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Spirituality And Student Engagement At A Small, Church-Related Private College

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SPIRITUALITY AND STUDENT ENGAGEMENT AT A SMALL,
CHURCH-RELATED PRIVATE COLLEGE

by

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A Dissertation

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty

of the

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in partial fulfillment of the requirements

for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

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2016

This dissertation, submitted by Hal Henry Haynes, Jr. in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy from the University of North Dakota, has been read by the Faculty Advisory Committee under whom the work has been done and is hereby approved.

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This dissertation is being submitted by the appointed advisory committee as having met all of the requirements of the School of Graduate Studies at the University of North Dakota and is hereby approved.

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Date

PERMISSION

Title   Spirituality and Student Engagement at a Small, Church-Related Private
               College

Department   Educational Leadership

Degree   Doctor of Philosophy

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                                                  Hal Henry Haynes, Jr.
                                                  May 13, 2016

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ABSTRACT

The undergraduate collegiate years are filled with growth and development for students. As students experience and progress through their collegiate years, they are often confronted with difficult life questions, such as what is the meaning of life or why am I here? Oftentimes, the question is why do bad things happen? The purpose of this study is to better understand relationship between student engagement and spirituality.

Undergraduate students at a small, church-related private college in the Upper Midwest were surveyed in the Spring 2015 semester using the College Students' Beliefs and Values Survey (CSBVS).

Alexander Astin's I-E-O model was utilized as a conceptual framework for better understanding the relationships of inputs, environments, and outputs while testing the variables selected for the purposes of this research from the CSBVS, specifically the five constructs of spiritual quest, ethic of caring, ecumenical worldview, equanimity, and charitable involvement.

In-class experiences appear to be the strongest as it relates to the five spirituality constructs. There is a statistically significant relationship between out-of-class experiences and spirituality. There is less evidence that there is a relationship between spirituality and faculty interactions. It is important to remember the institution surveyed. Midwest Church College (MCC) is a small, church-related private college. What the research with this project also showed is strong support of the findings of the Astin,

Astin, and Lindholm research of 2011 in that there is a strong relationship between engagement and the five spirituality constructs of equanimity, ecumenical worldview, charitable involvement, ethic of caring, and spiritual quest for students at MCC.

Such information helps to confirm that students at MCC find that spirituality is a significant part of their daily lives and thus must be considered as a strong piece for better understanding how to best respond to the difficult questions they often pose: Why am I here? What is the meaning of life? Why do bad things happen?

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Student-affairs administrators are frequently challenged with a distressed student. Sometimes the student is struggling with profound questions: "What is the meaning of life?," "Why am I here?," and "Why do bad things happen?" When a student poses a question, we as student-affairs professionals are eager to respond with a well-researched and accurate answer; we are service oriented. How do we help our campuses cope with the tragic vehicular drowning deaths of three star collegiate softball players at a regional university? How do we understand the abduction and murder of a popular undergraduate student whose disappearance captured the attention of a campus, city, state and region? How do we explain the tragic loss of a student walking home from a party who dies while crossing a railyard near campus? How do we help our campuses or even ourselves as leaders come to terms with the suicide of a popular academic dean, or the senseless acts of gun violence we have witnessed at college campuses throughout the country? For questions like these, the research on our office shelves provides very little information. As our nation continues to grieve the Connecticut school and South Carolina church tragedies, President Barack Obama posed the following questions during a nationally televised service in Newtown, CT, on Sunday, December 16, 2012: "All the world's religions–so many of them represented here today–start with a simple question: Why are

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we here? What gives our life meaning? What gives our acts purpose?" (National Public Radio, 2012, para. 18).

The college student-affairs profession has research available for many of the issues and challenges our students face. Still, sadly, we are often at a loss for words or explanation when students pose these difficult questions. Many years ago, in 1998, college students asked why such evil exists in the world shortly after the Matthew Shepard case made national headlines (Matthew Shepard Foundation, 2015). Student-affairs administrators need to be better prepared to respond in a compassionate and caring way. Simply passing it off as "that's life" will not be sufficient. Much like we work very hard to address the academic, social, mental health, wellness, and career needs of our students, we must also be able to respond accordingly when our students ask the difficult questions President Obama outlined: "Why am I here?," "What is the meaning of life?," and "Why do bad things happen?" Oftentimes, as administrators, we refer our students to campus or community ministerial associations that use faith-based or religious-oriented information and methods. But that may not be enough, or even an option in some cases.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to better understand the relationship of student engagement and spirituality at a small, church-related private college. It is important to point out the distinction between religion and spirituality. Religion refers to a more organized practice, within some sort of human institution, whereas spirituality refers to a more personal experience, which may or may not fit within an organized religion. Both religion and spirituality can involve belief in a deity, spiritual or mystical experiences, or

rituals, as well as value systems and beliefs about morality and ethics, and a particular worldview. These things alone are not necessarily religious or spiritual; they can be both.

Rationale for the Study

It is important that we examine ways that we can contribute towards college student development. Our students lead complex and demanding lives. They search for meaning. They search for the answers to life's difficult questions. The mission statement of MCC supports the students' search as it states that the college's aim is to provide a higher educational experience to last a lifetime, one that will challenge intellectual curiosity, promote integrity, and will integrate faith with learning and being of service in a global community. This study is important because it will help us better understand the relationship between spirituality and the ways students at MCC engage in the classroom, outside the classroom, and how they interact with faculty members. It is through this engagement that we can consider the role that spirituality plays in students' development in college. Thus, we will better understand how we can improve our abilities to support not only students at MCC, but all of our students in higher education towards finding the answers to the difficult questions of why am I here, what is the meaning of life, and why do bad things happen.

I examined what students at a small, church-related private college in the Upper Midwest feel about faith, spirituality, and their overall student experience. To study those thoughts and feelings, I administered the College Students' Beliefs and Values Survey (CSBVS) in the Spring 2015 semester. For the purposes of this study, and to protect the privacy of the college surveyed, I will refer to this institution as Midwest Church College (MCC).

Conceptual Framework

Utilizing Astin's I-E-O model as a framework, we can examine student experiences at MCC, and determine if the results from the 2004 College Students' Beliefs and Values Survey, produced by the Higher Education Research Institute (HERI), can be replicated. It is important to reiterate that MCC is a private, church-related institution. Astin's earlier work as a clinical and counseling psychologist provided him a developmental framework from which to view human behavior. Once he transitioned to conducting research in educational psychology, he brought with him the clinical psychologist's perspective (Astin, 1993). Early in his research efforts he became convinced that every educational assessment project is incomplete unless it includes data on student inputs, student outcomes, and the education environment to which the student is exposed. Astin created his I-E-O model as a result of his early studies.

The model was developed for use in natural settings. The advantages of research conducted in natural settings, compared to true experiments, would be to remove artificial conditions and provide the capability to simultaneously study many environmental variables (Astin, 1993). I looked at many variables included as part of the CSBVS at MCC. Data gathered from natural experiments allow contrasting of data gathered from a variety of educational environments. Unfortunately, lack of randomization in environmental settings can impose limitations since student-input variables are not controlled. However, the I-E-O model, through multivariate analyses, can control for initial student input (Astin, 1993). The statistical control for initial student characteristics provides some additional rigor to studies when randomization of subjects is not possible.

Using the model to design evaluation research studies can help determine assessment activities to explain student outcomes.

Testing the results from the 2015 CSBVS from MCC can provide us with potentially valuable insight into student experiences inside and outside of the classroom, and how those experiences may impact faculty-student interaction and overall viewpoints about spirituality. The purpose of this study is to better understand the relationship of student engagement and spirituality at a small, church-related private college. I wanted to find out if there are connections between spirituality and the experiences of students at MCC with out-of-class experiences, in-class experiences, and faculty interactions. It would be helpful to clarify the terms inputs, environment, and outputs.

Inputs

Inputs refer to those personal qualities the student brings initially to the education program (including the student's initial level of developed talent at the time of entry) (Astin, 1993). Inputs also can be antecedent conditions or performance pretests that function as control variables in research. Examples of student inputs might include demographic information, educational experiences, political affiliation, behavior pattern, degree aspiration and attainment, reason for selecting an institution, financial background, disability status, career choice, major field of study, life goals, and reason for attending and selecting a college (Astin, 1993).

For the purposes of this study, I focused on grade point average as a measure of prior academic performance and how many years of undergraduate education have been completed. Inclusion of input data when using the I-E-O model is imperative, because inputs directly influence both the environment and outputs, thus having a "double"

influence on outputs: one that is direct and one that indirectly influences *through* environment. Input data also can be used to examine influences that student inputs have on the environment; these could include gender, age, ethnicity, academic ability, and socioeconomic level.

Environment

A large part of this study will be devoted to the experiences of students at MCC, both inside and outside the classroom. We often refer to such activities as engagement on our campuses. Environment refers to the students' actual experiences during their educational program (Astin, 1993). The environment includes everything and anything that happens during the program course that might impact the student, and therefore the outcomes can be measured. Environmental items can include things such as educational classroom experiences, practices, programs, or interventions and interactions with faculty and staff. Additionally, some environmental factors may be antecedents (e.g., exposure to institution policies may occur before joining a college organization). Environmental factors may include the program, personnel, curricula, instructor, facilities, institutional climate, courses, teaching style, friends, roommates, co-curricular activities, and organizational affiliation (Astin, 1993). For the purposes of this study, I will be looking at out-of-class experiences, in-class experiences, and faculty interaction. For the purpose of this study, I will refer to these three categories as engagement.

Environment: Student Development

At the 1937 American Council on Education conference and from *The Student Personnel Point of View*, it was established that it was the duty of colleges and

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universities to assist students in developing their potentials and contribute towards improving society.

> This philosophy imposes upon educational institutions the obligation to consider the student as a whole – his intellectual capacity and achievement, his emotional makeup, his physical condition, his social relationships, his vocational aptitudes and skills, his moral and religious values, his economic resources, his aesthetic appreciations…. [I]t puts emphasis on the development of the student as a person rather than upon his intellectual training alone. (Roberts, 2012, p. 3)

The student-affairs profession has devoted much research to the psychosocial development of our students. The holistic approach for student development adopted from the 1937 *The Student Personnel Point of View* is universally accepted as the foundation for best serving our students. Especially during the college years, young adults seek to establish a sense of identity and self-worth (Chickering & Reisser, 1993) and to form concepts about themselves as separate adult persons (Chickering & Reisser, 1993). They also develop increasingly mature patterns of interpersonal behaviors, coping styles, career orientations, value systems, and lifestyles that will greatly influence the shape of their futures (Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005).

Two fundamental presuppositions of education are that people can change and that educators and educational environments can affect that change (Astin, 1993). Observations of college students from entry to graduation confirm that change does occur. Students learn factual information in the humanities; the physical, natural, and behavioral sciences; and other academic disciplines. They learn to think critically; to identify, use, and evaluate sources; to solve methodological and technical problems; and

to communicate ideas more effectively in oral and written language. If these kinds of academic and intellectual changes do not occur, educators know that they have failed to carry out their educational mission.

Focus for student success is not just for academic matters. Pascarella and Terenzini (2005) came to a similar conclusion in their book, *How College Affects Students*, after summarizing thousands of studies. Lee S. Shulman (2004), president of the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, believed that because student engagement is a precursor for knowledge and understanding, it is both a proxy for learning as well as a desired outcome in itself. Shulman further believed that by being engaged–something not represented in outcomes measures–students develop habits that promise to stand them in good stead for a lifetime of continuous learning. Student engagement is universally accepted as important in helping our students succeed.

Kuh and Hu (2001) equate quality undergraduate education with student engagement. Yet, within American higher education, there has long been concern about whether campuses effectively create engaging learning environments, especially as they have grown in size. For example, in the earlier part of the last century, students and outside commentators noted the increased reliance on the lecture method, increasing separation of faculty and students, and decline of interaction among faculty and students as problematic (Altbach, 1997).

Engagement is defined as the time and energy that students devote to educationally purposeful activities, and the extent to which the institution gets students to participate in activities that lead to student success (Kuh & Hu, 2001). All of the activities and practices, whether it be contact with faculty, collaboration, integrating

education and experience, or high standards, are all functions that create engagement, which leads to learning (Kuh & Hu, 2001). We embrace the idea that student engagement both inside and outside the classroom is critically important and relevant for student success, and, clearly, colleges and universities are interested in the development of the whole student. Yet, for some time, higher education has become more focused on preparing students for a career than preparing them for life (Braskamp, 2007). This study will examine three types of engagement: out-of-class experiences, in-class experiences, and faculty interaction.

Outputs

Astin (1993) referred to the talents we attempt to develop in our educational program as outputs. Astin believed that outputs are outcome variables which may include post-tests, consequences, or end results. In education, outcome measures have included indicators such as grade point average, exam scores, course performance, degree completion, and overall course satisfaction. At the time Astin developed the I-E-O model, outputs was an appropriate term. Thirty years later, higher education more often refers to outputs as outcomes. For the purpose of this study, I will use the terms interchangeably. The outputs for this study are five measures of spirituality identified by Astin, Astin, and Lindholm (2011b) in *Cultivating the Spirit*. They are spiritual quest, charitable involvement, ethic of caring, equanimity, and ecumenical worldview. I utilized the five spirituality constructs as output variables to examine their relationship to engagement at MCC.

So what does spirituality mean when we refer to it in the college student development context? It has been defined in many different ways. Chickering (2006) recognized spirituality as

a way of life that affects and includes every moment of existence. It is at once a

contemplative attitude, a disposition to a life of depth, and the search for ultimate

meaning, direction, and belonging. The spiritual person is committed to growth as

an essential ongoing life goal. To be spiritual requires us to stand on our own two

feet while being nurtured and supported by our tradition, if we are fortunate

enough to have one. (p. 2)

Astin et al. (2011b) identified some aspects of spirituality as a dynamic construct

that involves the

internal process of seeking personal authenticity [genuineness, and wholeness];

[transcending one's locus of centricity while] developing a greater sense of

connectedness to self and others through relationship and community; deriving

meaning, purpose, and direction in life; being open to exploring a relationship

with a higher power that transcends human existence and [human] knowing; and

valuing the sacred. (p. 27)

Is there a connection between engagement and spirituality as it relates to the

undergraduate student experience? Astin et al. (2011b) conducted a quantitative,

longitudinal study of colleges and universities between 2004 and 2007. They developed

the College Students' Beliefs and Values Survey, results which were published in a book

titled *Cultivating the Spirit: How College Can Enhance Students' Inner Lives*. This

research helps us understand issues surrounding spirituality, student engagement, and

religion impact student experiences. The survey focused on 10 constructs, five each for

religion and spirituality. For the purposes of the study I conducted at MCC in the spring

of 2015, I used the survey's five spiritual constructs (charitable involvement, ecumenical

worldview, spiritual quest, ethic of caring, and equanimity) to measure spirituality in MCC students.

