I had just had a conversation with a dear friend or trusted mentor. It challenged my assumptions and provided perspective, making me think. The book would be a valuable contribution for the serious college student trying to find his/her way with identity decisions.

*What Color is Your Parachute: A Practical Manual for Job-Hunters and Career Changers* (Bolles, 2006)

Richard Bolles is legendary in career and vocational circles. The *What Color is Your Parachute* manual, affectionately referred to by many as the "parachute book," is a standard in the career profession. Annually, since 1970, a revised version of the manual has provided vocational direction for those in need. Bolles, overtly Christian and for many years an ordained Episcopalian minister, indicated that one of the purposes of the book was to help as many people as possible "find meaning for their lives" (p. xi).

The book is a classic. It has 13 chapters, an epilogue, and two appendices. It is divided into three sections: the problem (fundamental truths about the job search), the playing field (career options and alternatives), and the creative approach to finding meaning in your life (professional skills, employer identification, interviewing, salary negotiation).

The epilogue is a must read for college students searching for identity. Bolles provided his version of how to find your mission in life: specifically, addressing God and one's vocation.

*We want to do more than plod through life, going to work, coming home from work. We want to find that special joy, "that no one can take from us," which comes from having a sense of Mission in our life. We want to feel we were put here on Earth for some special purpose, to do some unique work that only we can accomplish. We want to know what our Mission is. (p. 337) Bolles acquaints "mission" with calling and vocation.*

*These, of course, are the same word in two different languages, English and Latin. Both imply God. To be given a Vocation or Calling implies Someone who calls. To have a Destiny implies Someone who determined the destination for us. Thus, the concept of Mission lands us inevitably in the lap of God. (p. 337-338)*

He identified a formula for finding one's mission in life. First, acknowledge and practice the presence of God in your life, or as Bolles says it, "seek to stand hour by hour in the conscious presence of God, the One from whom your Mission is derived" (p. 340). Second, do what you can each day to make the world a better place. And third, exercise your talent, "your greatest gift" (p. 340), in the place most desirable to you and for those most needy purposes. He then explains a cycle of unlearning and learning that takes place at each stage.

- Stage 1. Unlearn that our mission is to keep busy doing something. Learn that our mission is to keep busy being something.
- Stage 2. "Unlearn the idea that everything about our mission must be unique to us" (p. 341). Learn that parts of our mission on earth are to be shared by all of us.
- Stage 3. Unlearn that the Creator orders us to do something. "Learn that God so honors our free will, that He has ordained our unique Mission be something which we have some part in choosing" (p. 341).

Bolles does a nice job of explaining how God speaks his mission into each of our lives. First, he explains how we think it will happen. "We look for a voice in the air, a thought in our head, a dream in the night, a sign in the events of the day, to reveal this things which is otherwise (it is said) completely hidden" (p. 352). But then, with simplicity, he explains how it should happen.

*God actually has written His will twice in our members: first in the talents which He lodged there, and second in His Guidance of our heart, as to which talent gives us the greatest pleasure from its exercise (it is usually the one that, when we use it, causes us to lose all sense of time). (p. 352)*

In addition to the invaluable and practical job search provided throughout the book, it is worth the purchase price for Bolles' advice on how to find your mission in life.

## Summary

Most of us have been quite fortunate to benefit from wise mentors as our life-paths unfolded. Now, because of our roles in American higher education, we have the privilege of working with college students struggling with the development of their personal identities, vocations, and callings. There is not a magic formula, no "one size fits all" advice that will work with all of our students. My hope is that some of the resources identified in this essay will help you work with your college students as they seek lives of meaning.

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## **William C. Ringenberg; *The Christian College: A History of Protestant Higher Education in America* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Academic, 2006)**

A review by Jason M. Morris and Michelle Lessly.

History helps us understand the past, so we are able to forge ahead and make a better future. The book, *The Christian College: A History of Protestant Higher Education in America* by William C. Ringenberg, provides valuable historical insight aimed at aiding the enterprise called Christian higher education. The author has dedicated the book to church-related colleges "...who are earnestly exploring how they might more clearly explain the Christian worldview to their students" (p. 5).

Ringenberg, a professor of History at Taylor University (a Council for Christian Colleges and Universities member institution), joins a host of other higher education historians (Rudolph, 1990; Lucas 1994; and Cohen, 1998) who have skillfully chronicled how the U.S. system of higher education came to be what it is today. Ringenberg adds to the literature on American higher education history by specifically focusing on church-related higher education. He brings a unique lens to the table as one deeply interested in and knowledgeable about this subject. The author's primary purposes in this work are to "...assist Protestant colleges in increasing their understanding and appreciation of their educational and spiritual heritage and to help fill a void in the historiography of American higher education" (p.13). Ringenberg's book is an updated and expanded version of what he wrote in 1984; thus making it current and applicable to the present higher education system.

To accomplish his stated purposes, the author utilizes seven chapters that flow chronologically from the colonial period to present day. The author advances his ideals and arguments with a very detailed and well organized account of higher education history. The methodology used by the author appears consistent with similar historical texts. Guest contributor, Dr. Mark Noll, opens the book with an extensive introduction, providing a framework for the chapters that follow by summarizing the intellectual history of Christian higher education. The discussion in this introductory chapter is critical in helping the reader understand the foundational elements of Christian higher education and the ideological forces that shaped and formed these institutions.

Following the introduction, Ringenberg traces the history of higher education in the United States from its beginnings in colonial times to 1900. In these first chapters, Ringenberg's primary thesis is that the foundational elements of the U.S. system of higher education were *Christian*. He backs this claim with powerful historical evidence, such as the stated purposes of our nation's earliest institutions. For example, at Harvard the goal of education was "to know God and Jesus which is eternal life (John 17:3), and therefore to lay Christ in the bottom as the only foundation as all sound knowledge and learning" (p. 38). Also, in the early 1700s Yale's primary goal was that "every student should consider the main end of his study to wit to know God in Jesus Christ and answerably to lead a Godly, sober life" (p. 38).

Another highlight in the first part of this work is the author's explanation of the explosive growth in Protestant higher education that took place in the first half of the nineteenth century. This college founding "boom" occurred primarily because churches felt the need to create institutions of Christian learning for the expanding nation. With few impediments, institutions committed to Christ-centered learning sprang up all across the middle western states. By the 1860s, around 250 institutions of higher education were functioning (Cohen, 1998). Methodist and Baptist institutions led the way because they grew rapidly in church membership during the Second Great Awakening and they realized the importance of having trained clergy (Ringenberg, 2006). This example and many others throughout the first part of this book help the reader understand that Christian ideals in higher education were pervasive in America up until the late 1800s.

