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

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Abstract

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

Keywords: student, faith development, student development, faiths

Introduction

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

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

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

The Evangelical University and Constructive Engagements with Otherness

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

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

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

Purpose of Study and Research Questions

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

Method

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Results

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

Powerful Effects of Engagement with Other Faiths

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

Critical Examination of Faith

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Respect for the other

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

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

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

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

Complex Understanding of Faith

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

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

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

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

Strengthening of Faith

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

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

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

Barriers to Constructive Engagement on the Evangelical Campus

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

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

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

Another JEU student remarked:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Steps to Foster Constructive Engagement with *Otherness*

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

Modeling an Open Posture

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Preparing Students for Constructive Engagement

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

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

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

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

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

Supporting the other at Evangelical Institutions

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

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

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

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

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

Conclusion

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

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

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

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