The longitudinal study conducted in 2004-2007 showed that, although religious engagement declines somewhat during college, students' spiritual qualities grow substantially. Results also showed that exposing students to diverse people, cultures, and ideas through study abroad, interdisciplinary coursework, service learning, and other forms of civic engagement helps students value multiple perspectives as they confront the complex and difficult social, economic, and political problems of our time. Also, meditation and self-reflection are among the most powerful tools for enhancing students' spiritual development. Finally, the study showed that providing students with more opportunities to connect with their "inner selves" facilitates growth in their academic and leadership skills, contributes to their intellectual self-confidence and psychological well-being, while enhancing their satisfaction with college (Astin et al., 2011b). With all of this in mind, my goal is to better understand the relationship of student engagement and spirituality at a small, church-related private college referred to as MCC.

Research Questions

To help better understand the relationship of spirituality and engagement at MCC, the following questions for this research are:

1. Is there a relationship between student characteristics and spirituality at MCC?

2. Is there a relationship between student characteristics and engagement at MCC?

3. Is there a relationship among the student engagement constructs at MCC?

4. Is there a relationship between engagement and spirituality at MCC?

At the conclusion of the study, I will also be able to examine my results in the context of Astin et al.'s work on religiosity and spirituality.

Based on the administration of the College Students' Beliefs and Values Survey in the Spring 2015 semester, we can get a glimpse of what students at MCC think and feel about spirituality and their overall experience as a student. The purpose of the administration of the survey at the time was to complement the campus ongoing effort for assessment and to assist the researcher with his research project as a doctoral student at the University of North Dakota. The survey was administered with the cooperation of the Office of Student Development. The data obtained from the survey could possibly be helpful to contribute towards efforts for the ongoing assessment process at MCC. This information might also be helpful to contribute for institutional assessment for the Higher Learning Commission.

It will be informative to examine from the results of the Spring 2015 semester MCC administration of the CSBVS to answer questions related to the five spirituality constructs identified by Astin et al. (2011b). The I-E-0 model serves as a conceptual framework when considering curricular and non-curricular experiences and student engagement. At MCC, what can we discover about the experiences of students both inside and outside the classroom?

Undergraduate students at MCC in April 2015 were invited to complete the CSBVS. MCC students enroll at the institution with an average ACT of 26 and a high school GPA in excess of 3.5. The student to faculty ratio is 12 to 1 and an average class size of 20. MCC provides opportunities for involvement in more than 100 student organizations and activities, including special interest groups, 19 NCAA Division II

athletic teams, and 20 performing arts ensembles in music and theatre. Recently, the college was named to a prestigious national honor roll by the federal government for engaging its students, faculty, and staff in meaningful service that achieves measurable results in the community. MCC recently reported that they retain 80% of students from freshmen to sophomore years and that the overall six-year graduation rate is 67%.

MCC is a private, four-year, liberal arts college located in the Upper Midwest and is church affiliated. During the spring semester of 2015, there were 1,538 students enrolled in one or more of the 50 major fields of study offered at the college. These fields of study are divided into three main academic departments: humanities, social sciences, and natural sciences.

Study Setting

Utilizing the I-E-O model as a framework for understanding the 2015 CSBVS survey and results from MCC may yield answers to help better prepare us for the difficult questions our students pose to us in the higher education arena. This model provides me with a strong conceptual framework to examine the survey and thus better understand the relationship of student engagement and spirituality at this small, church-related private college.

Terms

It would be helpful at this time to provide the reader with additional definitions of key terms that help support the purpose of this study. The following terms are taken directly from the Spirituality in Higher Education website at UCLA and are utilized in support of this research project consistent with the College Student's Beliefs and Values

Survey. These terms will help the reader better understand what I am examining at MCC and research for this study.

Charitable Involvement is a behavioral measure that includes activities such as participating in community service, donating money to charity, and helping friends with personal problems. All three of these activities are associated with positive college outcomes.

In particular, donating money to charity is positively associated with growth in most religious and spiritual qualities and with virtually all of the other outcomes of college: better college grades, leadership development, intellectual self-confidence, psychological well-being, commitment to promoting racial understanding, growth in appreciation of other races and cultures, and satisfaction with college.

Charitable Involvement is enhanced by membership in fraternities/sororities and other student organizations, leadership training, and living on campus. (Higher Education Research Institute, 2010a, paras. 1-3)

Ecumenical Worldview reflects a global worldview that transcends ethnocentrism and egocentrism. It indicates the extent to which the student is interested in different religious traditions, seeks to understand other countries and cultures, feels a strong connection to all humanity, believes in the goodness of all people, accepts others as they are, and believes that all life is interconnected and that love is at the root of all the great religions.

Students with a strong Ecumenical Worldview see the world as an interconnected whole and feel a personal connection with, and acceptance of, all

other beings. Students' Ecumenical Worldview is enhanced when professors value diversity, employ techniques of contemplation or meditation in the classroom, and directly encourage students to explore questions of meaning and purpose. Ecumenical Worldview is also strengthened when students interact cross-racially and when they participate in charitable activities. (Higher Education Research Institute, 2010b, paras. 1-2)

Equanimity may well be the prototypic defining quality of a spiritual person. It measures the extent to which the student is able to find meaning in times of hardship, feels at peace or is centered, sees each day as a gift, and feels good about the direction of her life.

Equanimity plays an important role in the quality of undergraduate students' lives because it helps to shape how they respond to their experiences, especially experiences that are potentially stressful.

Undergraduates show significant growth in their capacity for equanimity during the college years, and practices such as meditation and self-reflection can contribute to that growth. Equanimity has positive effects on a wide range of other college student behaviors, abilities, and feelings: grade point average, leadership skills, sense of psychological well-being, ability to get along with other races and cultures, and satisfaction with college. (Higher Education Research Institute, 2010c, paras. 1-3)

Ethic of Caring reflects our sense of caring and concern about the welfare of others and the world around us. These feelings are expressed in wanting to help those who are troubled and to alleviate suffering. It includes a concern about

social justice issues and an interest in the welfare of one's community and the environment, as well as a commitment to social and political activism. In contrast to Charitable Involvement, which emphasizes "caring for," Ethic of Caring emphasizes "caring about."

Ethic of caring shows substantial growth during the college years. Positive growth in Ethic of Caring can be accelerated by participating in study abroad programs, taking interdisciplinary courses, and engaging in community service as part of a class (i.e., service learning).

Growth in Caring is also enhanced when students live on the campus and when professors place a high priority on having a diverse, multicultural campus. (Higher Education Research Institute, 2010d, paras. 1-3)

Spiritual Quest reflects the degree to which the student is actively searching for meaning and purpose in life, to become a more self-aware and enlightened person, and to find answers to life's mysteries and "big questions." Each of the individual items that make up this scale includes words such as "finding," "attaining," "seeking," "developing," "searching," or "becoming."

Students who begin college with high Spiritual Quest scores say that a major reason they enrolled in college is to find their life's purpose and that they expect the college experience to enhance their self-understanding and contribute to their emotional and spiritual development.

The student's inclination to engage in a Spiritual Quest grows significantly during the college years. This growth can be facilitated by meditation and self-reflection, having faculty who encourage the exploration of questions of

meaning and purpose, involvement in religious activities, and by participation in charitable activities. (Higher Education Research Institute, 2010e, paras. 1-3)

There are questions to answer in better understanding the student engagement questions as it relates to spirituality for students at MCC. The answers to the research questions that are posed may provide us with helpful information in better responding to the many challenging questions that students pose to us in the midst of difficult and often life-changing events. A comprehensive review of the literature covering the topics of spirituality and the five constructs identified for this research, college student engagement, and faculty-student interaction will be necessary.

CHAPTER II

SPIRITUALITY AND STUDENT ENGAGEMENT

A History of Spirituality in Higher Education

To understand the role of spirituality in higher education today, we can look to the 17th century, during which spirituality, religiosity, and morality were subsumed in Christian theology and served as cornerstones upon which the idea of the American university was built (Mayhew, 2012). Early on, religion played a central role in institutional evolution and daily life (Thelin, 2011). Thelin presented that universities should develop patriotic citizens and civil servants and would train leaders for public administration, law, and police, who saw their responsibility as goodwill for society. The common good was rooted in the values of democracy and civic responsibility fostered by a deep moral sense, a connection to spirituality, and recognition of our purpose for being in the world.

Historically and traditionally, higher education has emphasized academic development over personal development. The beginning of the 21st century brought about criticism of higher education for its apparent lack of recognition of the mutual coexistence of fact and value, the cognitive and the affective, and the outer and inner self asserted that the *inner* development of college students that gets little attention includes the areas of "values and beliefs, emotional maturity, moral development, spirituality, and self-understanding" (Bugenhagen, 2009, p. 69).

By the 1960s, rejection of faith-oriented knowledge had been fully established; however, although religious pluralism is now typical of students and faculty, it is generally not included in measures developed by colleges and universities to strengthen multiculturalism. The events of September 11, 2001, dramatically illustrated the necessity for American colleges and universities to expand the scope of multiculturalism to include religious diversity and pluralism. Post 9/11, educators across the country have been challenged to utilize their scholarly and pedagogical expertise to encourage students to learn about and develop an appreciation for the diversity of global religious traditions and practices. As a result of the immediacy of worldwide communication networks and the progressive interconnectedness of the world economy, many Americans have developed an awareness of the complexity of other societies and cultures. But in the aftermath of 9/11, it has become clear that we need a better understanding of the basic belief systems of world religions beyond the Judeo-Christian traditions dominant in Euro-American societies (Stamm, 2003). Still, evidence suggests that colleges and universities tend to refrain from directly encouraging students to reflect on their "inner lives," particularly their spiritual values and development (Astin, 2004). Even as society progresses, there remains a very real energy of the spirit, as individuals struggle for meaning in a cold and impersonal world (Keeney, 2012). Recently, U.S. institutions of higher education have tended to ignore issues of religion on campus by maintaining secular atmospheres (Laurence, 1999). Academics are divided over the topic of religion. While some religious factors have a positive impact on student success, other religious commitments undermine educational attainment (Sherkat & Darnell, 1999).

Colleges can play a valuable role in students' personal development. Research suggests that colleges and universities are in a unique position to take advantage of this rare time period by encouraging self-reflection throughout a variety of academic disciplines to further reinforce or develop spirituality (or religiosity) in their student bodies, which may provide lasting changes in student-perceived health status and satisfaction with life (Zullig, Ward, & Horn, 2006). One of the more interesting trends at the turn of the 21st century is the ascendant influence of religion in various aspects of American life. The majority of adults identify spirituality as a major organizing principle that gives their lives meaning and informs life choices and is about developing a more authentic identity (Tolliver & Tisdell, 2006). The renewed interest in religion and spirituality is not just a function of aging baby boomers or millennials acknowledging their mortality. Kuh and Gonyea (2005) reported that 86% of those between the ages of 11 and 18 believe religion is an important part of life. Meaning making is now a common concept discussed on our campuses. Reflecting on one's spiritual or religious belief is consistent with exposure to liberal arts educational practices that encourage students to become more open to alternative, diverse views about various matters, including religion and spirituality (Astin et al., 2011b).

More attention is being given towards the spiritual development of our students. Colleges are having increasingly open discussions among all members of the campus community about how students learn and develop (i.e., they are committed to fostering both student learning and personal development). They realize that giving ministry or student-affairs professionals the sole responsibility to develop the student's spirituality does not include all elements that are necessary to the life of the mind. To them, if

religion is to be a part of the life of students, then spirituality and religion need to be nurtured *within* an academic setting, and the campus needs to proactively tackle life's big questions in the curriculum as well as the co-curriculum (Braskamp, 2007).

Love (2001) felt that we need to bring spirituality into education, not keep it separate and banished to small sectors of campus (the religious studies department, the campus ministry). The U.S. Constitution states that we may not favor one religion over another–not that we must totally erase all notions of spiritual development from public life and the academy (Kaplin & Lee, 1995). With the resurgent interest in both spirituality in higher education and traditional religious expression in American society and on campus, it is vital that faculty and administrators are familiar with legal implications (Lowery, 2005). Institutions of higher education must carefully consider the legal implications of addressing issues related to spirituality and religion outside of the classroom, especially student-initiated religious expression. The relationship between the institution and student religious groups can be particularly complicated. Challenges often stem from an overemphasis of the Establishment Clause of the First Amendment without fully considering the Free Speech and Free Exercise clauses. Summarizing the rights of college students, Kaplin and Lee (1995) concluded that students have a "general right to organize; to be officially recognized whenever the school has a policy of recognizing student groups; and to use meeting rooms, bulletin boards, and similar facilities open to student groups" (p. 516).

In the past, legal conflicts have arisen on several public college campuses due to disconnects between students' religious beliefs and academic requirements or activities of the institution. These cases help illustrate the effect of both students' and faculty

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members' religious beliefs on spirituality in the classroom (Lowery, 2005). As colleges and universities grapple with the complexities of spirituality in the academic environment, there is no real consensus that defines the term and our understanding of spirituality. We do know that religion and spirituality are important social and psychological factors in the lives of adults. Legally speaking, under the Establishment Clause of the First Amendment, public institutions must maintain a neutral stance regarding religious beliefs and activities. Public colleges and universities cannot favor or support one religion over another, and they cannot favor or support religion over non-religion (Kaplin & Lee, 1995).

Spirituality is the name that we give to the quest for meaning that helps us make sense of our world in uncertain times. Spirituality has to do with the values that we hold most dear and helps us define meaning and purpose in our work and life (Astin, 2004). College students often confront issues of faith, religion, and spirituality as they move away from home and experience new environments for the first time. Love and Talbot (2000) argue that everyone searches for meaning in life. They view spiritual development as an ongoing process, an important component of self-understanding, and a quest for self-understanding and wholeness that imparts direction and purpose to one's life. Exploring one's spiritual side requires openness to self-exploration, great connectedness with others, and exploration of a relationship with an intangible and pervasive power or essence that exists beyond human existence and rational human knowledge.

The research on spirituality that has been conducted in higher education institutions has focused primarily on students, ignoring completely the experiences, attitudes, expectations, and behaviors of faculty (Braskamp, 2007). The result is a critical

gap in our understanding of how we can create educational environments that maximize the personal and professional potential of students and faculty and that best prepare students to respond effectively to the demands of an increasingly complex and global society (Lindholm & Astin, 2006).