Perhaps the most interesting chapter of the book is chapter 4, where the author explores the reasons why many of the institutions that started out with Christianity as the dominant worldview lost their Christian identity. Secularization has been a widely discussed topic in Christian higher education literature. Some of the seminal works that tackle this issue include Burtchaell's *The Dying of the Light: The Disengagement of Colleges and Universities from Their Christian Churches*, Marsden and Longfield's *The Secularization of the Academy*, and Marsden's *The Soul of the American University: From Protestant Establishment to Established Nonbelief*. Ringenberg's historical chapter on secularization complements the major works previously mentioned. Ringenberg cites three primary reasons for what he terms an "ideological revolution": 1) The Bible began to be viewed by intellectuals as a book useful as a source of religious history, wisdom and inspiration, not a work of divinely revealed truth; 2) logical positivism and the scientific method became the established epistemologies; and 3) the belief that universal truths such as those found in the Bible were relative. The idea that individuals create their own meaning and truth became a pervasive philosophy among intellectuals. Ringenberg proceeds in chapter 4 to discuss marks of secularization that often appear in historically Christian universities. Ringenberg boldly states,

*The ultimate measure of the extent to which a given college in a given period – past or present – has moved toward secularism is how completely the college personnel still believe that the critical act of history (and thus the key to ultimate meaning and truth in the universe) is the supreme revelation of God to humanity through Christ. (p. 120)*

The final part of this book examines the contemporary period of church-related higher education. By including information on the contemporary period, Ringenberg bridges the gap between past and present. This allows the reader to see how advancements

were made in light of secularization and how a solid set of institutions exist that are unabashedly *Christian*. In this section Ringenberg reports that the current state of Christian higher education is flourishing. Current statistics indicate remarkable enrollment growth for CCCU member institutions (67.3%) as compared to all colleges and universities (2.1%) for the 1992-2002 decade. Ringenberg's last chapter points toward reasons for growth, current issues, and possibilities for the future.

This look at the history of the Christian College provides a wide angle that is relevant and necessary to the student development professional today. However, readers may find this book difficult to digest at times. At points the author chooses to sacrifice readability for detail and praxis for historical perspective. This, consequently, may be necessary as many Christian institutions wrestle with identity and level of commitment to Christian ideals. Historical perspectives prove invaluable for informing those charged with policy creation and implementation. Ringenberg's work does accomplish important objectives for student development professionals. Primarily, it familiarizes the practitioner with the larger context of the history of Christian higher education and the dialogue that surrounds its sustainability, as well as future trends.

Ringenberg's work is an important contribution to the body of literature that has been published on Christian higher education. He presents to the reader an honest and comprehensive historical account of Protestant academic institutions in America. His holistic approach to the subject matter makes this work a valuable resource for faculty, staff, and administrators at Christian institutions of higher education. I recommend this read as a timely addition to the growing body of literature on Christian higher education.

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**Schuman, S. (2005). *Old Main: Small Colleges in Twenty-First Century America* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press)**

Reviewed by Mari H. Anzicek

“In short, the day I decided to attend a small college was one of the best days of my life” (p.19). This quote epitomizes the essence of *Old Main: Small Colleges in Twenty-First Century America*. This book is about small colleges, their past and present, and the variety of missions and histories they bring to the landscape of American higher education. This book is not a history lesson or an exercise in nostalgia, but a critical exploration into the qualities of small colleges that make them valuable and fascinating places which cannot be lost in the consumerism and one size fits all mindset of 21<sup>st</sup> century America. Small colleges are “not better than large universities...they are different in kind...and for some undergraduates they are the best educational option” (p.2).

Schuman opens with an extensive introduction detailing why, how, for whom, and what he is writing about. This provides the foundation for the text and an understanding of how one might benefit from the reading. Described as institutions containing 500-3,000 full-time students, Schuman believes these small colleges are facing a crisis of collapse. They are being displaced by large multi-versities and expanding community colleges, the for-profit sector, and regional comprehensive universities, all with the ability to meet the many needs of today’s students. Schuman believes the four-year experience at a small college -- for most of our nation’s history, the established norm -- is close to disappearing. It is a “neighborhood American higher education can’t afford to lose” (p.6).

Following extensive research into the history of higher education, studies regarding post-secondary education, and an examination of published college materials (e.g., catalogs, self-studies, admissions materials and websites), Schuman supplemented his research with fieldwork. He chose 12 small colleges to visit; ask questions of students, faculty, and staff; and to critically examine their efforts to find a niche in the higher education community in America. The institutions selected represent a variety of characteristics including: (a) all four tiers of the Carnegie College classification; (b) locations ranging from both coasts, north to Lake Superior, and south to the Gulf of Mexico; (c) co-ed and single-sex institutions; (d) prestigious schools and others that continue to thrive in relative obscurity; (e) public and private institutions; and (f) religious and non-religious. In essence, he attempted to explore a broad sampling of small colleges across America to examine the critical role they play in higher education today. Additionally, Schuman identified a wide audience for this read, including those interested in or currently affiliated with small colleges, guidance counselors and parents of prospective students, alumni, educational policy makers, and the general reader.

Through Schuman's own research and statistics from both the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) and National Center for Educational Statistics (NCES), he focuses on areas he believes distinguish small colleges from the greater higher education community. In chapters two through seven, Schuman surveys the history of American higher education from the perspective of a small college and examines how these institutions are distinctive from each other. An overview of students, faculty, and staff who live, study, and work at small colleges is also provided. In this section, one staff member at a small college commented, "Working at a small college is not a job; it is a lifestyle, even a passion" (p.79).

Additionally, Schuman discusses how small colleges have contributed to the higher education community through a unique commitment to educating students about community and integrity. This is not to say that larger universities are not successful in developing these characteristics in their students, but small colleges have a distinct ability due to their size. In addition, the blurred boundary between small colleges and large universities is discussed. There are many small colleges who have large university qualities and aspirations while large universities are attempting to appear smaller through learning communities and smaller colleges within the greater university community. The fear is that the efforts by large universities are drawing students away from the small college setting. Finally, Schuman provides a series fears and hope for the future along with strategies for continued growth and success.

Possibly the most helpful aspect of the book was the author's "intermezzo" at the end of each chapter. These short stories of a person whose life was impacted and changed by their experience working, studying, and living at a small college linked research with the human experiences of small college constituents. Schuman said this was an "emblem of what small colleges actually do – deal with real people, one at a time" (p.17). Personally, reading these intermezzos was more intriguing and exciting than the book itself. As a graduate of a small college, I immediately related to the experiences of the storytellers, and felt they communicated the real story behind attending and working at a small college. Their stories were poignant and heartfelt, and communicated a true devotion and understanding of the value of small colleges in a small anecdote which could not fully be captured by a whole book.

Overall, Schuman provided a solid contribution to the study of higher education and the role of small colleges. He carried out his argument well and initially indicated a wide audience, but continually came back to suggestions for faculty members and the role they play in student development on campus. One section focused on the staff at small colleges, but Schuman specifically focused on the role of the president because it is the position he knows best. Furthermore, this read sometimes felt like a rally cry for small colleges as if to say together, "We did it. We are doing great beyond our small budgets, limited resources, and less than satisfactory facilities." The reality is that many small colleges already know where they stand and how they are contributing to higher education by creating a unique niche for themselves. This is how they have survived many years and sustained the changing market of higher education.



