Introduction
College Students' Beliefs & Values Survey

A pilot survey was completed in Spring 2003 by approximately 3,700 juniors at a representative sample of colleges and universities that participated in the Cooperative Institutional Research Program (CIRP) annual Survey of Entering Freshmen three years earlier. These longitudinal data provide information on how the college experience impacts students' spiritual life and development.

Survey questions cover 11 broad areas:
- Spiritual outlook / orientation / worldview
- Spiritual well being
- Religious / spiritual practices and behaviors
- Self-assessments of spirituality and related traits
- Spiritual quest
- Spiritual / mystical experiences
- Attitudes towards religion / spirituality
- Religious affiliation / identity
- Theological / metaphysical beliefs
- Facilitators / inhibitors of spiritual development
- Compassionate behavior

Correlations by Gender

- Female students were more likely than males to report being essential:
  - Becoming a more loving person
  - Praying
  - Praying for help in solving problems
  - Praying for emotional strength
  - Praying to relieve the suffering of others
  - Praying for loved ones
  - Feeling a sense of connection with God/Higher Power that transcends their personal self.

The Higher Education Research Institute (HERI) at UCLA conducted a major new program of research to track the spiritual growth of students during their college years.

The study employed a multi-institutional and longitudinal design to identify trends, patterns, and principles of spiritual growth during the college years;

- Generate empirically based insights on the trends, patterns, and principles of spiritual growth during the college years;
- Involve and engage colleges and universities interested in expanding and enhancing opportunities for college students to grow spiritually and religiously;
- Widely disseminate the findings of the study to stakeholders throughout higher education as well as to opinion leaders in the mainstream media.

The values are expressed in percentages.

* "Others" includes:
  - Unitarian/Universalist
  - Eastern Orthodox
  - Hindu
  - Other

The values are expressed in percentages.
Correlations by Gender

- Female students were more likely than males:
  - To report that they ultimate spiritual quest is to know their purpose in life.
  - To report that romantic relationship experiences strengthened their religious/spiritual beliefs.
  - To report that they agree that:
    - What happens in their lives is determined by forces larger than themselves
    - They gain spiritual strength by trusting in a Higher Power
    - Their spirituality is a source of joy
  - To have helped friends with personal problems during the past year
  - To be felt loved by God
  - To pray.

Correlations by Ethnic Background

- African American students were more likely than other ethnic groups to strongly agree that:
  - Reducing pain and suffering in the world;
  - Becoming a more loving person;
  - Believing in the goodness of all people.

- African American students were more likely than other ethnic groups to:
  - Engage at least weekly in religious singing/chanting;
  - To pray.

Correlations by Ethnic Background

- White Caucasian students were less likely than other ethnic groups to strongly agree that:
  - All life is interconnected;
  - Pain and suffering are essential to becoming a better person.

- African American students were more likely than other ethnic groups to:
  - Engage at least weekly in religious singing/chanting;
  - To pray.

Correlations by Religious Affiliations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Seeking opportunities to help them grow spiritually</th>
<th>Baptists</th>
<th>Methodists</th>
<th>Catholics</th>
<th>Non Religious</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strongly agree</td>
<td>Very important</td>
<td>Non Significant Correlation</td>
<td>Not very important</td>
<td>Non very important</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Seeking to follow religious teachings in their everyday life</th>
<th>Baptists</th>
<th>Methodists</th>
<th>Catholics</th>
<th>Non Religious</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strongly agree</td>
<td>Very important</td>
<td>Non Significant Correlation</td>
<td>Not very important</td>
<td>Non very important</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>People who do not believe in God will be punished</th>
<th>Baptists</th>
<th>Methodists</th>
<th>Catholics</th>
<th>Non Religious</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strongly agree</td>
<td>Non Significant Correlation</td>
<td>Non Significant Correlation</td>
<td>Do not agree</td>
<td>Do not agree</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The universe arose by chance</th>
<th>Baptists</th>
<th>Methodists</th>
<th>Catholics</th>
<th>Non Religious</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Do not agree</td>
<td>Non Significant Correlation</td>
<td>Non Significant Correlation</td>
<td>Strongly agree</td>
<td>Non Significant Correlation</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Having an interest in different religious traditions</th>
<th>Baptists</th>
<th>Methodists</th>
<th>Catholics</th>
<th>Non Religious</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Do not agree</td>
<td>Non Significant Correlation</td>
<td>Non Significant Correlation</td>
<td>Strongly agree</td>
<td>Non Significant Correlation</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Being thankful for all that has happened to them</th>
<th>Baptists</th>
<th>Methodists</th>
<th>Catholics</th>
<th>Non Religious</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strongly agree</td>
<td>Non Significant Correlation</td>
<td>Non Significant Correlation</td>
<td>Do not agree</td>
<td>Non Significant Correlation</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Correlations by Religious Affiliations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Baptist</th>
<th>Methodist</th>
<th>Catholic</th>
<th>Non Religious</th>
<th>Non Significant Correlation</th>
<th>Do not agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Seeing each day, good or bad, as a gift</td>
<td>Strongly agree</td>
<td>Non Significant Correlation</td>
<td>Non Significant Correlation</td>
<td>Do not agree</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Believing obligated to follow any parents' religious practices</td>
<td>Strongly agree</td>
<td>Non Significant Correlation</td>
<td>Non Significant Correlation</td>
<td>Do not agree</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Had a spiritual experience while listening to beautiful music</td>
<td>Strongly agree</td>
<td>Non Significant Correlation</td>
<td>Non Significant Correlation</td>
<td>Do not agree</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Had participating in a musical or artistic performance</td>
<td>Strongly agree</td>
<td>Non Significant Correlation</td>
<td>Non Significant Correlation</td>
<td>Do not agree</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students find religion to be personally helpful</td>
<td>Strongly agree</td>
<td>Non Significant Correlation</td>
<td>Non Significant Correlation</td>
<td>Do not agree</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My spirituality is a source of joy</td>
<td>Strongly agree</td>
<td>Non Significant Correlation</td>
<td>Non Significant Correlation</td>
<td>Do not agree</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Students agreed strongly or somewhat that:

- Love is at the root of all the great religions, 83%
- People can reach a higher spiritual plane of consciousness through meditation or prayer, 80%
- We are all spiritual beings, 78%
- Non-religious people can lead lives that are just as moral as those of religious believers, 77%
- While science can provide important information about the physical world, only religion can truly explain existence, 76%
- All life is interconnected, 74%
- People who don’t believe in God will be punished, 65%

For the students, the relationship between science and religion is one of:

- Collaboration; each can be used to help support the other, 38%
- Conflict; I consider myself to be on the side of religion, 37%
- Independence; they refer to different aspects of reality, 21%
- Conflict; I consider myself to be on the side of science, 5%.

Students report frequently praying:

- For forgiveness, 71%
- For loved ones, 70%
- To express gratitude, 67%
- For help in solving problems, 66%
- To praise God, 65%.
Students report engaging at least weekly in:

- Prayer, 81%
- Self-reflection, 66%
- Religious singing/chanting, 46%
- Reading sacred texts, 41%
- Other reading on religion/spirituality, 34%.

The following statements describe students to a great extent:

- Believing in life after death, 62%
- Being thankful for all that has happened to me, 58%
- Feeling good about the direction in which their life is headed, 54%
- Seeing each day, good or bad, as a gift, 53%
- Having an interest in spirituality, 49%
- God/Highest Power that transcends my personal self, 49%
- Believing in the sacredness of life, 46%.

The following best characterize students’ conception of or experience with God:

- Creator, 69%
- Love, 68%
- Protector, 61%
- Supreme Being, 54%
- Teacher, 51%.

Students reported having had a spiritual experience while:

- Praying, 84%
- In a house of worship, 81%
- Listening to beautiful music, 73%
- Witnessing the beauty and harmony of nature, 67%
- Participating in a retreat, 64%.

The ultimate spiritual quest for students is:

- To follow God’s plan for me, 54%
- To discover who I really am, 13%
- To know God, 10%
- I do not consider myself to be on a spiritual quest, 8%.
Students reported the following experiences strengthened their religious/spiritual beliefs:

- Death of a close friend or family member, 55%
- The events of September 11, 2001, 54%
- The war in Iraq, 42%
- Romantic relationship, 40%
- Personal injury or illness, 37%.

Students agreed strongly or somewhat:

- I know someone I can turn to for spiritual guidance, 85%
- I find religion to be personally helpful, 83%
- I gain spiritual strength by trusting in a Higher Power, 83%
- My spirituality is a source of joy, 79%
- I do not expect my religious convictions to change in the next few years, 78%
- What happens in my life is determined by forces larger than myself, 76%.

Students described their current views about spiritual/religious matters:

- Secure, 50%
- Seeking, 22%
- Conflicted, 10%
- Not interested, 6%
- Doubting, 5%.

Students’ spiritual/religious beliefs:

- Provide them with strength, support and guidance, 85%
- Have helped them develop their identity, 83%
- Give meaning/purpose to their life, 83%
- Are one of the most important things in their life, 83%
- Help define the goals they set for themselves, 81%.

Most or all of students’ close friends:

- Go to church/temple/other house of worship, 76%
- Share their religious/spiritual views, 66%
- Are searching for meaning/purpose in life, 44%.

Students engage to some or a great extent in the following activities:

- Being honest in their relationship with others, 95%
- Accepting others as they are, 95%
- Searching for meaning/purpose in life, 81%
- Having discussions about the meaning of life with their friends, 86%
- Trying to change things that are unfair in the world, 72%.
Students reported that during the past year they have:

• Helped friends with personal problems, 96%
• Been able to find meaning in times of hardship, 88%
• Felt that your life is filled with stress and anxiety, 79%
• Donated money to charity, 73%
• Felt distant from God, 70%
• Participated in community food or clothing drives, 68%
• Felt loved by God, 67%
• Struggled to understand evil, suffering and death, 66%.