Spirituality Defined

Chickering (2006) shared a definition of spirituality as

a way of life that affects and includes every moment of existence. It is at once a contemplative attitude, a disposition to a life of depth, and the search for the ultimate meaning, direction, and belonging. The spiritual person is committed to growth as an essential ongoing life goal. To be spiritual requires us to stand on our own two feet while being nurtured and supported by our tradition, if we are fortunate enough to have one. (p. 2)

Another definition for spirituality in education is going beyond the acquisition of knowledge and entering the realms of meaning and purpose (Laurence, 1999).

There are numerous other definitions for the term spirituality. Speck (2005), in his work, assembled several definitions that illustrate the diverse opinion about what defines spirituality. "Spirituality is the eternal human yearning to be connected with something larger than our own egos" (Palmer, 2003, p. 377).

Others have the following thoughts about spirituality. Palmer (2003) also describes spirituality as an encounter with something other than what we know. It is a connection with others and a discovery of our place in life. It is also, as Palmer describes it, a process of turning inward to find ourselves at home and with a focused life. The spiritual quest is a lifelong pursuit, but it emerges full bloom during the transition from

youth to adulthood. For most students, the college years are a time of questioning and spiritual searching in which there is particular emphasis upon two dimensions of spirituality: making connection with ultimate life purpose and finding an inward home (Dalton, 2001). For the purpose of this study, I prefer to utilize the definition of spirituality as defined by Arthur Chickering. I select this definition for two reasons. First, I believe his definition includes the search for meaning, direction, and belonging. He also identifies the spiritual person as being committed to growth as an essential ongoing life goal. I believe this definition best fits my observations and conclusions about what best identifies an MCC student. Secondly, Chickering's definition is one that appears quite frequently in the student affairs literature and is often referred to in research topics surrounding spirituality.

To speak of spirit or spirituality is to enter the realm of inner beliefs and commitments. Much discussion about spirituality in the literature of college student development focuses on the religious beliefs and practices of college students. It has rarely considered student spirituality as a phenomenon separate from religion. This distinction can mask the importance of spirituality because many college students interpret religion and spirituality as distinct and separate experiences and thus identify with them differently. Many students report neither participating in organized religious activities nor identify themselves as religious yet attribute great importance to spiritual beliefs and practices. Spirituality is viewed by students as more inclusive and less formal than religion and more personal and individualistic (Dalton, 2001). Astin et al. (2011b) define spirituality as a dynamic construct that involves the

internal process of seeking personal authenticity [genuineness, and wholeness];

[transcending one's locus of centricity while] developing a greater sense of

connectedness to self and others through relationship and community; deriving

meaning, purpose, and direction in life; being open to exploring a relationship

with a higher power that transcends human existence and human knowing; and

valuing the sacred. (p. 27)

Based on his study of eight students with different worldviews, Mayhew (2004)

described spirituality as the human attempt to make sense of the self in connection to and

with the external world. Being a spiritual individual means to have a set of values and

beliefs, morals and ethics, and to consider how one's acts have an impact on others

(Bugenhagen, 2009). Parks (2000) viewed spirituality to mean many things, such as

transcendence, purpose, wholeness, a search for meaning, and the apprehension of spirit

as the very center of life. One research group has defined spirituality as "a way of being

and experiencing that comes about through awareness of a transcendent dimension and

that is characterized by certain identifiable values in regard to self, others, nature, life,

and whatever one considers to be the ultimate" (Elkins, Hedstrom, Hughes, Leaf, &

Saunders, 1988, p. 10). Nino (1997) felt that spirituality encompasses meaning making, a

quest for defining one's self along with a sense of belonging

Astin (2004) believes that spirituality is hard to define or difficult to talk about,

especially if we consider it as a gut level experience, mystical or mysterious. Parks

(2000) believed spirituality to be a process of meaning making attempting to fully

understand the human experience and is a universal component of human experience

regardless of religion or belief. Another way to frame spirituality and to emphasize the

importance the role it plays in lifelong identity is to consider the three dimensions articulated by Magolda. Magolda (2009) envisioned three dimensions essential to composing a self-authored life: the epistemological dimension ("how we know or decide what to believe"), the intrapersonal dimension ("how we view ourselves"), and the interpersonal dimension ("how we construct relationships with others").

Spiritual Struggle for College Students

Evidence suggests that our students struggle with spirituality and issues of faith during the college years. Spiritual struggles are a known source of challenge for a considerable proportion of college students, and encompass a broad array of experiences that reflect forms of spiritual and religious conflict within oneself, with others, and with the immanent or transcendent (Pargament, Murray-Swank, Magyar, & Ano, 2005).

Spiritual struggle is an experience familiar to many students whose college years are marked by reflections on faith, purpose, and life meaning and by efforts to understand the preponderance of suffering, evil, and death in the world (Bryant & Astin, 2008). Spiritual struggles may include questioning one's religious/spiritual beliefs; feeling unsettled about spiritual and religious matters; struggling to understand evil, suffering, and death; feeling angry at God; and feeling disillusioned with one's religious upbringing (Bryant & Astin, 2008). More surprising, however, is the fact that spiritual struggle is not associated with self-perceived religious and spiritual growth. In fact, the only positive outcome of struggling, according to recent empirical analysis, is acceptance of others with different religious faiths (Bryant & Astin, 2008).

The theories of Fowler (2001) and Parks (2000) are cornerstones of existing faith development theory and both allude to spiritual struggles. Parks' analogy of shipwreck

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and Fowler's discussion of life crises, disruptions, and disequilibrium are posed as precursors to growth and spiritual transformation. Moments of struggle such as these are especially prevalent in the transitions in faith that typically mark the onset of young adulthood. Both Fowler and Parks emphasize the changes in authority, dependence, and depth of critical reflection that often peak after adolescence. Parks (2000) advocated to integrate three similar domains in her exploration of young adult faith development and identified forms of knowing (cognition), forms of dependence (feelings and affect experienced in relation to others), and forms of community (contexts of belonging) as the essential elements that undergo transformation along the journey of faith. Astin (2004) found that commitment to developing a meaningful philosophy of life, a spiritual value, was positively affected by social activism, community orientation, and diversity activities. Such activities could include socializing with students from a different race or ethnicity.

In a study of nearly 5,550 students attending 39 colleges and universities across the country, Johnson and Hayes (2003) reported that upwards of 44% of their sample experienced at least some distress related to religious or spiritual concerns, and approximately 25% felt considerable religious or spiritual distress. Another possibility: Spiritual struggle might *not*, in the end, result in growth; rather, it might hinder development if one is locked into maladaptive ways of conceiving of and responding to the existential questions life poses (Bryant & Astin, 2008). Spiritual struggles may be rooted in numerous causes, but they are most notably linked to difficult life circumstances (Pargament et al., 2005) and encountering events that unexpectedly threaten to shatter one's customary state of being.

Spiritual struggle appears to be negatively associated with psychological health and results in such outcomes as depression, anxiety, negative mood, low self-esteem, and even suicidal thoughts (Pargament et al., 2005). The experience of spiritual struggle is thought to be rooted in life events and circumstances that disrupt a person's spiritual status quo. Research shows that embracing the holistic approach and the potential consequences of spiritual struggle, there were immediate negative implications experienced with respect to students' psychological well-being, physical health, self-esteem, spiritual growth, and religious growth. Yet, students who struggle with spirituality do perceive that they have grown to accept those of different faiths (Bryant & Astin, 2008).

Students need reassurance that their struggles are justified and a legitimate part of their developmental process (Bryant & Astin, 2008). While we know our students struggle with spirituality, evidence is clear that there are many benefits for having a spiritual element in the overall university experience. Studies to date have tended to support the notion that spirituality and religion have beneficial outcomes for physical and mental health (Hansen, Larson, & Dworkin, 2003). Also, academic advisers, who regularly talk with students about what is important to them while advising them on the curriculum, are in a great position to help students make personal connections between their search for meaning and purpose and general education (Kirk-Kuwaye & Sano-Franchini, 2015).

Sociologists of religion have long linked educational attainment to religious decline (Sherkat, 2001). Certainly, many college students participate less in formal religious activities than they did as adolescents, but church attendance may take a hit

simply because of factors that influence the lives of *all* emerging adults: the late-night

orientation of young adult life; organized religion's emphasis on other age groups,

namely school-aged youth and parents; and collective norms on campus social

environments (Smith & Snell, 2009). And, while we invest a good deal of our

pedagogical effort in developing the student's cognitive, technical, and job skills, we pay

little, if any, attention to the development of skills such as empathy, cooperation,

leadership, interpersonal understanding, and self-understanding (Astin, 2004).

The abundance of literature on the spiritual leadership suggests that our culture is

searching for leaders with a deeper understanding of themselves and the processes by

which they make meaning of the world around them (Gehrke, 2008). The undergraduate

student experience can be very challenging. Magolda (2009) makes the argument that

future directions in research on college students must account for conditional effects in

light of the fact that students experience and process events differently. No two students

are exactly alike and thus the same intervention or experience might not have the same

impact for all. It is now time to focus on the five constructs of spirituality utilized for the

purpose of this study. The purpose of this study is to better understand the relationship of

spirituality and engagement at a small, church-related private college in the Upper

Midwest.

Spiritual Quest

Spiritual quest is a form of existential engagement that emphasizes individual

purpose and meaning making in the world (Astin et al., 2011b). College students ask the

questions of who am I, why am I here, and why do bad things happen or what is my

purpose. Students search for the meaning of life while having discussions with their

friends about such questions. According to Astin, Astin, and Lindholm (2011a), college students want to find the answer to the mysteries of life while attaining inner harmony and wisdom. They seek beauty in life towards while becoming a more loving person and developing an overall meaningful philosophy of life. Astin et al. (2011a) also felt that questing is a natural part of young adult development. Such a position would be consistent with that of Love (2001), who took the spiritual development theory stages of Fowler a step further by identifying a specific young adult stage consistent with the age frame of traditional college students. We have many theoretical frames to refer to as it relates to student development theory.

Ethic of Caring

Astin et al. (2011b) believed that caring for and about others is an expression of spirituality. In traditional Christian faith, loving your neighbor is as important as loving oneself. Concepts to be explored for the purpose of this research will be explaining college student efforts to try to change the things in the world that are unfair. Students want to reduce the pain and suffering they witness in the world. College students strive to promote racial understanding. They want to become responsible stewards for protecting the global environment. College students strive to be leaders in their communities and influence social values and political structures. Students believe they can make a difference (Astin, Vogelsang, Ikeda, & Yee, 2000). Students are champions for social justice. Simply put, college students show an enormous capacity to display care and compassion for a troubled and problem-laden world.

Charitable Involvement

College and university campuses are traditional hotbeds for student involvement for volunteer work. In fact, volunteer and service learning programs are becoming commonplace on many college and university campuses and that students develop a heightened sense of civic responsibility and personal effectiveness through participation in such programs (Astin et al., 2000). An extracurricular transcript is becoming every bit as important as the academic record. Students participate in community food or clothing drives, donate money, and, when it is available, to support worthy social causes. Students care about helping friends with personal problems and helping with a local community action program. Finally, as a part of the continued trend towards activity related transcripts, there is evidence that supports increased undergraduate participation in performing many hours outside of the classroom in support of volunteer work which complements many newly established service learning programs on campuses across the nation.

Ecumenical Worldview

The ecumenical worldview, as framed by Astin et al. (2011b), supports helping undergraduate students better understand their connectedness with the world, which in turn helps to begin answering the larger questions posed by spiritual quest. Helping students understand their role in a diverse and multicultural world helps students make the connections of time, place, and role in all that goes on around them, whether it be at a local, national, or global level.

Knowledgeable observers, both inside and outside the academy, say that an important goal of higher education is to prepare culturally competent individuals with the

ability to work effectively with people from different backgrounds (Zhao, Kuh, & Carini, 2005). Diversity is important for college students. When imbedded in appropriate pedagogy, such challenges can promote high levels of intellectual and personal development (Chickering & Reisser, 1993). Thus, diversity on college campuses is not a gratuitous or idealistic goal; it is essential in order for college students to learn how to live and work effectively with others who differ from themselves (Smith & Schonfeld, 2000). Findings reveal that ecumenical worldview is a function of college experiences that bring students into contact with religion, spirituality, and diversity in classroom and co-curricular contexts (Bryant, 2011b). A college context that is open to students' spiritual expressions appears to diminish struggling (indirectly curtailing ecumenical worldview), but inclusive environments that encourage expression directly increase students' capacity to understand and accept others of diverse perspectives (Bryant, 2011b).

Providing visibility to spirituality and religion on campus through interfaith conversations, faculty-led discussions, speaker forums, and relevant coursework, just to name a few, will enhance the odds that students will encounter worldview diversity. Exposure to worldview diversity is instrumental in provoking crisis and thereby openness toward and acceptance of diverse others (Bryant, 2011b). A worldview can be defined as an individual's primary frame of reference or life philosophy and it may reflect a particular religious faith or may not be religious at all (Bryant, 2011b).

The college years represent a critical moment in young adulthood when encounters with religious, spiritual, and worldview diversity may enhance students' understanding and appreciation of pluralism (Bryant, 2011a). Spirituality and religion

represent important dimensions of pluralism in institutions of higher education. Students, faculty, and staff bring a range of worldviews to campus, creating diverse contexts that may influence college student development. A campus openness to student spirituality and faith based organizations promotes diversity and an ecumenical worldview (Astin et al., 2011b). A college context that is open to students' spiritual expressions appears to diminish struggling, and contribute towards environments that encourage expression directly increase students' capacity to understand and accept others of diverse perspectives (Bryant, 2011a). In a 2015 study, researchers found that students affiliated with a faith on campus viewed the environment as encouraging and receptive of ecumenical worldview (Rockenbach, Mayhew, & Bowman, 2015).

Ecumenical worldview development finds theoretical support in the model by Parks (2000) describing an individual's journey toward mature faith. Mapping onto trajectories of human development was first developed by Robert Kegan in 1982. Parks (2000) deconstructs this journey into three discrete yet mutually reinforcing forms: cognitive, dependence, and community. The ecumenical worldview helps to identify a student's interest in other cultures, different religious traditions, developing a strong connection to all humanity, and a belief in the goodness of all people. Such view is that one believes in the goodness of all people and that all life is interconnected and that love is at the root of all religions (Astin et al., 2011a).