Although this book reads more like a faculty handbook and was not written specifically for student development professionals working in Christian higher education, it does offer some suggestions for small colleges that span the boundaries of faculty, staff, or administration: 1) Small colleges must invent or discover their own pathway to survival and success through strategic thinking and clarifying the mission; 2) The core mission needs to be sustained and persistently followed; and 3) Small colleges need to continue to be sources of innovation for American higher education.

Small colleges may continue to wish for more resources to attract high quality faculty and students, but the final paragraph of the book captures the essence of small colleges that will hopefully never be lost in the desire to create a niche in higher education. “One attribute that all twelve colleges share, and which characterizes the overwhelming majority of America’s small colleges, is a passionate commitment and deep loyalty...their constituents view them as special places. What America’s small colleges may often lack today in visibility and in wealth they make up for with love” (p.243). I recommend this read as a solid addition to the discussion of the past and present of small colleges and how they can help continue to contribute to the landscape of American higher education.

## **James K.A. Smith. *Who's Afraid of Postmodernism? Taking Derrida, Lyotard, and Foucault to Church.* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2006)**

Reviewed by Gregory P. Veltman

Recently, a few of my colleagues asked me to describe postmodernism. Attempting this was somewhat risky business. The task was like grabbing a handful of sand; it is not easily grasped because some amount seems to always escape between one's fingers. My colleagues had heard the term thrown around, but had rarely spoken about it in depth or in any coherent manner.

Unfortunately, postmodernism has become a sort of catch-all word in higher education, which oftentimes confuses more than clarifies. Its meaning can range from the philosophical, as in "there are no absolute truths," to the cultural, referring to the current generation's penchant for images and story in the learning process. It is commonly understood to be an attack on the validity of the Christian faith. Maybe it is something to be feared. In a gentle and intelligent way, James Smith defines key phrases associated with postmodernism and shows how, rightly understood, they may actually help Christians navigate our current times within the community of the Church. Smith's goal with this book is to introduce college students and the philosophically uninitiated to the origins and the shaping influences of the current theories and discourse in academia.

Smith's gift in this book is to clearly and concisely summarize the major thoughts of three heavy duty French thinkers (Derrida, Lyotard, and Foucault) which have paved the way for our cultural entrance into a postmodern era. He not only opens up the readers to these ideas but also illuminates how they might apply these ideas to their Christian faith and life. A Christian approach to the emerging postmodern culture is an important topic for college students as well as for those working in academia. The academic context is a key arena for discussion of postmodernism and its consequences and allows student affairs professionals to mentor students in exploring how Christians can live *in* the world but not *of* it. Becoming clear on the ideas and issues of postmodernity will equip Christians to step into their callings within society. College and university campuses are where students develop the habits of engage and live in society. Smith's book is a helpful tool in understanding the worldview of postmodern culture as well as the tools for developing a robust Christian faith and practice.

*Who's Afraid of Postmodernism?* came out of a series of lectures that Smith gave at L'Abri, a study center in Switzerland for college age students started by theologian and cultural critic Francis Schaeffer. This book is the first in *The Church and Postmodern Culture* series (edited by Smith and published by Baker Academic) surrounding issues arising out of two new theological movements: the Emergent Church and Radical Orthodoxy. With this confluence of the church and contemporary culture as a guiding influence, Smith weaves together film examples, philosophy and spiritual disciplines in an effort to allay fears that postmodernism is an affront to the gospel.

Smith begins with Jacques Derrida famous phrase “There is nothing outside the text” and explains how it is commonly understood to mean that knowing is only possible through very subjective interpretations of the world, and that all truth is relative to one’s interpretation. Smith points out that this phrase is more comparable to the situation that Lenny, of the film *Memento*, finds himself. Because of an injury that does not allow him to store anything new to memory, Lenny must rely on the words he has written down to lead him toward finding his wife’s killer. His faith in the text becomes more and more suspect as he realizes that the text can be manipulated by others. Smith then goes on to relate this new insight to the use of Scripture as the primary text for life as a Christian. Smith argues that we need a textual community; the church should be a gathering place for Christians to come to know the text that informs their practice. By being a part of this community, Christians can be prophetic in the culture by pointing out that the Christian interpretation of the world, through the lens of the text, accurately describes reality and deconstructs the predominant idols of our culture, like consumerism and hedonism. Understanding that knowing is an interpretive process does not by default make truth relative, rather we come to understand our faith as a lens through which we see the world. Although it is like looking through a glass darkly, someday we shall see face to face.

The second common phrase of postmodernity is Jean-Francois Lyotard’s assessment of the postmodern condition as “incredulity toward metanarratives.” Commonly understood, this phrase takes the shape of doubt toward an over-arching story that explains and gives meaning to our lives. Since Christianity is usually considered to be a metanarrative, a story about the way the world is and the way it ought to be, any incredulity (disbelief or skepticism) toward the Christian faith looks like a rejection of Christianity. What is usually misunderstood in this view is that Lyotard is claiming that the postmodern condition has exposed the fact that it is belief systems that undergirds any type of theory that explains reality (modernism claims that there are objective foundations that legitimate these theories as true). Lyotard’s intent in the context that surrounds this quote is to point out that positivistic science is losing its followers as a guiding worldview. The postmodern condition is the movement away from propositional and foundational truth, toward a view of truth that is a convergence of beliefs and our everyday experience. Modernist Christianity usually comes across as a list of propositions. Smith argues that the postmodern condition allows the church and its members to describe the Christian faith as a rich and dynamic story that applies to our lives and becomes evident in our practices. Christianity, in this view, becomes a persuasive lived narrative, rather than a belief that is held in the abstract and applied legalistically.

Finally, Smith shows how we might approach the “Power is Knowledge” philosophy of Michel Foucault. This section is the hardest part of the book. Not only is Foucault hard to summarize, but Smith also wants to be careful to let readers know that there are currently debates as to what is the best interpretation of Foucault’s work. Foucault’s theory of power, knowledge, and discipline is characterized by “protesting control and resisting systems by documenting their covert domination in modern culture” (p.84). In other words, the structures of society work to make individuals its followers by disciplining them in a certain way—to the benefit of the societal structure. The power that social institutions use to order processes, systems, and people comes to shape the participants, which for Foucault means that the flaws in the social structure become imposed on the participants of the institution. Foucault’s theory reminds me of King David’s critique of idol worship in Psalm 115 in which the worshipers become like the idols they bow before. What is most important to Foucault is the individual’s ability to resist this power, which is seen as coercive and manipulative. Smith concedes that the use of power by individuals and social institutions cannot be avoided, but that it is not inherently negative, like Foucault implies. Instead he argues that power can be useful within a loving community. Smith points out that the church is the institution that should use its power to disciple its members because the image that its members should be conformed to is that of Christ. With Christ as the head, the rightful authority, the body will become what it is meant to be. The church offers Christians a counter formational ethic shaped by the gospel that sets them apart as a prophetic and persuasive witness to the dominant culture.

Smith concludes the book with an appeal for the emerging postmodern church to connect with its roots. Churches that are most interested in connecting to contemporary culture can slide into the problem of accommodating the gospel to the culture. Smith argues that this accommodation can, and should, be avoided by understanding how our times are situated in relationship to a long and deep tradition of Christian thought that can contribute to the current conversation. If we do indeed live on the precipice of postmodern culture, then we will need to be bold in understanding the ideas that shape that culture as well as what the Bible can tell us about how to live faithfully in what seems like a culture in flux.

As students enter college, they are quickly dropped into the waters of postmodernism uninitiated. Smith offers students and their mentors a guide to understanding the times we are living in and knowing what to do in order to avoid being overwhelmed by the cacophony of ideas in a postmodern culture. By initiating students into the conversation of understanding their faith as it relates to culture, they can be developed into wise and faithful followers of the ancient faith that helps them navigate their lives today and tomorrow.

## **Douglas V. Henry and Michael D. Beaty, Editors** **Christianity and the Soul of the University:** **Faith as a Foundation for Intellectual Community**

Reviewed by Barry Loy

If you have ever wished for a better understanding of the mind of Christian intellectuals, this is the book for you. *Christianity and the Soul of the University: Faith as a foundation for intellectual community* is the published outcome of the March 2004 conference co-sponsored by The Baylor Institute for Faith and Learning and The Council of Christian Scholarly Societies. According to the program description, conference goals included the following:

- *To underscore the place that Christian faith should hold as scholars consider how they are called to intellectual labor and how they regard their disciplines.*
- *To remind Christian scholars of the vision of the faith as a comprehensive, unsurpassable, and central account of human life and the world in relation to God.*
- *To promote the vision of an intellectual and spiritual community that aims at comprehending and appropriating the all-encompassing Christian vision of life, and doing so not incidentally, but as an essential and unifying aspect of all academic disciplines.*

The three-day gathering included 5 plenary sessions and a multitude of concurrent meetings consisting of over 100 speakers. Baker Academic, the publisher, included the 5 plenary talks and chose 5 essays from the concurrent sessions for the final volume. The book is divided into two main sections – basic issues and vital practices.

The first section describes intellectual community as a community founded upon the incarnation of Jesus Christ and driven by reflective Christian faith. The second part explores ways in which institutions might comprehend and live out a commitment to the belief that in Christ “are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge” (Col. 2:3).

Given that the aims of the conference were rather expansive, the 10 essays are loosely connected but all do support the basic premise that the Christian faith is at the bottom of all true intellectual community. Polkinghorne argues in chapter 3 that every intellectual community, sacred or secular, that seeks truth, whether they know it or not,

are ultimately searching for the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. Polkinghorne goes further and claims that the quest for truth is a search for the work of the Word “by whom all things were made, and without whom was not anything made that was made” (John 1:3).

The primary audience of this book is Christian scholars, not student development practitioners - all the more reason that those of us in student affairs should read the book. We sometimes lament how our faculty colleagues do not understand our work and I’m sure they have similar feelings about us from time to time. An afternoon or day spent with *Christianity and the Soul of the University* gives one much insight into the motives, zeal and passions of our fellow educators.

In addition to helping us understand the academic enterprise and the work of the teaching faculty on our campuses, several of the essays have implications for the out of class educational pursuits of student affairs. I’ll share just a few examples below.

In the opening chapter, Richard Hayes, using 1 John, provides a rich explanation of the Biblical idea of community and the concept of “Koinonia”. He explains that Koinonia is more than fellowship, sharing, and social relationships. It is a deep bond of common interest and commitment that leads us to “know” the truth and “do” the truth. Hayes maintains that we must teach our students to do the truth – to seek holiness, justice, peace, and reconciliation. And to do this within community not as disembodied intellects but as a meeting of persons.

In chapter 4, Joel Carpenter reminds us that the center of Christianity is moving South and East and that Christian scholars must reorient their course (and courses) accordingly. As support he uses the example of Africa. In 1900 there were about 9 million Christians in Africa. Today the number is estimated at 382 million. Carpenter argues that these growth trends call Christian scholars to relocate their scholarship toward new interests and strategies to serve the growing church in

the Southern Hemisphere. This calls those of us in student development to ponder what it might mean for us to reorient our work toward the South and East. What would it look like for our student development programs to become more global in scope?

The success of becoming less centered on the concerns of Christians in the North and West may depend on our ability to practice hospitality. In chapter 7, Aurelie Hagstrom argues that Christian higher education must recover and appropriate hospitality as a moral category that benefits the development of community as well as the pursuit of scholarly inquiry. She also maintains that through the practice of Christian hospitality, colleges and universities can embody lively places of learning, stronger and more interesting than their secular counterparts, because of their religious identity.

In the ninth chapter, Mark Sargent and Daniel Russ reflect on something very close to the hearts of Christian student affairs professionals - the task of understanding the New Testament as a compelling moral vision and not simply a reductive behavioral code. Sargent and Russ encourage us to use our “moral imagination” as we consider two general streams of moral thought: the concern for personal integrity and piety and the concern for justice and redemptive action. The authors especially call us to do more to engage our students in imaginative thinking that works to promote social hope. Students need more than simple reminders about engaging culture and caring about the world's pressing problems. They also need practice and discipline in civic dialogue and civic engagement.

*Christianity and the Soul of the University* sets before us a challenge to work hard to pursue truth and to act truthfully within our college and university communities. In chapter 2, Jean Bethke Elshtain cautions us against accepting and substituting simplistic therapeutization for the rigorous life. She reminds us of Dietrich Bonhoeffer's dislike of mushy arguments and soft theology. While most of us in student affairs may not have a calling to rigorous scholarship, we do have the responsibility of intellectual labor. *Christianity and the Soul of the University* challenges me to undergird my student affairs practice with serious intellectual effort. The essays call us to live within our intellectual communities in ways that help us love God with “all our hearts, with all our understanding, and with all our strength” (Mark 12:33).

## Arthur W. Chickering, Jon C. Dalton, and Liesa Stamm. Encouraging Authenticity & Spirituality in Higher Education

Reviewed by Sam Shellhamer

Arthur Chickering introduced his seven developmental vectors for college students in 1969 in his book, *Education and Identity*. This was during a time when “value-less” education was in vogue. Chickering described the development of integrity, one of the seven vectors, in this manner: “...the clarification of a personally valid set of beliefs that have some internal consistency and that provide at least a tentative guide for behavior” (p. 17). Almost 40 years later, post-modernism pervades the academy and the prevailing attitude is “you believe what you want to believe and I will believe what I want to believe.”