Equanimity

Equanimity is often referred to as the evenness of mind, especially under stress: the right disposition or balance. Once considered to be leaders of equanimity, American college campuses are today experiencing numerous cases of mental illness

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(Arehart-Treichel, 2002). Recent data compiled by the Centers for Disease Control suggest that mental health problems and suicide rates on American college campuses are increasing (Farabaugh et al., 2012). The strongest relationships to leadership were found with the value of equanimity provides insight into some of the facets of equanimity, such as finding meaning in hardships, feeling centered, and experiencing a strong bond with humanity, are fundamental in an understanding of socially responsible leadership (Gehrke, 2008). Individual student characteristics, including gender, race/ethnicity, religion/worldview, political orientation, and career aspirations, significantly shape the ways in which students experience their spiritual and religious lives (Lindholm & Astin, 2006). More specifically, spirituality has to do with the values that we hold most dear, our sense of who we are and where we come from, our beliefs about why we are here. It can also be the meaning and purpose that we see in our work and our life and our sense of connectedness to each other and to the world around us (Astin, 2004).

Why is all of this important for higher education? Students' spirituality may be especially important in understanding how they approach career decisions and make long-term commitments about such goals as service to others, family life, and community involvement (Dalton, 2001). For many, college is a time when individuals encounter fundamental questions about life choice and direction, yet they often have few structured opportunities to examine the spiritual implications of such big decisions. If we do our job well in higher education, students will reflect upon the greater purpose of their lives. They ask questions about worthy commitment, moral responsibility, and life's inevitable transcendent claims and experiences (Dalton, 2001). Higher education that ignores the spiritual dimension of learning and development simultaneously inhibits students' quest

for the good life and decreases the chance that graduates will be engaged citizens willing to do the long and arduous work of creating a good society.

Astin (1993) found that commitment to developing a meaningful philosophy of life was positively affected by social activism; community orientation; and other activities such as discussing racial or ethnic issues, socializing with students from different racial or ethnic groups, attending racial or ethnic workshops, and taking women's or ethnic studies courses. This will help lead us to the discussion of our students' engagement with faculty and campus life inside and outside of the classroom.

We have examined many meanings and interpretations of spirituality, as well as the importance and growing presence thereof on our campuses. What do we also know about how our students engage themselves on our campuses both inside and outside of the classroom and, moreover, how do faculty at our institutions fit into all of this? What do we also know about student engagement and faculty-student interaction?

Engagement: Out-of-Class Experiences

Colleges and universities are concerned about both the academic and out-of-class experiences for students. The purpose of this study is to better understand the relationship of student engagement and spirituality at a small, church-related private college located in the Upper Midwest.

Student engagement is important in student success. But why is it important? Research shows that exceptional experiences in the classroom along with strong interactions between students, peers, faculty, and out-of-class experiences result in high-quality student outcomes (Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005). In order to measure these experiences, higher education engages in numerous forms of assessment. Indeed, higher

education prides itself on being high-performing and productive. Many colleges and universities use these data from the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) to work toward this goal. The NSSE instrument is a research-based tool for gathering information that focuses on learning-centered indicators of quality in undergraduate education. The instrument examines several indicators of success, including institutional improvements, benchmarking, and public accountability. To gather these data, the NSSE instrument asks undergraduate students about how they spend their time, their interaction with faculty, and what they have gained from their classes. The assessment measures student engagement on campus.

College students engage on their campuses by becoming involved both inside and outside of the classroom. In-class experiences and out-of-class experiences contribute a great deal to traditional college student experiences on our campuses. Actively discussing spiritual topics in the classroom, with a faculty member, or becoming engaged with spiritual life on campus through a variety of clubs and organizations available to students is important. It is through this involvement that students experience the inner process to seek the answers to who we are, why are we here, and how can we build meaningful lives.

In the fall of 2002, a NSSE Institute research team launched an intensive effort called Project DEEP (Documenting Effective Educational Practice) (Kuh, Kinzie, Schuh, & Whitt, 2006). The project was a two-year study of 20 high-performing (based on NSSE data) colleges and universities. Participating schools had higher than predicted graduation rates and higher than predicted scores on the five NSSE areas of effective educational practice: level of academic challenge, active and collaborative learning,

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student interaction with faculty members, enriching educational experiences, and supportive campus environments.

The following institutional conditions are important for student development and to remember when we consider the three areas of engagement that this study is focused on: out-of-class experiences, in-class experiences, and faculty interaction. Some of these institutional conditions are also valuable to better understand the five spirituality constructs identified for this study:

- A clear and focused institutional mission

- High standards for student performance

- Support for students to explore human differences and emerging dimensions of self

- Emphasis on the early months and first year of study

- Respect for diverse talents

- Integration of prior learning and experience

- Ongoing practice of learned skills

- Active learning

- Assessment and feedback

- Collaboration among students

- Adequate time on task

- Out-of-class contact with faculty (Chickering & Reisser, 1993; Evans, Forney, Guido, Patton, & Renn, 2010; Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005).

Why is student engagement so important? Student development theory has identified engagement as a critical component towards student success. Chickering and

Gamson (1999) identified the following seven principles as important for improving the undergraduate educational experience for students:

1. Encourages contact between students and faculty

2. Develops reciprocity and cooperation among students

3. Encourages active learning

4. Gives prompt feedback

5. Emphasizes time on task

6. Communicates high expectations

7. Respects diverse talents and ways of learning.

If colleges and universities are indeed being challenged to create the environments and conditions necessary to promote student success, are other issues present and necessary to take into consideration? Student-affairs professionals recognize that a significant amount of change occurs in students from the time they arrive as freshmen till the time they depart the university with an earned academic credential. Chickering and Reisser (1993) identified a frame of vectors to explain how students develop in college. There are seven vectors to Chickering's model, each of which can be viewed as a sequence of developmental tasks, a cause of anxiety, and a collection of end results. These vectors include developing competence, managing emotions, developing autonomy, establishing identity, freeing interpersonal relationships, developing purpose, and developing integrity. Each of the vectors represents a component of the larger category of identity development, yet six of these vectors (other than establishing identity) also exist to make the concept of identity more integrated. Since we know that spirituality is important to students, would it not be important to think about how the

factors for successful engagement can be implemented for supporting our students' spiritual development on our campuses? It can be argued that being engaged in out-of-class experiences, in-class experiences, and having faculty interactions fit into the Chickering seven vectors model.

Higher education traditionally focuses more on the academic development of our students and less on personal development. Chickering and Reisser (1993) asserted that the *inner* development of college students that gets little attention includes the areas of values and beliefs, emotional maturity, moral development, spirituality, and self-understanding. Academic success, often evaluated in terms of students' grade point averages, goes hand in hand with levels of personal motivation, study habits, quality of effort, and organizational skills (Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005). Essentially, the integration of one's social life with one's intellectual life effectively facilitates intellectual development (Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005).

Why do students become involved in campus organizations related to spirituality and faith? Students' involvement in social, volunteer, leadership, and community service activity may be a manifestation of their spiritual development and quest for meaning. We also need to recognize that religious activity and other spiritually related activities may be manifestations of students' search for meaning and faith (Fowler, 2001). Faith-based student organizations can aid our students. If a campus desires to intentionally help students in their religious and spiritual journey, then terms such as meaning, purpose, calling, vocation, inner life, faith, spirituality, as well as religious engagement, can be used to initiate discussions among all members of the campus community (Braskamp, 2007).

Social integration, including student-to-student interactions and developing friendships on campus, is typically construed as a positive predictor of a number of college outcomes, including emotional health, leadership development, academic development, cultural awareness, and satisfaction (Astin, 1993). Chickering and Reisser (1993) argue that the creation of campus communities for students fosters social integration and enhances development during college. Residence halls, learning communities, and student organizations are ideal environments for students to form friendships and learn from one another. The more involved students are in college, the better they fare with respect to both affective and cognitive forms of development (Astin, 1993). These are all important out-of-class experiences.

Student involvement refers to the quantity and quality of the physical and psychological energy that students invest in the college experience. Such involvement takes many forms, such as absorption in academic work, participation in extracurricular activities, and interaction with faculty and other institutional personnel (Astin, 1993). Student-to-student interactions are particularly beneficial, and student organizations provide a means through which students can encounter one another, form close friendships, and gain valuable insight and character strengths from the relationships they develop. Chickering and Reisser (1993) believed that student communities enable students to grow more competent, interdependent, purposeful, and congruent. To enhance development, they suggest that student communities should serve as a reference point for students by maintaining certain boundaries and norms such that members have a standard by which to evaluate their own behavior:

- Encourage regular interactions between students and support ongoing

  relationships

- Provide opportunities for collaboration

- Be small enough to make every member feel significant

- Include people from diverse backgrounds.

Out-of-class experiences can be found in campus religious organizations that

provide additional spirituality venues to which non-students lack access. Also, as part of

engagement, college students pursue academic work and out-of-class experiences that

will complement future career goals. Working towards a career requires things like

interpersonal competency and multicultural understanding. It also demands skills in

problem identification and solving. To do so, it will require a sense of personal purpose

and the mental confidence to act in ways to make a difference (Chickering, Dalton, &

Stamm, 2006).

Engagement is important on our campuses. The importance of engagement is

critical as it relates to the purpose of this study. Focus thus far has been on out-of-class

experiences, student engagement, and spirituality. I will now shift towards discussing

what do we know about in-class experiences, faculty interactions, engagement, and

spirituality.

Engagement: In-Class Experiences

In-class experiences matter because the classroom is a potential site for

discussions of a religious or spiritual nature (Bryant, Choi, & Yasuno, 2003). Tolliver

and Tisdell (2006) felt that engaging learning in multiple dimensions, including the

rational, affective, somatic, spiritual, and sociocultural, will increase the chances that new

knowledge is actually constructed and embodied in the classroom, thus having the potential to be transformative. Learning environments may prompt spiritual questioning if they indeed treat religious issues as academic subject matter to be debated, investigated, and perhaps even critiqued (Bryant & Astin, 2008).

The college classroom lies at the center of the educational activity structure of institutions of higher education; the educational encounters that occur therein are a major feature of student educational experience. Indeed, for students who commute to college, especially those who have multiple obligations outside the college, the classroom may be the only place where students and faculty meet, where education in the formal sense is experienced. For those students, in particular, the classroom is the crossroads where the social and the academic meet. If academic and social involvement or integration is to occur, it must occur in the classroom (Tinto, 1997).

Engagement: Faculty Interaction

Faculty play a central role in shaping both the culture and the climate of their institutions. Faculty values are central to any change that occurs in higher education (Lindholm & Astin, 2006). This view of the role of classrooms in student academic and social involvement leads us to the recognition of the centrality of the classroom experience and the importance of faculty, curriculum, and pedagogy to student development and persistence (Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005). The greater students' involvement in the life of the college, especially its academic life, the greater their acquisition of knowledge and development of skills. This is particularly true of student contact with faculty. Engagement, both inside and outside the classroom, appears to be especially important to student development (Astin, 1993). Even among those who

persist, students who report higher levels of contact with peers and faculty also demonstrate higher levels of learning gain over the course of their stay in college (Tinto, 1997). In other words, high levels of involvement prove to be an independent predictor of learning gain. Such gain enhances the overall experience for students.

Frequent interaction with faculty is more strongly related to satisfaction with college than any other type of involvement or, indeed, any other student or institutional characteristic. Students who interact frequently with faculty members are more likely than other students to express satisfaction with all aspects of their institutional experience, including student friendships, variety of courses, intellectual environment, and even the administration of the institution. Encouraging greater student involvement and interaction with faculty (and vice versa) could be a highly productive activity on most college campuses (Astin, 1993).

Faculty attitudes and behaviors are known to have important consequences for student development. The actions of faculty both inside and outside the classroom impact the learning and development of future engineers, nurses, business leaders, lawyers, and teachers, not to mention their very own academic successors and the thousands of others whose work affects our daily lives. Interpersonal interaction with faculty enhances a wide variety of student outcomes and, as researchers have shown, is one of the most influential sources of undergraduate student learning (Lindholm & Astin, 2006).

There appears to be evidence that modest, but statistically significant, positive associations exist between amount of student informal, non-classroom contact with faculty and such educational outcomes as satisfaction with college, educational aspirations, intellectual and personal development, academic achievement, and freshman

to sophomore year persistence in college (Tinto, 1997). Additionally, Pascarella and

Terenzini (2005) report the following two findings of interest. First, that the quality of

faculty-student informal interactions may be as important in influencing voluntary

persistence/withdrawal decisions as the frequency with which such interactions occur.

Second, that the frequency and quality of informal interactions with faculty may have a

differential influence on college persistence for different kinds of students. Specifically,

such contacts were most important in positively influencing the persistence of students

with initially low commitment to the goal of college graduation, who came from families

where parents themselves have relatively little formal education, or who were relatively

low on other measures of social and academic integration (e.g., peer-group interactions).

This evidence would suggest that faculty-student informal contacts may have a

compensatory influence on college persistence, in that they appear to be most important

for students whose initial characteristics and subsequent college experiences typify the

"withdrawal-prone" individual (Tinto, 1997). Faculty-student interaction is a critical

factor to consider for student success.

What about contact outside of the classroom? Informal faculty-student interaction

does, in fact, accentuate faculty influence on student intellectual and creative

development (Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005). One of the more persistent assumptions in

American higher education has been that of the educational impact of close

faculty-student interactions beyond the classroom. Indeed, so strongly and widely held is

this assumption that frequent informal contact between faculty and students has often

been viewed as a desirable educational end in and of itself. And, if there is no faculty

interaction? Much of the ferment and unrest experienced by academic institutions in the

late 1960s and early 1970s has been explained as a reaction to the growing impersonalism of the multiversity and the lack of communication and non-classroom contact between faculty and student culture (Pascarella, 1980).

The student-affairs profession recognizes the importance of informal faculty and student contact. The earliest systematic research on the impact of college on students provides at least indirect support for a systematic relationship between students' informal contact with faculty and educational outcomes (Pascarella, 1980). Chickering and Reisser (1993) believed that faculty influence as agents of socialization in college is accentuated by contact with students in unstructured, informal settings; thus, one might expect significant positive correlations between amount of non-classroom interaction with faculty and various indicators of intellectual and personal development during college. The results of a number of studies suggest that faculty-student interaction is associated not only with differences in students' levels of intellectual and personal development, but also with differences in their perceived sources of impact and influence during college (Pascarella, 1980). There is a growing number of educators calling for a more holistic education, pointing towards the need to connect mind and spirit and to return to the true values of liberal education–an education that examines learning and knowledge in relation to an exploration of self (Braskamp, Trautvetter, & Ward, 2006). Many academic planners believe religion should be accounted for in the college learning process. Learners' special needs must be considered when planning curricula, courses, and programs (Stark & Latuca, 1997). These needs include and should be concerned with adult students; minority students; underprepared students; disabled students; and students who differ from others in some way such as sexual orientation, religious background, or

cultural orientation. Higher education needs to respond and develop whole people for the common good. The academic curriculum needs to consider how to teach the values and beliefs that engage students as tomorrow's leaders, not in just science, medicine, technology, and commerce, but in the fostering of the common good for the nation and the world (Bugenhagen, 2009).