In *Encouraging Authenticity & Spirituality in Higher Education*, Chickering, Dalton, and Stamm focus upon a holistic development of college students and how the total collegiate experience impacts their growth. These three authors bring decades of experience in the field of higher education and they recognize and assert the importance of spirituality in the lives of college students. They define authenticity in terms of congruity between what one says and what one does. “Being authentic means that what you see is what you get (p. 8). They describe spirituality in a very broad manner, not just in terms of personal religious beliefs, but include a commitment to inner development that includes one’s total being. This is very similar to Chickering’s description of integrity in *Education and Identity*, which was written almost 40 years ago.

This book is a refreshing acknowledgement of the value and the influence of spirituality among college students. The book is laid out in three major areas. The first section, “Framing Perspectives,” lays out the historical and cultural implications as to why spirituality is an important dynamic in higher education. “Institutional Amplification” is the second section and considers the challenges and appropriate changes needed for spirituality to become an integral part of the academy. The last section, “Getting There from Here” deals with the challenges of assessing spirituality and enabling spirituality to become an inclusive aspect of college life.

One of the truly unusual and delightful aspects of this book is found in the first chapter. All three authors provide a personal reflection upon their career in higher education and why spirituality is of significant interest to them. This personal perspective is seldom found in the literature in higher education. It is extremely helpful in laying out a context for the entire book and should not be overlooked. Jon Dalton, in particular, is to be commended for his leadership in establishing and hosting the annual Institute on College Student Values at Florida State University for the past 15 years. It provides a good venue for student development professionals from faith-based colleges to actively engage with professionals from secular institutions on the topics of values and spirituality.



*Encouraging Authenticity & Spirituality in Higher Education* is a valuable resource for anyone engaged in higher education, and not just for those who work at faith-based or parochial institutions. The authors define spirituality in a broader sense than most student development professionals would who serve at Christian colleges. However, there is value for those who work in Christian higher education to be challenged to think beyond their own community as to the meaning of spirituality. Even though some institutions might define themselves as more spiritually focused, the spiritual dimension is universal to any college or university student.

Dalton makes a very direct statement about the lack of leadership in the area of spirituality: "...student affairs professionals have not been influential advocates for the place of spirituality in the higher education setting. They have often failed to recognize the centrality of spirituality in the identity development of students during the college years..." (p. 147). Stamm asserts that moral leadership among student affairs staff must be strengthened. She points out that student affairs professionals are role models and do influence the institutional environment and students. Stamm states that "administration is not leadership" (p. 254). She offers the following challenge: "...we need to encourage our administrators, faculty, and student affairs professionals to become true leaders through living their own visions for amplifying our institutional environments." (p. 253).

She goes on to suggest that leaders must have a vision for creating a culture of values and purpose.

The authors identify some of the challenges related to spirituality that are of particular interest for those of us who serve in faith-based institutions. These include: the challenge of seeking congruity between the espoused core values of the institution and what experience reveals, clearly defining a mission statement and desired outcomes for all students, and assessing institutional influence upon the spiritual growth of students. In the past decade, accrediting bodies have begun holding college and universities accountable for assertions made about the values of the institution and the influence upon students. An assessment of relying upon testimonials and personal stories is no longer sufficient. Evaluating the spiritual aspect of students' lives is challenging, but nevertheless necessary and exceedingly important.

*Encouraging Authenticity & Spirituality in Higher Education* is a valuable resource for anyone involved in the college or university setting. It is of particular value for the student development professional working at faith-based colleges because it affirms the spiritual focus and vision of such institutions and it provides a comprehensive approach

to the spiritual growth of students and how they are influenced by their collegiate experience. Chickering, Dalton, and Stamm are to be commended for their contribution to a more holistic view of students and how spirituality places a formative role in their personal development.

### **Additional Resources:**

- Garber, Steven (1996), *The Fabric of Faithfulness*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press.
- Holmes, Arthur F. (1991), *Shaping Character: Moral Education in the Christian College*. Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company.
- Litfin, Duane (2004), *Conceiving the Christian College*. Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company.
- Parks, Sharon. (1986), *The Critical Years*. San Francisco: Harper & Row, Publishers.
- Tisdell, Elizabeth J. (2003), *Exploring Spirituality and Culture in Adult and Higher Education*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

## **Michael J. Cuyjet and Associates: African American Men in College (Josey Bass 2006)**

Reviewed by Jacqueline Rhodes

Since the doors of Harvard open in 1636 to the recent passing of Michigan's Proposal 2, the state's version of California's prop 209, the institution of higher education has been informed and reformed by society's tension surrounding race and gender. With the exception of Oberlin and Antioch, African Americans were denied access to higher education in the United States before the Civil War. Historians of Black education estimate that during the first 230 years of American higher education (1636-1866), the nations' colleges and universities graduated a total of from fifteen to twenty eight African American students (Sollors, Titcomb, and Underwood 1993) And while we know the unanimous Supreme Court decision of *Brown v Board of Education* in 1954 ended de jour school segregation the country continues to struggle in 2006 to build an educational system that works for all citizens. Indeed, the very questions posed by the founding fathers of educational philosophy; access to education, curriculum and pedagogy, continue to plague us today.

What is the purpose of college and more importantly, for which citizens is it designed? While there may be some debate on what college is for, it is clear, that higher education was not designed with the African American in mind. After the Civil War, many progressive southern Whites supported the notion of education but proposed a special form and content of "Negro Education," a curriculum designed to meet their perception of the peculiar aptitudes and needs of a "race" of manual laborers. If African American, like Whites, were to be educated at public expense, southern White public officials all but universally held that education for African Americans be separate and subordinate (Anderson, 1988, 79-109). African American religious organizations and White, northern missionary societies persevered to create educational opportunities for African American men and women, Significant gains in college admission and graduation were enjoyed due to the protest and sacrifice of students in the sixties.

Decades after the educational gains of the Civil Rights Movement, African American men seem to be losing ground in the battle to attain a college degree. African American women outnumber African American men two to one on college and university campuses. Clarence Page of the *Chicago Tribune*, wrote, "There are now more black men behind bars in America than in its colleges and universities." (*Chicago Tribune* 2002). *African American Men in College* does not aim to support Page's conclusion but does present an analysis of the most current data on the declining number of African American male students in higher education. The contributing authors of *African American Men in College* focus their attention on the crisis in higher education as it relates to the male student's social, cultural and academic adjustment to campus life.

However, the book is careful not to take the Bill Cosby approach to discussing the plight of African American men. According to Hrabowski, Maton, and Greif (1998), “Almost everything we read and hear about young Black males focuses on the problems and not the promises” (pg 24). *African American Men in College* focuses on the institution and its responsibility to consider the unique needs of African American men.

This book, a lengthy read at 345 pages, is written with the Student Development practitioner in mind. It is divided into two main sections, containing twenty one chapters total. The first section, Part One: Issues and Ideas, addresses some of the most pressing issues facing colleges and universities. Cuyjet and Associates tackle the Academic Climate, Campus Activities, Spirituality and Religion, Sexuality, Athletic, Fraternities and Matriculation. Part Two: Profiles of Some Successful Programs, highlights nine programs deemed successful by the contributing authors. These programs are easily adaptable and can be replicate at institutions of all sizes. The editor wisely provides a thorough synopsis of each chapter in the preface of the book and an extensive subject index at the conclusion.

What I found most refreshing about the text book – and yes, I think it should be used in our graduate programs - is its inclusion of the African American male student voice. Imagine, actual students talking about issues pertaining to students. Encouraging! At predominantly white Christian institutions we must be careful to consider the student perspectives as we shape programs and policies aimed to function on their behalf, lest we fall into a familiar pattern of paternalism. Notice I say “consider “their voice, not rely upon it to the point of over taxation. This book is not written by a group of scholars tucked away in a think tank waxing eloquently on matters only researched. The advice is given by college student personnel professionals and faculty on the frontline with student everyday. Equally impressive is the breadth of professional expertise represented by the contributors. The volume represents a spirit of collaboration which breaks down the traditional tension between faculty and administration. There is a sense from this book that the success of students – all student- occurs when education is seamless. The contributing writers who serve as faculty confirm the notion that there are some on the “in classroom” side of the educational enterprise who value the contribution of those who teach outside of the classroom.

Cuyjet looks at three institutional types, historically Black colleges and universities, predominately white institutions and community colleges. Although he considers the matter of spirituality and religion, the Christian college experience is not included in the dialogue. Interestingly, many African American male students site their faith as their primary source of motivation. It seems to reason that faith-based institutions would attract Black men of faith at a higher percentage. Armed with this knowledge CCCU institutions should find renewed vigor for connecting and recruiting male students. But do not expect to find recruitment strategies in *African American Men*. The book is solely dedicated to helping institutions retain current students.

The text is replete with current statistics on attrition and matriculation. It does an excellent job painting the current picture of male students; their struggles, their strength, their successes. A comparison of the Institutional Environment on HBCUs and PWI found in chapter two is numbing. In my opinion, the environmental conditions experienced on a PWI campus are intensified when the campus is PWI and Christian. Add to the feelings of social isolation, low academic expectations and minimal faculty of color mentors, a different denominational world view, unfamiliar worship music and students who have never interacted with people outside of their homogenous community. Now you have a sense of life as a student of color at your campus.

To gain a broader, more in-depth perspective I suggest coupling this book with the *Racial Crisis in American Higher Education: Continuing Challenges for the Twenty-first Century*, Smith, Altbach, Lomotey. The *Racial Crisis* provides an analysis of the political and social underpinnings which have shaped educational policy and practices. While *African American Men* deal with the student's current predicament, the *Racial Crisis* helps uncover the institutional racism which has plagued the educational system since its inception. After reading *African American Men in College* I realized that the concepts and strategies introduced are standard practice for most colleges and universities. It is par for the course to offer mentorship programs, student organizations and leadership opportunities for students. The main benefit of reading this book is to add a new dimension, a different perspective to the quality campus programs being rendered. If we seek to improve the campus climate for African American male students on campus, we must strive to remove the institutional racism and individual prejudice that impede their success. By doing so, we improve the campus climate for *all* students.

# **Our Underachieving Colleges: A Candid Look at How Much Students Learn and Why They Should be Learning More.**

**(Derek Bok)**

A Review Essay by Jean-Noel Thompson, Ph. D.

In considering the successes and ills of American society, many have turned to the institution of higher education as a primary contributor. The concepts of assessment, accountability, and higher education reform continue to pervade the halls of colleges and university nation-wide. In *Our Underachieving Colleges*, Derek Bok raises some fundamental questions and relevant criticism of past and current efforts to examine the effectiveness of institutions of higher education. “Put bluntly, the widely publicized critiques of four-year colleges are largely a digression, diverting attention from questions of pedagogy, the college major, the neglect of moral development and civic education, and other truly serious educational problems.” (pg. 56) In lieu of such approaches, the author argues that a better way to examine the strengths and weaknesses our colleges is to begin “with a careful look at the purposes to be achieved” (pg. 57).

As Bok considers the purposes of higher education, he unapologetically dives more deeply than the expected scholastic, professional, and vocational aims. Perhaps, such an approach lends the necessary pressure that colleges need to instead seek a more compelling institutional purpose. Bok asserts that institutions of higher education should drive a purpose that encompasses efforts to foster among students generally accepted values and behaviors including honesty, sound character, and racial tolerance. The author identifies and elaborates on six purposes of higher education he deems especially important in preparing young adults: (1) The ability to communicate; (2) Critical thinking; (3) Moral reasoning; (4) Preparing citizens; (5) Living with diversity; and (6) Living in a more global society. Considering the audience for which this review is intended, “moral reasoning” will be given special attention later in this review.

*Our Underachieving Colleges* is highly recommended. This book is an insightful lesson for college constituency at all levels of academic and co-curricular departments. Bok brings over 100 years of undergraduate education history to a poignant summary, offering an honest and eye-opening review of several related works. This book is both a timeless and a timely work. Timeless in that the author raises fundamental questions about higher education which are sure to remain directly relevant to our work. Timely with respect to the salient issues institutions of higher education are currently facing. In arguing his points, Bok references a wide variety of literature and research studies, ranging from Pascarella and Terenzini’s research on how college affects students, to Mina Shaughnessy’s guides for teaching basic writing. Furthermore, the author comprehensively cites the Department of Education and other statistics reporting organizations in his efforts to support his claims. This combined with Bok’s impressive credentials and personal experience in higher education lends strength and validity to his arguments.

While this book is important and well written, it is appropriate to point out a possible shortcoming. Perhaps this criticism will be more meaningful and/or accepted by professionals in higher education who value a Christian worldview. An underlying message Bok refers to throughout this book is that undergraduate education has meandered away from many of the foundational principles and classical curriculum found in colleges before the Civil War, such as training the intellect and building character. Particularly with respect to building character and ethical behavior among students, Bok only skims the surface of the significance that religion has played in this regard. For instance, he briefly mentions that “religious orthodoxy also lost its grip on many colleges”, and that “faith was no longer thought central to the development of moral character” (pg. 15). Historically, the author addresses this issue of character and moral development more from a curricular standpoint related to required courses, classical texts, and the role that faculty should or should not play in this regard. While it is perhaps pleasing to know that Bok has minimally recognized the role of religion or faith in higher education, he has not sufficiently stressed the true importance of faith in the discussion of character building on moral and ethical grounds. Furthermore, there is no discussion on how current institutions of higher education (both faith-based and secular) integrate faith as a means to moral and ethical behavior among students. In all fairness to the author, there exists today an expansive body of literature on the topic of character building and moral development among students that does not give weight to the integration of faith and learning.