For institutions emphasizing liberal education, the presence of mounting numbers of students, faculty, and staff who actively engage in religious practices and spiritual activities presents challenges. On one hand, the search for meaning is consistent with liberal education aims to think deeply and critically reflect on one's experience in the context of competing views. Still, concerns remain. If the consideration of new ideas is embraced as central to liberal education, what is the educational experience of students who arrive on campus with static notions of truth based on their religious beliefs? Might they be less likely to engage in the kinds of activities that lead to desired liberal education outcomes (Kuh & Gonyea, 2005)? These are very important student engagement questions.

If we accept the ideas of faculty and student interaction, out-of-class experiences, and in-class experiences as being critically important, it will be interesting to look at the results of the Spring 2015 semester CSBVS administered to students at MCC to measure the levels of spirituality and student engagement inside and outside of the classroom and interaction of MCC students with their faculty.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this study is to better understand the relationship of student

engagement and spirituality at a small, church-related private college. This chapter

contains a detailed explanation of the methods and procedures used to study how student

engagement in and out of the classroom is related to changes in spirituality of students at

MCC, a small, private, baccalaureate, church-related college located in the Upper

Midwest. The chapter begins with a description of the selected sample, a description of

the instrument, and concludes with a discussion of the data collection and analysis

procedures used.

Why is this study important? As discussed in Chapter I, it is important that we

examine ways we can contribute towards college student development. Students lead

complex and demanding lives, and they search for meaning. The mission statement of

MCC supports the students' search, as it states that the college's aim is to provide a

higher education experience to last a lifetime, one that will challenge intellectual

curiosity, promote integrity, and will integrate faith with learning and being of service in

a global community. This study is therefore important because it will help us better

understand the relationship of spirituality and the ways students at MCC engage in the

classroom, outside the classroom, and how they interact with faculty members. The

following research questions are posed for this study:

Research Questions

1. Is there a relationship between student characteristics and spirituality at MCC?

2. Is there a relationship between student characteristics and engagement at MCC?

3. Is there a relationship between the student engagement constructs at MCC?

4. Is there a relationship between engagement and spirituality at MCC?

It is through examining this engagement that we can consider the role that spirituality plays in students' development in college. Thus, we will better understand how we can improve our abilities to support not only students at MCC, but all of our students in higher education towards finding the answers to the difficult questions of why am I here, what is the meaning of life, and why do bad things happen.

Sample

The sample for this study is derived from students enrolled at MCC for the Spring 2015 semester. Permission was granted to survey the entire student population at MCC with special assistance from the Office of Student Development. The intent was to make the survey available for all students enrolled at MCC for the Spring 2015 semester. It was hoped that the results would show an even distribution of freshmen, sophomore, junior, and senior students.

Data Collection

The data in this study are from the administration of the CSBVS offered to 1,538 undergraduate students at MCC during the Spring 2015 semester. Permission was obtained from MCC's Institutional Review Board after receiving permission beforehand from the University of North Dakota Institutional Review Board (Appendix A). This assured the protection of human rights and privacy. A confirmation of permission was

also received from the Higher Education Research Institute at UCLA to utilize the College Students' Beliefs and Values Survey (Appendix B). It is the intellectual property of HERI and UCLA. The researcher is deeply indebted to the Higher Education Research Institute at UCLA for being granted permission to use the College Students' Beliefs and Values Survey for this one-time research effort. The researcher was allowed to use the instrument at no charge.

Once Institutional Review Board approval was granted by both MCC and the University of North Dakota in March 2015, the researcher utilized the survey platform Qualtrics to electronically deliver the CSBVS to all 1,538 undergraduate students at MCC. The Office of Student Development at MCC delivered the survey electronically to all MCC students via their email. The survey included a link for participants to claim a coupon for a free soft drink at the MCC student snack bar as a reward for completing the survey. All completed participants were then lumped into one database for the Office of Student Development at MCC to draw a grand prize of an Apple iPad mini to a student. The survey was conducted live via the Qualtrics platform from April 25, 2015, through May 15, 2015. The web access for the survey closed at midnight on May 15, 2015.

Students were asked to complete the survey on their own time, which would take an average of 45 minutes; 398 undergraduate students or almost 24% of the Spring 2015 semester enrolled students as recorded by the academic records office participated and completed the CSBVS from MCC.

Instrumentation

The College Students' Beliefs and Values Survey is a survey that measures the spirituality and religiosity of college students. The survey was developed in a major,

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multi-year research project conducted through the Higher Education Research Institute (HERI) at UCLA. The purpose was to examine the religious and spiritual development of undergraduate students during their college years. The study was designed to enhance our understanding of the role that spirituality plays in students' lives and to identify strategies that institutions can use to enhance students' spiritual development.

In the spring of 2003, the Higher Education Research Institute contacted 150 colleges and universities inviting them to participate in a study of spirituality in higher education. Forty-seven colleges and universities chose to participate in the study. The target number of participants for each college/university was 250 and 12,035 surveys were mailed to potential participants in March 2003. HERI recorded 3,680 returned responses to the survey, which is a 32% return rate. HERI conducted a follow-up to this survey in 2006 as part of the longitudinal study. Results of the study were shared in the publishing of *Cultivating the Spirit: How College Can Enhance Students' Inner Lives* (Astin et al., 2011b).

Inputs

The student characteristics selected to study for this research were classification (first year, second year, third year, fourth year or more) and grade point average (GPA). I chose these two criteria because they could give me a better understanding about whether grade point average and number of years in college has any significance as related to both engagement and spirituality. One might assume that higher GPA or the greater number of years for attendance might lend itself to reflecting higher levels of spirituality and engagement.

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Input Variables

The input variables I am examining as student characteristics, grade point average

and years in school (Table 1), will be considered as "Inputs" considering Astin's I-E-O

model.

Table 1. Student Characteristics.

Variable Name	Variable Description	Data Type	Values
Grade point average	4.0 – 0.00	Rank	6 - 3.75 – 4.0 5 - 3.25 – 3.74 4 - 2.75 – 3.24 3 - 2.25 – 2.74 2 - 1.75 – 2.24 1 - Less than 1.75
How many years of undergraduate education completed	Class–Freshman through Senior	Rank	1-1 2-2 3-3 4-4 or more

Environment

The characteristics selected for this research related to engagement can help better

understand the collegiate experiences for students at MCC. The three forms of

engagement are out-of-class experiences, in-class experiences, and faculty interaction.

Research shows that engagement inside and outside of the classroom is important in

creating ideal environments on campus that promote student success (Kuh et al., 2006).

Examples of out-of-class experiences include identifying student involvement in campus

clubs/organizations, intercollegiate athletics, and spiritual organizations on campus.

Research shows that exceptional experiences in the classroom along with strong

interactions between students, peers, faculty, and out-of-class experiences result in high-quality student outcomes (Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005). Some areas to be explored for in-class experiences will include discussion in class on topics related to spirituality, encountering new ideas in class, and tutoring another student. The classroom is the centerpiece where faculty, curriculum, and pedagogy all come together to promote student development and persistence (Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005). Faculty interaction will include contact inside and outside the classroom with faculty, and other criteria that identify interaction with faculty and educational attainment for students. Astin (1993) believed that the encouragement of greater student involvement along with interaction with faculty could be a highly productive activity on most college campuses.

Environmental Variables

Environmental variables refer to students' experiences on our campuses both inside and outside the classroom. It also refers to the interactions students have with faculty members.

Out-of-class experiences (Table 2) refer to student involvement outside the classroom. Clubs, organizations, intercollegiate athletics, and leadership activities are considered.

The second set of environmental variables, in-class experiences, are examined here. Learning in the classroom, classroom discussions, study time, and others are considered (Table 3).

Table 2. Out-of-Class Experiences.

Variable Name	Variable Description	Data Type	Values
Joined a fraternity or sorority	Greek	Nominal	0-No 1-Yes
Joined a campus religious organization on campus	Religious Organization	Nominal	0-No 1-Yes
Participated in intercollegiate football or basketball	Athletics	Nominal	0-No 1-Yes
Participated in other intercollegiate sports	Other Athletics	Nominal	0-No 1-Yes
Participated in leadership training	Leadership	Nominal	0-No 1-Yes

Table 3. In-Class Experiences.

Variable Name	Variable Description	Data Type	Values
Became an authority in my field of study	Academic	Nominal	1-Not Important 2-Somewhat Important 3-Very Important 4-Essential
Discussed religion/spirituality in class	Academic	Nominal	0–No 1-Yes

Table 3 (cont.)

Variable Name	Variable Description	Data Type	Values
Time spent studying/doing homework	Academic	Rank	1-None 2-Less than 1 hour 3-1-2 hours 4-3-5 hours 5-6-10 hours 6-11-15 hours 7-16-20 hours 8-21-30 hours 9-Over 30 hours
Took an interdisciplinary course	Academic	Nominal	1-Frequently 2-Occasionally 3-Not at all
Tutored another college student	Academic	Nominal	1-Frequently 2-Occasionally 3-Not at all
New ideas encountered in classes	Academic	Nominal	1-Weakened 2-Strengthened 3-No Change 4-Not applicable

The third set of environmental variables include interaction with faculty, faculty support, and involvement from faculty (Table 4).

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Table 4. Faculty Interactions.

Variable Name	Variable Description	Data Type	Values
Amount of contact with faculty	Faculty	Rank	1-None 2-Less than 1 hour 3-1-2 hours 4-3-5 hours 5-6-10 hours 6-11-15 hours 7-16-20 hours 8-21-30 hours 9-Over 30 hours
Advice and guidance from faculty about your educational program	Faculty	Nominal	1-Frequently 2-Occasionally 3-Not at all
Emotional support and encouragement from faculty	Faculty	Nominal	1-Frequently 2-Occasionally 3-Not at all
Intellectual challenge or stimulation from faculty	Faculty	Nominal	1-Frequently 2-Occasionally 3-Not at all
Opportunities to discuss coursework with faculty outside of class	Faculty	Nominal	1-Frequently 2-Occasionally 3-Not at all
Help from faculty in achieving professional goals	Faculty	Nominal	1-Frequently 2-Occasionally 3-Not at all

Outputs

Astin (1993) referred to the talents we attempt to develop in our educational

program. Outputs are end results. The measures of spirituality as utilized in the College

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Students' Beliefs and Values Survey include charitable involvement, ecumenical worldview, spiritual quest, ethic of caring, and equanimity.

For the purposes of this study, I will focus only on the broad construct of spirituality using the following five measures: charitable involvement, ecumenical worldview, spiritual quest, ethic of caring, and equanimity.

Outcome Variables

There are five CSBVS constructs that serve as measures of spirituality. Descriptors and variables for study of the spirituality constructs are listed in Table 5 through Table 9.

Spiritual Quest

Spiritual quest (Table 5) reflects the degree to which the student is actively searching for meaning and purpose in life, to become a more self-aware and enlightened person, and to find answers to life's mysteries and "big questions." It describes behaviors and goals of students who are on a spiritual quest (Higher Education Research institute, 2010e). This outcome is a composite measure consisting of eight items with 2007 HERI CSBVS results as ($\alpha = .85$) (Astin et al., 2011b).

Equanimity

Equanimity (Table 6) measures the extent to which the student is able to find meaning in times of hardship, feels at peace or is centered, sees each day as a gift, and feels good about the direction of her life (Higher Education Research Institute, 2010c). The equanimity outcome reflects students' self-descriptions and experiences and is comprised of the following five items with 2007 HERI CSBVS results as ($\alpha = .76$) (Astin et al., 2011b).

Table 5. Spiritual Quest.

Variable Name	Variable Description	Data Type	Values
Developing a meaningful philosophy of life	Quest	Nominal	1-Essential 2-Very Important 3-Somewhat Important 4-Not Important
Attaining inner harmony	Quest	Nominal	1-Essential 2-Very Important 3-Somewhat Important 4-Not Important
Attaining wisdom	Quest	Nominal	1-Essential 2-Very Important 3-Somewhat Important 4-Not Important
Seeking beauty in my life	Quest	Nominal	1-Essential 2-Very Important 3-Somewhat Important 4-Not Important
Finding answers to the mysteries of life	Quest	Nominal	1-Essential 2-Very Important 3-Somewhat Important 4-Not Important
Becoming a more loving person	Quest	Nominal	1-Essential 2-Very Important 3-Somewhat Important 4-Not Important
Searching for meaning and purpose in life	Quest	Nominal	1-None 2-Some 3-Most 4-All
Having discussions about the meaning of life with my friends	Quest	Nominal	1-Not at all 2-To some extent 3-To a greater extent

Table 6. Equanimity.

Variable Name	Variable Description	Data Type	Values
Been able to find meaning in times of hardship	Equanimity	Nominal	1-Frequently 2-Occasionally 3-Not at all
Felt at peace/centered	Equanimity	Nominal	1-Frequently 2-Occasionally 3-Not at all
Feeling good about the direction in which my life is headed	Equanimity	Nominal	1-To a great extent 2-To some extent 3-Not at all
Being thankful for all that has happened to me	Equanimity	Nominal	1-To a great extent 2-To some extent 3-Not at all
Self-description: Seeing each day, good or bad, as a gift	Equanimity	Nominal	1-To a great extent 2-To some extent 3-Not at all

Ethic of Caring

Ethic of caring (Table 7) reflects our sense of caring and concern about the welfare of others and the world around us. These feelings are expressed in wanting to help those who are troubled and to alleviate suffering. It includes a concern about social justice issues and an interest in the welfare of one's community and the environment, as well as a commitment to social and political activism (Higher Education Research Institute, 2010d). The ethic of caring measure describes a variety of goals in which students express their caring. This outcome is comprised of the following eight items with 2007 HERI CSBVS results as (α = .79) (Astin et al., 2011b).

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Table 7. Ethic of Caring.

Variable Name	Variable Description	Data Type	Values
Helping others who are in difficulty	Caring	Nominal	1-Essential 2-Very Important 3-Somewhat Important 4-Not Important
Helping to promote racial understanding	Caring	Nominal	1-Essential 2-Very Important 3-Somewhat Important 4-Not Important
Becoming a community leader	Caring	Nominal	1-Essential 2-Very Important 3-Somewhat Important 4-Not Important
Trying to change things that are unfair in the world	Caring	Nominal	1-To a greater extent 2-To some extent 3-Not at all
Reducing pain and suffering in the world	Caring	Nominal	1-Essential 2-Very Important 3-Somewhat Important 4-Not Important
Influencing the political structure	Caring	Nominal	1-Essential 2-Very Important 3-Somewhat Important 4-Not Important
Becoming involved in programs to help clean up the environment	Caring	Nominal	1-Essential 2-Very Important 3-Somewhat Important 4-Not Important

Charitable Involvement

Charitable involvement (Table 8) is a behavioral measure that includes activities such as participating in community service, donating money to charity, and helping friends with personal problems. All three of these activities are associated with positive college outcomes (Higher Education Research Institute, 2010a). The charitable involvement outcome reflects the various ways in which students participate in charitable activities. This measure is a composite of five items with 2007 HERI CSBVS results as ($\alpha = .71$) (Astin et al., 2011b).

Table 8. Charitable Involvement.

Variable Name	Variable Description	Data Type	Values
Participating in community food or clothing drives	Charitable	Nominal	1-Frequently 2-Occasionally 3-Not at all
Performed other volunteer work	Charitable	Nominal	1-Frequently 2-Occasionally 3-Not at all
Helped friends with personal problems	Charitable	Nominal	1-Frequently 2-Occasionally 3-Not at all
Donated money to charity	Charitable	Nominal	1-Frequently 2-Occasionally 3-Not at all
Participated in a community action program	Charitable	Nominal	1-Essential 2-Very Important 3-Somewhat Important 4-Not Important

Ecumenical Worldview

Ecumenical worldview (Table 9) reflects a global worldview that transcends ethnocentrism and egocentrism. It indicates the extent to which the student is interested in different religious traditions, seeks to understand other countries and cultures, feels a strong connection to all humanity, believes in the goodness of all people, accepts others as they are, and believes that all life is interconnected and that love is at the root of all the great religions (Higher Education Research Institute, 2010b). The ecumenical worldview outcome reflects numerous ways in which students are accepting of other people, cultures, ideas, and perspectives. This measure is a composite of 11 items with 2007 HERI CSBVS results as ($\alpha = .70$) (Astin et al., 2011b).

Table 9. Ecumenical Worldview.

Variable Name	Variable Description	Data Type	Values
Love is at the root of all the great religions	Ecumenical	Nominal	1-Agree Strongly 2-Agree Somewhat 3-Disagree Somewhat 4-Disagree Strongly
All life is interconnected	Ecumenical	Nominal	1-Agree Strongly 2-Agree Somewhat 3-Disagree Somewhat 4-Disagree Strongly
We are all spiritual beings	Ecumenical	Nominal	1-Agree Strongly 2-Agree Somewhat 3-Disagree Somewhat 4-Disagree Strongly
Most people can grow spiritually without being religious	Ecumenical	Nominal	1-Agree Strongly 2-Agree Somewhat 3-Disagree Somewhat 4-Disagree Strongly

Table 9 (cont.)

Variable Name	Variable Description	Data Type	Values
Non-religious people can lead lives that are just as moral as those of religious believers	Ecumenical	Nominal	1-Agree Strongly 2-Agree Somewhat 3-Disagree Somewhat 4-Disagree Strongly
Accepting others as they are	Ecumenical	Nominal	1-To a greater extent 2-To some extent 3-Not at all
Understanding of others	Ecumenical	Scale	1-Lowest 10% 2-Below Average 3-Average 4-Above Average 5-Highest 10%
Having an interest in different religious traditions	Ecumenical	Nominal	1-To a greater extent 2-To some extent 3-Not at all
Believing in the goodness of all people	Ecumenical	Nominal	1-To a greater extent 2-To some extent 3-Not at all
Feeling a strong connection to all humanity	Ecumenical	Nominal	1-To a greater extent 2-To some extent 3-Not at all
Improving the human condition	Ecumenical	Nominal	1-Not Important 2-Somewhat Important 3-Very important 4-Essential

Data Analysis

The data for this study come from a set of data collected as a part of an institutional assessment plan. The College Students' Beliefs and Values Survey (CSBVS) was administered at MCC in the spring of 2015. Data from the MCC survey were extracted from the survey platform Qualtrics by the researcher. Once the data set was complete, it was imported into SPSS where the actual data analysis occurred.

The descriptive statistics will be presented for the variables that are used in the study. I used two tests to examine data from the survey conducted in 2015 at MCC. I used Pearson's correlation on all constructs such as spirituality and engagement. The most appropriate test to utilize for student characteristics was Spearman's correlation. I also collapsed the variables for the five spirituality constructs and ran a Cronbach's Alpha test to compare with the 2007 HERI CSBVS. Results will help us determine if spirituality constructs are consistent with responses from the 2004 and 2007 College Students' Beliefs and Values Survey conducted by the Higher Education Research Institute at UCLA.

The research questions were examined in the following manner:

1. Is there a relationship between student characteristics and spirituality at MCC? The researcher examined the relationships between GPA and the spirituality constructs of spiritual quest, equanimity, ethic of caring, charitable involvement, and ecumenical worldview using Spearman's correlation. Also tested were the number of years of undergraduate education completed and spiritual quest, equanimity, ethic of caring, charitable involvement, and ecumenical worldview using Spearman's correlation.

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2. Is there a relationship between student characteristics and engagement at MCC? The researcher examined the relationships of the following constructs to reach conclusions using Spearman's correlation: GPA and out-of-class experiences, in-class experiences, and faculty interaction. Years of undergraduate education completed with out-of-class experiences, in-class experiences, and faculty interaction using Spearman's correlation were also examined.

3. Is there a relationship among the student engagement constructs at MCC? The researcher examined the relationship of the following constructs to reach conclusions using Pearson's correlation: out-of-class experiences, in-class experiences, and faculty interaction.

4. Is there a relationship between engagement and spirituality at MCC? The researcher examined the relationship of the following constructs to reach conclusions using Pearson's correlation: out-of-class experiences and equanimity, ecumenical worldview, ethic of caring, charitable involvement, and spiritual quest. The researcher also examined in-class experiences and equanimity, ecumenical worldview, ethic of caring, charitable involvement, and spiritual quest using Pearson's correlation. Finally, the researcher examined faculty interaction and spiritual quest, equanimity, ethic of caring, charitable involvement, and ecumenical worldview using Pearson's correlation.

Limitations

As articulated in Chapter I, a significant limitation of this study is that it is a snapshot, one-time view of students' perceptions regarding beliefs and values at a small, church-related private college located in the Upper Midwest. It is not longitudinal. It is bound by time, location, and participant pool size.

Delimitations

The sample of this study is limited to full-time students at a small (less than 3,000), private baccalaureate college located in the Upper Midwest. It does not reflect the experiences of graduate or professional students.

All of the data were collected between April 25, 2015, through May 15, 2015. It is now time to move to an important part of this research, the data analysis. What will the analysis tell us about the relationship of student engagement and spirituality at MCC?

CHAPTER IV

RESULTS

This chapter contains the following sections; purpose of the study, description of the sample, descriptive statistics for the variables, the results of the four research questions, and a summary. For the purposes of this study, statistical significance was set at the .05 level.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to better understand the relationship of engagement and spirituality at a small, church-related private college. The College Students' Beliefs and Values Survey, an instrument created by the Higher Education Research Institute at UCLA, was used to survey 1,538 registered students at MCC, a private, church-related college located in the Upper Midwest, during the Spring 2015 semester; 398 students completed the survey, which took approximately 45 minutes to complete. The survey was delivered electronically using the Qualtrics platform from the University of North Dakota. The conceptual framework is based on Astin's I-E-O model. Inputs are identified as student characteristics: year in college and grade point average. Environment is identified as in-class experiences, out-of-class experiences, and interactions with faculty. Outputs are the five constructs identified for spirituality: ecumenical worldview, spiritual quest, equanimity, ethic of caring, and charitable involvement. Two tests were used to

determine answers to the four research questions: Pearson's correlation and Spearman's correlation.

For the purposes of running the statistical analysis, variables in each of the categories were collapsed and then an ANOVA correlational test using Pearson's correlation or Spearman's correlation was run to determine statistical significance. For the spirituality constructs, I also ran a Cronbach's Alpha test on all variables for reliability. With the I-E-O model in mind, the following research questions were explored:

1. Is there a relationship between student characteristics and spirituality at MCC?

2. Is there a relationship between student characteristics and engagement at MCC?

3. Is there a relationship among the student engagement constructs at MCC?

4. Is there a relationship between engagement and spirituality at MCC?

Description of the Sample

The population for this study was 1,538 registered full-time students at MCC for the Spring 2015 semester; thus, there was a sample of 24%. MCC recorded enrollment as 1,538 full-time students, each carrying at least 12 semester hours of academic credit. It was hoped that there would be representation from all four classes, freshman through senior year of attendance. Table 10 displays the results.

The results show that 31% of the participants were first-year students at MCC, and that only 16% of the student pool were in their fourth year of college or higher. The distribution included 22% second-year students and 30% of third-year students enrolled

Table 10. Student Characteristics: Undergraduate Education Years Completed From the Spring 2015 Survey of MCC Students and Actual MCC Reported Data for Spring 2015.

| Year | Respondents | | MCC | |
	N	Percent	N	Percent
1	124	31%	428	28%
2	89	22%	347	23%
3	121	30%	368	24%
4	64	16%	395	26%
TOTAL	398	100%	1,538	100%

at MCC. This compares to the 28% of actual first-year students enrolled for the Spring 2015 semester at MCC and 23% for actual second-year students enrolled, along with 24% for third-year students and 26% for fourth-year students, and 26% of actual numbers reported by the records office at MCC for Spring 2015 semester. First-year and third-year students were overrepresented in the sample, while fourth-year students were underrepresented.

Another input criterion was grade point average. From the data, the following academic information was obtained (Table 11).

There is some difference in student reporting of grades and actual grades recorded by the academic records office at MCC. It appears that students with higher GPAs were more likely to respond to the survey. Thus, low-performing students may be underrepresented.

Table 11. Student Characteristics: Grade Point Average Reported From the Spring 2015 Survey of MCC Students and Actual MCC Reported Data From Spring 2015.

GPA	Respondents		MCC	
	N	Percent	N	Percent
3.75 – 4.0	107	27%	245	16%
3.25 – 3.74	168	42%	459	22%
2.75 – 3.24	88	22%	374	24%
2.25 – 2.74	26	6%	244	16%
1.75 – 2.24	8	2%	118	8%
Less than 1.75	1	0%	98	6%
TOTAL	398	100%	1,538	100%

Engagement Variables

The following are variables and results from the spring of 2015 survey at MCC related to environment and identified in Table 12 as out-of-class experiences. The researcher chose the five out-of-class experiences, as they typically reflect activities that students at many college and universities participate in. It is important to note that MCC does not have any Greek Life programs. Five students from MCC responded affirmative to this item on the survey. The two intercollegiate athletics items had the largest yes response (N = 149) but participating in leadership activities showed a high yes response with 144. I combined playing intercollegiate football/basketball with other intercollegiate sports. My total of 149 for the two items may be misleading. It is quite possible that a student who participated in intercollegiate football/basketball may have also competed in other intercollegiate sports. Ten students at MCC did not report participation in any of the five activities listed.

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Table 12. Out-of-Class Experiences Reported by Students at MCC for Spring 2015.

Variable	N Responding YES	Percentage of 398 Respondents
Joined a fraternity	5	2%
Played intercollegiate football/basketball	38	15%
Other intercollegiate sports	111	44%
Participated in leadership activities	144	57%
Joined a religious organization on campus	104	41%

The following variables and descriptive statistics from the spring of 2015 survey at MCC are related to in-class experiences (Table 13). The six items selected for the in-class experiences for students at MCC were intended to reflect typical issues related to the work that students do and are expected to master as undergraduate students. Items included becoming an authority in their field of study, discussing religion or spirituality in class, taking interdisciplinary courses, and encountering new ideas in the classroom setting. It is important to remember that learning is not one single item. It is about grasping the abstract; remembering facts; mastering methods, techniques, and approaches. Learning is also about debating ideas, reasoning, and developing appropriate behavior to specific situations. Learning is indeed about how we perceive and understand the world. The classroom and faculty interactions are places this all takes place (Fry, Ketteridge, & Marshall, 2008). Based on the mean scores for the six items, one can see

Table 13. In-Class Experiences for Students at MCC for Spring 2015.

Variable Name	Possible Range	Actual Range	Mean	Standard Deviation
Became an authority in my field of study	1-4	3	2.3	0.800
Discussed religion/spirituality in class	1-3	2	2.1	0.675
Time spent studying/doing homework	1-9	7	6.2	1.588
Took an interdisciplinary course	1-3	2	2.1	0.780
Tutored another college student	1-3	2	2.5	0.649
New ideas encountered in classes	1-4	3	2.2	0.644

that students at MCC scored slightly above the median for all six items. It is interesting to note that students from MCC responding to this survey report spending an average of 16-20 hours per week on homework, which is on the high end of the survey scale.

Table 14 shows variables and statistical results from the spring of 2015 survey at MCC for faculty interactions. The purpose of identifying the six items for faculty interactions was to gain a sense of whether students at MCC were interacting with their faculty. Research that was discussed in Chapter II identifies strong faculty-student

Table 14. Faculty Interactions as Reported by Students at MCC for Spring 2015.

Variable Name	Possible Range	Actual Range	Mean	Standard Deviation
Amount of contact with faculty	1-6	5	2.7	0.918
Advice and guidance from faculty about your educational program	1-3	2	1.5	0.533
Emotional support and encouragement from faculty	1-3	2	1.6	0.653
Intellectual challenge or stimulation from faculty	1-3	2	1.3	0.517
Opportunities to discuss coursework with faculty outside of class	1-3	2	1.4	0.532
Help from faculty in achieving professional goals	1-3	2	1.5	0.605

interactions as critical for student success in college. The researcher wanted to find out if there was a relationship between engagement and the spirituality constructs and to find out if there was a relationship between out-of-class experiences, in-class experiences, and faculty interactions. As discussed in Chapter II, interactions with faculty are important for student success. MCC reports a 12 to 1 student to faculty ratio and class sizes at MCC are reported to average 20 students. Based on these numbers, it would appear that

interactions with faculty as reported for this research are low. The mean averages are low for the scales presented and indicate that the amount of interaction between MCC students and their faculty in the classroom is low. Further discussion about this will follow later in this chapter.