The central point one might glean from this book, is Bok’s warning that colleges and universities in America have become complacent in their ability to truly teach college-age youth. He credits such complacency to the number of students who exit institutions of higher education ill-prepared to successfully navigate the world and people around them. Bok targets several competing issues within the current system of higher education for this complacency such as: a lack of clear purpose within institutions of higher learning; the notion that serious problems in higher education are not correctly identified, nor clearly understood by those responsible for making needed change; a disconnect among and between academic departments; a general emphasis among faculty to pursue research and other professional endeavors at the expense of quality teaching; and a general attitude among higher education constituency that American colleges and universities are superior to such institutions in other countries. Having raised these concerns, it is important to recognize that the underlying intent of Bok’s work in this book is to raise some important issues and questions, and not necessarily to offer specific solutions. He leaves it to individual institutions of higher education to first recognize such issues, and then to form appropriate solutions. Furthermore, Bok offers the reader the good news “...that most of the serious deficiencies can be overcome, at least to a significant degree, given the will to do so” (pg. 10).

As a result of reading this book, it is hoped that administrators, faculty, and student affairs practitioners in higher education will be inspired by Bok’s simple, yet compelling message that “we can do better” to prepare college students for the world they will soon join and lead.

Derek Bok is President Emeritus and Research Professor at Harvard University. He has authored major books on higher education which include *The Shape of the River* (with William Bowen), and *The Commercialization of Higher Education*.

## **Arthur Sandeen and Margaret J. Barr: Critical Issues for Student Affairs: Challenges and Opportunities (San Francisco: John Wiley, Inc., 2006)**

Reviewed by Rob Thompson, Ph. D.

It is fitting that two such highly respected Student Affairs professionals, at the end of long and successful careers, reflected on their combined experience and informed observations to identify various critical issues that they believe must be addressed in the near future. While the authors admit the issues they identify are not the only issues facing student affairs, they believe these issues will play a significant role in shaping the future of student development in higher education. Their stated purpose is to “stimulate civil discussion and debate” about the nine critical issues presented in the book. The authors’ target audience is student affairs professionals engaged in program review and planning as well as vice presidents and deans looking to answer these questions on their own campuses.

Each of the nine critical issues receives its own chapter in the book. The author’s begin each chapter by defining and discussing the various components of the issue in question. The chapter then ends with suggestions for action. The issues include: the foundation of student affairs; the placement of student affairs within the university organizational structure; student affair’s role in diversity education; attracting and retaining a diverse staff; the affect of various revenue sources on student affairs; student affairs role in non-traditional educational settings; the role of assessment; and defining who has the responsibility for the lives of students.

The authors’ first address the theoretical and philosophical underpinnings of the profession. Their concern centers on the debate on the “true foundation” of the profession, and how differing points of view can cause unproductive and unhealthy debates that distract the profession from the common foundation that bonds the profession together. The differing points of view have assisted in compounding efforts to unify the profession, causing those outside of student affairs to question the legitimacy of the field. After a brief and useful review of the theoretical and philosophical history of student affairs, the authors reiterate that, while the different philosophical approaches of the profession reflect the diverse nature of higher education in the United States, there are two fundamental assumptions that unify and drive the philosophy of the profession. These are the focus on the development of the whole student and the supporting of the academic mission of the institution.

The authors next discuss student affairs place in the administrative structure of the institution. Given the varied programs and activities found in student affairs, the role of student affairs has expanded and become a significant part of university administrations. While there does not seem to be a “best” administrative organizational model, the authors stress the importance of strong leadership in the



student affairs area. Leaders must be committed to student learning, the implementing of new ideas and programs, and be aware of important issues on their campuses.

Chapters three and four tackle the topic of diversity. First, the authors call on Student Affairs professionals to continue to take the lead role in educating the student population on the issues of diversity. They specifically identify this issue as the ideal opportunity to collaborate with the academic side of campus. The diversity issue is a “hot” button on most campuses, and one that requires immediate attention. Closely connected to educating students and the campus community on diversity is the issue of attracting and retaining a diverse staff, which is covered in Chapter Four. The authors rightly note that student affairs is not a profession most people plan to pursue when entering college. The authors identify several key issues that hinder both the recruitment and retention of diverse staffs, including low salary and difficult working conditions.

Chapter Five addresses the important issue of funding for student affairs. This is another important issue facing higher education, as tuition costs increase and constituencies demand higher accountability for their tuition and tax dollars. The authors raise issues worth consideration for senior administrators.

The question of the role of student affairs regarding students studying through various venues separated from the “main campus” is the topic for Chapter Six. What responsibility does the student affairs department have for on-line students, students studying abroad, students on branch campuses, or other education centers separated from the main student affairs operation. This topic is very pertinent considering the vast explosion of “for profit” programs as well as the expansion of on-line offerings.

The issue of assessment is the subject of Chapter 7. While student affairs profession has many fine practitioners, very few formally assess their programs and services. This has become an issue for the profession, and in this age of increased demand for outcome measures, either by legislative demand or institutional need, the profession has not taken leadership in this area. The authors note that this issue is quickly becoming the most powerful force in the decision making processes in colleges and universities. It is an area that is sadly neglected by student affairs professionals, and the authors call on the profession to seize the opportunity to collaborate with the academic side of campus in this manner.

Chapter Eight addresses the issue of who has responsibility for the lives of students. Changing student demographics, fluctuating legal environments, and expanding parent and student expectations merge with the varied institutional missions to create a complex, but volatile topic. Student populations are more diverse than ever with

increased percentages of non-traditional aged students, increasingly racially varied, and an increasing number of students with physical and emotional needs. In addition, society is more litigious than ever before, providing more pressure for the school to assume a larger role in the lives of students. What is the role of the student affairs office in meeting the needs of these students, and how can the costs of increased services be absorbed?

The final chapter looks at professional organizations, noting the recent trend of professional organizations to split into splinter groups specifically representing special interest groups. The authors note that there are currently over 35 national organizations representing student affairs and that leadership in the field is fragmented because of it. In addition, the splintering of student affairs professional organizations causes the professional to lose sight of one of the core issues of concern, the commitment to the whole student. The authors note the need for unity of the professional organizations and a return to the focus on the whole student and improving the learning conditions for the students.

While the book includes many useful insights and discussions on important issues and current 'hot' topics in the field, however, much of what is covered in the book is a rehash of issues that have been consuming the attention and energy of student affairs professionals for some time. The book is successful in identifying and articulating areas that are nearly universal in nature and applicable at some level to both secular and religious institutions. For the Christian, who is engaged in student affairs, the book provides a voice to issues important to the profession as a whole, and in most cases, applicable to the campuses of institutions closely tied to their governing denominations with little adjustment.