Spirituality Constructs

The following are variables and descriptive statistics from the spring of 2015 survey at MCC related to the outputs, the five constructs of spirituality. Of the five spirituality constructs, two are internally directed aspects of students' spirituality: quest and equanimity. Three are externally directed aspects: ethic of caring, charitable involvement, and ecumenical worldview.

Spiritual Quest

There are eight items for spiritual quest (Table 15). These are all items reported by Astin et al. (2011b). The 2011 published results of the Cronbach's Alpha is listed here as well as the Cronbach's Alpha reported from the Spring 2015 survey of MCC students. Of the eight items selected for spiritual quest, students at MCC reported slightly higher scores for searching for meaning and purpose in life, finding answers to the mysteries of life, and developing a meaningful philosophy of life. Lower scores were reported for attaining wisdom, seeking beauty in life, and becoming a more loving person.

The scale for this sample had a Cronbach's Alpha of .826 that exceeded the threshold of .70 for a scale; Astin et al. (2011b) reported an alpha of .820. The 2015 results are consistent with Astin et al.'s (2011b) results.

Table 15. Spiritual Quest Items for Students at MCC for Spring 2015.

Variable Name	Possible Range	Actual Range	Mean	Standard Deviation
Developing a meaningful philosophy of life	1-4	3	2.4	1.031
Attaining inner harmony	1-4	3	2.2	0.901
Attaining wisdom	1-4	3	1.8	0.748
Seeking beauty in my life	1-4	3	1.9	0.843
Finding answers to the mysteries of life	1-4	3	2.6	0.849
Becoming a more loving person	1-4	3	1.6	0.710
Searching for meaning and purpose in life	1-4	3	2.6	0.722
Having discussions about the meaning of life with my friends	1-3	2	1.9	0.653

Equanimity

There are five items for equanimity listed in Table 16. These are all items

reported by Astin et al. (2011b). The 2011 published results of the Cronbach's Alpha is

listed here as well as the Cronbach's Alpha reported from the Spring 2015 survey of

MCC students. The score reports for equanimity are both slightly low and slightly high.

Scores were slightly higher for being able to find meaning in times of hardship and

feeling at peace, as compared to seeing each day, good or bad, as a gift, being thankful

for all that has happened, or feeling good about the direction in which my life is headed.

Table 16. Equanimity Items for Students at MCC for Spring 2015.

Variable Name	Possible Range	Actual Range	Mean	Standard Deviation
Been able to find meaning in times of hardship	1-3	2	1.7	0.590
Felt at peace/centered	1-3	2	1.7	0.579
Feeling good about the direction in which my life is headed	1-3	2	1.5	0.547
Being thankful for all that has happened to me	1-3	2	1.4	0.532
Self-description: Seeing each day, good or bad, as a gift	1-3	2	1.5	0.639

The scale for this sample had a Cronbach's Alpha of .725 that exceeded the threshold of .70 for a scale; Astin et al. (2011b) reported an alpha of .720. The 2015 results are consistent with Astin et al.'s (2011b) results.

Charitable Involvement

There are five items for charitable involvement listed in Table 17. These are all items reported by Astin et al. (2011b). The 2011 published results of the Cronbach's Alpha is listed here as well as the Cronbach's Alpha reported from the Spring 2015 survey of MCC students. Students at MCC report slightly higher scores for participating in community food or clothing drives, donating money to charity, and participating in community action programs as compared to performing other volunteer work or

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Table 17. Charitable Involvement Items for Students at MCC for Spring 2015.

Variable Name	Possible Range	Actual Range	Mean	Standard Deviation
Participating in community food or clothing drives	1-3	2	2.2	0.614
Performed other volunteer work	1-3	2	1.7	0.609
Helped friends with personal problems	1-3	2	1.4	0.521
Donated money to charity	1-3	2	2.3	0.683
Participated in a community action program	1-3	3	2.5	0.899

helping friends with personal problems. We should remember that MCC proudly advertises a national award recently earned for student community involvement.

The scale for this sample had a Cronbach's Alpha of .669 that was slightly below the threshold of .70 for a scale; Astin et al. (2011b) reported an alpha of .710. The 2015 results are slightly below Astin et al.'s (2011b) results.

Ethic of Caring

There are eight items for ethic of caring listed in Table 18. These are all items reported by Astin et al. (2011b). The 2011 published results of the Cronbach's Alpha is listed here as well as the Cronbach's Alpha reported from the Spring 2015 survey of MCC students. Students at MCC score slightly higher for influencing social values,

Table 18. Ethic of Caring Items for Students at MCC for Spring 2015.

Variable Name	Possible Range	Actual Range	Mean	Standard Deviation
Influencing social values	1-4	3	2.3	0.844
Helping others who are in difficulty	1-4	3	1.7	0.712
Helping to promote racial understanding	1-4	3	2.5	0.927
Becoming a community leader	1-4	3	2.4	0.909
Trying to change things that are unfair in the world	1-3	3	1.9	0.646
Reducing pain and suffering in the world	1-4	3	1.9	0.756
Influencing the political structure	1-4	3	3.1	0.884
Becoming involved in programs to help clean up the environment	1-4	3	2.8	0.878

helping others in difficulty, promoting racial understanding, aspiring to become a community leader, influencing the political structure, and becoming involved in programs to clean up the environment as compared to the other two items for the construct.

The scale for this sample had a Cronbach's Alpha of .831 that exceeded the threshold of .70 for a scale; Astin et al. (2011b) reported an alpha of .820. The 2015 results are consistent with Astin et al.'s (2011b) results.

Ecumenical Worldview

There are 11 items for ecumenical worldview listed in Table 19. These are all items reported by Astin et al. (2011b). The 2011 published results of the Cronbach's Alpha is listed here as well as the Cronbach's Alpha reported from the Spring 2015 survey of MCC students. Students at MCC do not score either high or low for the 11 items for ecumenical worldview. Astin et al. (2111b) reported that the ecumenical worldview items measure the extent to which the student is interested in different religious traditions, seeks to understand and embrace diversity, believes in the goodness of all people, accepts others as they are, believes that all life is interconnected, and that love is at the root of all great religions. The score reports for this survey show the item of understanding of others to be the highest of all the items in ecumenical worldview for students from MCC; but, again, overall the scores are generally neither high nor low.

The scale for this sample had a Cronbach's Alpha of .757 that exceeded the threshold of .70 for a scale; Astin et al. (2011b) reported an alpha of .700. The 2015 results are consistent with Astin et al.'s (2011b) results.

Table 19. Ecumenical Worldview Items for Students at MCC for Spring 2015.

Variable Name	Possible Range	Actual Range	Mean	Standard Deviation
Love is at the root of all the great religions	1-4	3	1.8	0.860
All life is interconnected	1-4	3	1.7	0.641
We are all spiritual beings	1-4	3	1.9	0.809
Most people can grow spiritually without being religious	1-4	3	2.1	0.837
Non-religious people can lead lives that are just as moral as those of religious believers	1-4	3	1.5	0.709
Accepting others as they are	1-3	3	1.4	0.557
Understanding of others	1-5	4	2.3	0.768
Having an interest in different religious traditions	1-3	2	2.1	0.714
Believing in the goodness of all people	1-3	2	1.7	0.649
Feeling a strong connection to all humanity	1-3	2	1.8	0.608
Improving the human condition	1-4	3	1.9	0.786

Research Question #1

Is there a relationship between student characteristics and spirituality at MCC? The following results were found after running a Spearman's correlation test. There is a statistically significant relationship between number of years of undergraduate education and two spirituality constructs, equanimity and charitable involvement (Table 20).

Table 20. Number of Years of Undergraduate Education for Students at MCC for Spring 2015 and Spirituality Constructs: Spearman's Correlation.

Measure	1	2	3	4	5	6
1. Years of undergraduate education	--					
2. Spiritual quest	.086	--				
3. Equanimity	.107*	.582*	--			
4. Ethic of caring	.048	.596*	.468*	--		
5. Charitable involvement	.168*	.573*	.654*	.565*	--	
6. Ecumenical worldview	.050	.585*	.530*	.550*	.545*	--

* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

It is possible that students are more engaged with charitable involvement as they progress through their undergraduate years of experience and likewise exhibit an awareness of mental poise or equanimity as they mature. These are both assumptions but are possible explanations for the statistically significant relationship based on the data.

Using Spearman's correlation, there is no statistical significance between the constructs of spirituality and grade point average (Table 21). Grade point average does

Table 21. Grade Point Average for Students at MCC for Spring 2015 and Spirituality Constructs: Spearman's Correlation.

Measure	1	2	3	4	5	6
1. Grade point average	--					
2. Spiritual quest	-0.48	--				
3. Equanimity	-0.77	.582*	--			
4. Ethic of caring	-0.35	.596*	.468*	--		
5. Charitable involvement	-0.37	.573*	.654*	.565*	--	
6. Ecumenical worldview	-0.66	.585*	.530*	.550*	.545*	--

* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

not appear to be a factor for students from MCC when considering spirituality. A possible explanation might be that students who attend MCC arrive at the institution already possessing a strong connection in their lives with spirituality. MCC is a church-affiliated institution. This may explain why grade point average appears to be irrelevant to spirituality for students at MCC.

Research Question #2

Is there a relationship between student characteristics and engagement at MCC? Running a Spearman's correlation test, we have the following results.

There is a statistically significant relationship between the number of undergraduate years completed and engagement with faculty only. The longer students are enrolled the more likely they are engaged with their faculty (Table 22). Research shows that students who persist and progress towards graduation become more engaged

with faculty from freshmen to senior years. Further study of the data would be necessary to draw any additional conclusions.

Table 22. Number of Years of Undergraduate Education for Students at MCC for Spring 2015 and Engagement: Spearman's Correlation.

Measure	1	2	3	4
1. Years of undergraduate Education	--			
2. Out-of-class experiences	.034	--		
3. Faculty interaction	.100*	.133*	--	
4. In-class experiences	.058	.158*	.353*	--

* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Scores recorded for undergraduate GPA and engagement show a statistically significant relationship with in-class experiences and out-of-class experiences. The data show only an inverse relationship between grade point average and in-class experiences and out-of-class experiences, meaning that the data show there is no positive relationship established between the two (Table 23). Further study of the data would be necessary to better understand why there is a negative relationship between GPA and in-class experiences and out-of-class experiences. One would assume that students with high GPAs are less likely to become involved with activities so they spend more time on studies and less with co-curricular. One would also assume that students with higher GPAs would interact more so with their faculty. If, in this case, it were true, we would assume that in-class experiences would be higher for students at MCC as it relates to GPA. The data here are counterintuitive. We should recall from earlier in this research

Table 23. Grade Point Average for Students at MCC for Spring 2015 and Engagement: Spearman's Correlation.

Measure	1	2	3	4
1. Grade point average	--			
2. Out-of-class experiences	-.114*	--		
3. Faculty interaction	-.070	.133*	--	
4. In-class experiences	-.256*	.158*	.353*	--

* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

project that students who participated in this research project from MCC self-reported high grade point averages. A possible explanation is that students with higher GPAs were more likely to respond to this survey and thus low-performing students may be underrepresented.

Research Question #3

Is there a relationship among the student engagement constructs at MCC? Engagement for the purposes of this survey is defined in three broad areas of in-class experiences, out-of-class experiences, and faculty interaction for students. When considering all the variables for the purpose of this study that are defined as engagement and running a Pearson's correlation test, we have the following results.

There is a relationship among all three types of engagement identified for the purpose of this study (Table 24). Students at MCC appear to utilize what they learn in the classroom, what they experience in out-of-class experiences, and what they take from their interactions with faculty to be engaged in their environment. They report

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Table 24. Engagement (Out-of-Class Experiences, In-Class Experiences, and Faculty Interaction) for Students at MCC for Spring 2015: Pearson's Correlation.

Measure	1	2	3
1. Out-of-class experiences	--		
3. Faculty interaction	.125*	--	
4. In-class experiences	.151*	.349*	--

* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

statistically significant relationships between all three constructs. Students at MCC appear to relate what they learn in the classroom to what they experience in co-curricular life and what they take away from their interactions with faculty in their daily lives. A possible explanation here is that MCC is successfully integrating the overall student experience on campus. Students are balanced with engagement in the classroom, with faculty, and the many co-curricular opportunities made available to them at MCC.

There is a statistically significant relationship between faculty interaction and both in-class experiences and out-of-class experiences. There is also a statistically significant relationship between out-of-class experiences and in-class experiences. There is also a statistically significant relationship among the out-of-class experiences for students at MCC. Students at MCC report that they engage with their faculty while in class. Perhaps this is why students who responded to the survey self-report high grade point averages. Chapter II discussed at length the importance of interactions in the classroom as an important element for student success.

Research Question #4

Is there a relationship between engagement and spirituality at MCC? Students at

MCC report that spirituality is related to their out-of-class experiences (Table 25). The

data show a statistically significant relationship between four of the five spirituality

constructs and out-of-class experiences. They report being engaged with charitable

Table 25. Out-of-Class Experiences for Students at MCC for Spring 2015 and Spirituality
Constructs: Pearson's Correlation.

Measure	1	2	3	4	5	6
1. Out-of-class experiences	--					
2. Spiritual quest	.065	--				
3. Equanimity	.119*	.872*	--			
4. Ethic of caring	.127*	.598*	.508*	--		
5. Charitable involvement	.151*	.736*	.797*	.585*	--	
6. Ecumenical worldview	.105*	.763*	.742*	.567*	.673*	--

* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

involvement, they demonstrate an ethic of caring, possess equanimity, and believe they

possess an ecumenical view of the world. This can be related to participation in

leadership and athletic activities reported earlier in this research along with engagement

with the faith-based and service-oriented clubs and organizations on the campus of MCC.

When considering all of the variables defined as engagement for the purposes of this

study and the five constructs identified as spirituality and running a Pearson's correlation

test, the data show that there is a statistically significant relationship between out-of-class experiences and four of the five spirituality constructs.

There is also a statistically significant relationship between in-class experiences and the five spirituality constructs (Table 26). Students at MCC report a lot about the five constructs for spirituality for their in-class experiences, as it relates to quest, equanimity, ecumenical worldview, ethic of caring, and charitable giving with their attendance in class. Remembering the in-class experiences, students implement the five constructs while aspiring to be an authority in their field of study, discussing religion and spirituality in class, while they spend time studying and doing homework, taking an interdisciplinary course, tutoring another student, or any new ideas they encounter in their classroom on the campus of MCC.