Conspicuously missing is any discussion of spirituality and spiritual development in higher education. While the discussion of spirituality cannot be limited to Christianity for a general readership, the absence of the issue does seem negligent. The issue of spiritual development of college students has been receiving an increased interest over the past decade. If the development of the "whole" student is a core issue for student affairs as the authors argue, then this vital issue should at least deserve some discussion.

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academic affairs as the two central areas that contribute to fulfilling the primary objectives of a baccalaureate institution.

## **L. Braskamp, L. Calian Trautvetter, & K. Ward; Putting Students First: How Colleges Develop Students Purposefully (Bolton, Massachusetts: Anker Publishing Co., Inc, 2006)**

Reviewed by Jeffrey P. Bouman

What is college and who is it for? These are few of the questions that lie near the heart of a centuries-old dialogue in American higher education, and they inform much of the motivation behind the book *Putting Students First: How Colleges Develop Students Purposefully*. Veteran administrator and professor Larry Braskamp, with two highly experienced colleagues, Lois Calian Trautvetter and Kelly Ward, looked at 10 “faith-based” or “church-related” colleges (the terms are interchangeable) and found out that there are many ways in which small, faith-based institutions are well-positioned to lead the academy in its contemporary quest for holistic education because they never abandoned the original commitments of the academy in the first place, namely education for both *wisdom* and *knowledge*.

As the title suggests, Braskamp and his colleagues make the case that institutions of higher education should set out to nurture both cognitive and affective aspects of students, their heads and their hearts, in order to better prepare them for lives of meaning and purpose. By implication, higher education has not done this particularly well of late, and the colleges from the sample stand in contrast to recent “business as usual” in higher education, what has turned into an exclusive education of the head – the authors use the phrase “forming and informing” to describe the dual goals that have always served to guide institutions of higher education.

My own sense after reading the book was that it would have been better titled *Ten Colleges that Develop Students Purposefully and Holistically: How Faith Commitments Shape Student Develop Practice Across Colleges and Universities*. In addition to the question of what priority to give students in the higher education context, the book addresses four additional tensions in today’s academy: mission and market; individual gain and the public good; faith and knowledge; and compartmentalization and community. Indeed, these tensions nicely sum up the myriad complexities faced by leaders in higher education.

The ten institution sample represents a broad cross-section of the many different manifestations of faith-based higher education. These were:

*Bethune-Cookman College, an historically black Methodist college in Daytona Beach, Florida; Creighton University, a Catholic-Jesuit university in Omaha, Nebraska; Hamline University, a Methodist university in St. Paul, Minnesota; Hope College, a college affiliated with the Reformed Church in America in Holland, Michigan; Pacific Lutheran University, a Lutheran university in Tacoma, Washington; The College of Wooster, a Presbyterian college in Wooster, Ohio; Union University, a Southern Baptist university in Jackson, Tennessee; The University of Dayton, a Catholic-Marianist university in Dayton, Ohio; Villanova University, a Catholic-Augustinian university in Villanova, Pennsylvania; Whitworth College, a Presbyterian college in Spokane, Washington.*

The authors used Personal Investment Theory as a conceptual framework, and augmented this with what they call the 4C framework. Personal Investment Theory allows three elements of students' experience to be considered simultaneously: internal (sense of self), external (patterns of behavior), and sociocultural. The 4C framework emerges from this third element as four "C" concepts that the book explores in some depth: Culture, Curriculum, Cocurriculum, and Community. After setting a context in which the authors argue that the winds of change are blowing across the academy (from a "sage on the stage" to a "guide on the side" mentality), the authors spend a chapter on each of these concepts, and sprinkle in specific examples from the sample institutions along the way.

*Culture* is summed up as mission and leadership, location, faculty, and creative tensions between support and challenge within institutions. Colleges and universities that seek to provide a holistic education for their students will pay close attention to their stated purpose, their legacy and history, their geographical location, the nature of their faculty, and to "the dual role of support and challenge... to the holistic development of students where the goals extend beyond cognitive and skill development into values, civic responsibility, and faith development" (81).

*Curriculum* is described as the institutional bedrock where goals meet practice. The institutions studied provide multiple examples of how the practice of teaching and learning has changed alongside the way we now understand the nature of knowledge. The authors argue that post-modernity has brought with it a variety of opportunities and challenges in regard to how institutions define, prioritize, and transmit knowledge. One professor is quoted as being challenged by the image of being a vending machine into which students put money in exchange for the commodity, "which is me" (107). Indeed, the commodification of the professoriate is a concern that institutions must recognize and deal with or risk inadvertently losing their core identities. If our purpose shifts from training students to make a difference in the world to providing entertainment on students' journeys into privileged lives, we have lost our way. A recent strategic planning conversation at my own institution made the case that our purpose is never to simply employ people and to graduate students. Without a specific mission and purpose related to the nature of knowledge and the objective of its attainment, our institutions should cease to exist.

Another area discussed related to curriculum is the "pedagogy of engagement." The idea that students learn better through interaction with their learning environment beyond reading and listening has been around since the guilds of the medieval universities, and more recently enjoyed an advocate in the work of John Dewey during the early part of the twentieth century. After a few decades of drift toward more passive learning, active, engaged learning is making a comeback, and the authors give helpful descriptions of service-learning, community-based service and research, January and May terms, study abroad, and student research opportunities.

The *cocurriculum* is described as a set of bridge activities that enable students to find intersections between their classroom and out-of-class learning experiences. The authors list the mutual reinforcement of learning, campus rituals, residence life, student leadership, relationships with coaches, professional staff, and campus ministry, faculty interactions, and immersion experiences as the most common environmental or active ways of cocurricular learning.

*Community* is acknowledged by the authors as a potentially overused concept, and they give good examples of how to deal with this overuse. They define it as “what people do to create hospitable places to work and study” (160), and they discuss both its internal and external manifestations. In brief, campuses have to figure out how to both provide a hospitable, inclusive and close-knit learning and working environment along with creating multiple bridges and exchanges between campus and the external community. For example, “developing community” will be interpreted in vastly different ways by residence life staff members (internal) and alumni officers (external). It is important for campuses to be able to create small communities for students to belong to, and to be places where strangers can enter and feel like there is room to belong.

My hunch is that most readers of *Growth* will read the book appreciatively. The authors make a thoughtful case for the kind of work that has been done by student development professionals for some time. They also provide a welcome voice of appreciation for a thoughtful, committed Christian approach to the work of student development, a good example of principled pluralism, in the world of student development, something that has been largely absent in my experience in national settings. Where I think the book most challenges student development professionals is in their efforts to provide the kind of humble partnership that the academic divisions of their colleges need.

A member of ACSD since 1989, Jeffrey P. Bouman received his B.A. in Sociology from Calvin College, his M.A. in Student Personnel from Slippery Rock University, and his Ph.D. in Higher Education from the University of Michigan’s Center for the Study of Higher and Postsecondary Education. He is currently the Director of the Service-Learning Center at Calvin College in Grand Rapids, Michigan.

## **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) 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 specialization's.
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.