Table 26. In-Class Experiences for Students at MCC for Spring 2015 and Spirituality Constructs: Pearson's Correlation.

Measure	1	2	3	4	5	6
1. In-class experiences	--					
2. Spiritual quest	.337*	--				
3. Equanimity	.352*	.872*	--			
4. Ethic of caring	.343*	.598*	.508*	--		
5. Charitable involvement	.375*	.736*	.797*	.585*	--	
6. Ecumenical worldview	.366*	.763*	.742*	.567*	.673*	--

* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Scores reported for in-class experiences and spirituality show a statistical

significance (Table 26). Students at MCC report they feel that in-class experiences

support their spiritual quest, assist with mental poise or equanimity, reinforce their belief

in caring, and being charitably involved. The classroom is also a great place for students

at MCC to find support for growth and development of an ecumenical worldview.

Students at MCC are receptive to new ideas encountered in their classroom setting and

the discussion of religion and spirituality that they have and participate in the classroom

setting. The data suggest that the classroom setting at MCC is a significant place for

students to be engaged with spirituality.

Finally, there is a statistically significant relationship between engagement with

faculty interactions and two of the five spirituality constructs, charitable involvement and

ethic of caring (Table 27). Students at MCC are engaged with their faculty significantly

Table 27. Faculty Interactions for Students at MCC for Spring 2015 and Spirituality
Constructs: Pearson's Correlation.

Measure	1	2	3	4	5	6
1. Faculty interaction	--					
2. Spiritual quest	.022	--				
3. Equanimity	.082	.872*	--			
4. Ethic of caring	.166*	.598*	.508*	--		
5. Charitable involvement	.170*	.736*	.797*	.585*	--	
6. Ecumenical worldview	.093	.763*	.742*	.567*	.673*	--

* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

for ethic of caring and charitable involvement when considering the five spirituality

constructs. There is no significance for ecumenical worldview and equanimity and being

engaged with the faculty, which could possibly mean that students at MCC do not engage

their faculty regarding their very own personal spiritual journey and development. The

scores for engagement with faculty and the five spiritual constructs are fewer as

compared with in-class experiences and the five constructs.

Faculty engagement appears to impact spirituality the least for students at MCC.

This would not suggest that students' engagement interactions with faculty do not

influence their spirituality as identified by the five constructs utilized for the purpose of

this study. We should remember that MCC is a church-affiliated institution and students

who attend there may already be deeply spiritual before enrolling at MCC.

We know that based on the data analysis that spirituality shows significance for

students at MCC with their in-class experiences and their out-of-class experiences. We

also know there are only two constructs that are significant between faculty interactions

and spirituality. This presents now an opportunity to discuss the findings more and to

make recommendations to MCC, which will move us to Chapter V.

CHAPTER V

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS,
AND IMPLICATIONS FOR PRACTICE

Summary

The purpose of this study has been to examine the relationships between student engagement and spirituality at a small, church-related private college located in the Upper Midwest that the researcher has identified as MCC. The institution has an enrollment of over 1,500 full-time students and is strongly tied to a large Christian church organization in the U.S. The institution offers over 50 majors for undergraduate, liberal arts education and embraces values articulated by many church-related colleges and universities. Some of those values include liberal arts, community, service, and excellence. The college proudly states that students from all religious faiths are welcome at the college and that they believe that questions of faith and values fit comfortably in all aspects of life on the campus.

The researcher used Astin's I-E-O model as a conceptual framework. The study examined two input variables, year in school and grade point average. The environment was defined using three measures of student engagement: out-of-class experiences, in-class experiences, and faculty interaction. The output was defined using five measures of spirituality while utilizing the College Students' Beliefs and Values Survey created by the Higher Education Research Institute at UCLA. This survey was used in a longitudinal study from 2004 through 2007 and its results were published by Astin et al. (2011b).

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The researcher posed the following four questions for the purpose of examining and understanding the relationships of engagement with spirituality for students at MCC:

1. Is there a relationship between student characteristics and spirituality at MCC?

2. Is there a relationship between student characteristics and engagement at MCC?

3. Is there a relationship among the student engagement constructs at MCC?

4. Is there a relationship between engagement and spirituality at MCC?

After running statistical tests of the data collected from 398 student survey participants from MCC in the Spring 2015 semester, we are able to reach the following general conclusions.

Conclusions

Regarding student characteristics (referred from the outset as inputs) and spirituality, there is only statistical significance between charitable involvement and equanimity when looking at number of years of undergraduate education completed. There is no relationship between grade point average and the five spirituality constructs. This could be because, as discussed earlier, students who choose to go to MCC select it knowing of the institution's historical commitment to be affiliated with the church.

There is an inverse statistical significance between grade point average and in-class experiences and out-of-class experiences. It may be that students who are more engaged outside the classroom have less time to spend studying. Or, perhaps students at MCC with higher GPAs are more confident in themselves and their abilities, both in class and in participation in out-of-class experiences, that they do not view their involvement at MCC through a lens of self-awareness as it relates to their academic standing. Perception

about GPA may be irrelevant in the eyes of MCC students. There does appear to be a statistically significant relationship between faculty interaction and year in school, suggesting relationships with faculty develop over time. This could be because, as discussed earlier, students who choose to go to MCC select it knowing of the institution's historical commitment to be affiliated with the church.

All the measures of engagement for students at MCC were statistically significant. This may mean that there is really one form of engagement encompassing out-of-class experiences, in-class experiences, and faculty interactions. In-class experiences is the strongest of all three areas identified as student engagement and how it relates to the five spirituality constructs identified as outputs for the purpose of this research. All five relationships show statistical significance.

Pascarella and Terenzini (2005) came to the conclusion that the time and energy that students devote to their studies and other educationally purposeful activities positively influence their grades and persistence. Another way to put it is that a key to academic success for students is their engagement. Tinto (1997) also had the following to say about classroom experiences for students:

> The college classroom lies at the center of the educational activity structure of institutions of higher education; the educational encounters that occur therein are a major feature of student educational experience.... [I]n particular, the classroom is the crossroads where the social and academic meet. If academic and social involvement or integration is to occur, it must occur in the classroom. (p. 599)

Kuh (2008), while writing for *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, stated that colleges and universities need to make the classroom the centerpiece for community. Kuh

believed that the classroom is the only venue where students regularly have face-to-face contact with faculty or staff members and other students. They learn how the institution works and absorb the campus culture. This makes professors' jobs in the classroom more challenging and complicated. Successful colleges and universities must create an environment in which a group of strangers will listen attentively to others with respect, and challenge and support one another to higher levels of academic performance.

MCC has an excellent opportunity to help students answer the difficult questions posed for this research. The data show a statistically significant relationship between in-class experiences and spirituality. If we are to agree with the conclusions of Pascarella and Terenzini, Tinto, and Kuh, then the classroom is a powerful resource at MCC to assist with the spiritual quest, ethic of caring, equanimity, charitable involvement, and helping to develop an ecumenical worldview for its students.

All spirituality constructs, based on the data, are related to one or more forms of engagement. Charitable involvement and ethic of caring have a relationship with all three forms of engagement. Spiritual quest is a form of existential engagement that emphasizes individual purpose and meaning making in the world (Astin et al., 2011b). Spiritual quest is only significant for in-class experiences. Equanimity and ecumenical worldview are related to both in-class experiences and out-of-class experiences.

The researcher would like to point out it is important to remember that all five of the spirituality constructs show a relationship with one or more forms of the three types of engagement identified for the purpose of this study. It is interesting to note that the Astin et al. study (2011b) pointed out that their research findings showed that students'

overall level of spirituality increases from freshmen to senior years. It is evident that the five constructs are related to engagement for students at MCC.

Two of the spirituality measures are related to all three forms of engagement. They are charitable involvement and ethic of caring. Charitable involvement and ethic of caring appear most prominently as it relates to student engagement at MCC. This deserves further study as it has implications to consider for volunteer and service learning programs and activities at MCC. There appears to be a heightened sense of civic responsibility and personal fulfillment through participation in such programs for students at MCC.

Engagement with faculty at MCC has a relationship with ethic of caring and charitable involvement from the five spirituality constructs. In their research, Astin et al. (2011b) reported that participating in community activities, donating money to charity, and helping friends with personal problems were important to students. Students at MCC are involved with causes that support charitable efforts. Could this be confirmation about what students at MCC value as it relates to the national honor the institution received recently for community service?

Engagement in out-of-class experiences for MCC students is significant as it relates to four of the five spirituality constructs. These four measures of charitable involvement, ethic of caring, equanimity, and ecumenical worldview are shared between in-class experiences and out-of-class experiences. This can suggest that peer interactions for students at MCC contribute in positive ways towards spirituality in the lives of students and that they share and experience their collegiate world at MCC similarly. Based on the spirituality constructs from Astin et al. (2011b), we need to remember that

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students who begin college say that a major reason they enrolled in college is to find their life's purpose and that they expect the college experience to enhance their self-understanding and contribute to their emotional and spiritual development (Chickering et al., 2006).

Co-curricular opportunities at MCC are robust for students. MCC has a strong intercollegiate athletic program for both men and women and a plethora of campus clubs and organizational opportunities for students. MCC has 90 approved student clubs and organizations. Of the 90 student organizations, 6 are religious organizations and 13 are service-oriented entities. MCC shows statistical significance between out-of-class experiences and four of the five spirituality constructs. Based on the 90 student organizations and a robust intercollegiate athletic program, we can recognize that MCC, along with student leadership, have built a vibrant array of opportunities outside the classroom for students to engage with spiritual and religious interests. This is certainly not accidental, considering the institution's historical commitment to the church. Over time, it is clear that the institution has built a student life program to support the commitment to church and faith. An opportunity to improve might be found in tying the out-of-class experiences together for students. Finally, the only construct that does not have a statistically significant relationship with out-of-class experiences is spiritual quest. We know that spiritual quest is defined as being on a journey and to understand the purpose of the journey. There may be opportunities for MCC administrative and student leaders to pull this all together in a well-articulated mission statement about the division of student life and the college's historic affiliation with the church. This could have

potentially strong implications for the continued environmental issues that students experience while enrolled at MCC.

We know from Astin et al. (2011b) that the student's desire to engage in a spiritual quest increases significantly during the college years. Such growth can be facilitated by meditation and self-reflection, having faculty who encourage the exploration of questions of meaning and purpose, involvement in religious activities, and by participation in charitable activities. Spiritual quest is only significant as it relates to in-class experiences. The classroom is at the center of all students' collegiate experiences. Spiritual quest is not related to out-of-class experiences nor faculty interactions. Why spiritual quest is not related to either of the two is something for leaders at MCC to potentially explore and examine further. The church affiliation with the institution perhaps makes this all the more important. This helps to better understand that students at MCC indeed ask the difficult questions of what is the meaning of life, why am I here, and why do bad things happen. This research confirms that faculty and administrators at MCC should continue to have conversations to discuss ways to maintain and build on the fact that their students incorporate spirituality towards their work and involvement in class. There is opportunity to build on and improve the connections for spirituality as it relates to the co-curricular life on campus and keeping the topic alive for interactions between faculty and their students.

Recommendations and Implications for Practice

Recommendations for MCC would be to seize the opportunity to build on what students report for their in-class experiences. In-class experiences are related to all five spirituality constructs. Faculty at MCC could strengthen the student classroom

experiences to improve teaching pedagogies, classroom management, and the overall creation of curriculum for students at MCC. Also, students come to the campus of MCC with expectations based on the fact that MCC is a small, church-related private institution. The data collected for this survey indicate that there is a distinctive possibility and opportunity for growing the connections of spirituality for students with continued strong emphasis on co-curricular experiences. Regarding interactions with faculty, students have opportunities to make improved connections with the 12 to 1 student to faculty ratio along with the strong student life programs and services currently in place. MCC should encourage faculty to take on leadership and advisory roles with clubs, student organizations, and perhaps even possibly coaching in intercollegiate athletics. This may already be happening at MCC.

Two of the five spirituality constructs show a statistically significant relationship with faculty interactions. The low student to faculty ratio at MCC contributes much to this. Still, since students at MCC demonstrate active involvement with spirituality and in-class experiences, perhaps there is opportunity for the faculty at MCC to think about ways to build on student engagement in the classroom at MCC. Perhaps faculty at MCC might consider these data as they plan course goals and objectives, something that could be included in pedagogical approach. There appears to be excellent opportunity for growing faculty-student interaction and spirituality. MCC may want to consider having open discussion at faculty trainings, workshops, and meetings about the potential significance of the data from this research. The mission statement of MCC emphasizes the importance of integrating faith in everyday life. Faculty are at the center of students' academic experiences. MCC faculty have the opportunity to build on faculty-student

interactions both inside and outside the classroom by being very intentional and discussing the issues surrounding equanimity, ecumenical worldview, and ultimately the spiritual quest that students at MCC perceive themselves as being on. Such discussions may have potential impact for classroom and campus conversations that at one time or another will go directly back to the hard questions that students often pose: Why am I here?, What is the meaning of life?, and Why do bad things happen? Having candid conversations throughout the campus has the potential to have positive results not only for the students at MCC, but also for the entire community.

MCC may want to consider adding such intentional focus to overall campus programming. This could be implemented into campus-wide conversations, lecture series, "brown bag" lunch discussions, and a variety of other campus programming efforts. There is a great opportunity to do this for a campus the intimate size of MCC.

Administrators at MCC have some important information here that can be utilized for institutional assessment purposes and planning. Reports from the data show the following:

- Charitable involvement and ethic of caring show the most in terms of relating to engagement. There is a relationship with all three forms of engagement. Leaders at MCC may find this information to be important as they continue to identify and profile the typical current MCC student. This may be information that will be helpful in recruitment, retention, public relations, and overall perceptions of what MCC students value in their lives as students at MCC and how they engage on the campus.

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- Additionally, MCC lists one of its core values as "by caring for one another" in recognition of the importance for commitment to community. MCC students relate the ethic of caring to all aspects of engagement and this is important for leaders at MCC to make note of.

- Relationships between faculty and students could be expanded to further develop student spirituality. MCC administrators could always encourage faculty to take on leadership and advisory roles with student clubs, organizations, and possibly even coaching in intercollegiate athletics. This may already be happening at MCC.

- Students at MCC show thought and reflection on spirituality in the classroom and in out-of-class experiences. Tying this in to the church affiliation for MCC may be very helpful in support of the institutional mission statement.

- The vast majority of students at MCC who participated in this research project report their overall campus experience as being satisfied or very satisfied. Their information can be very helpful in both long-term and short-term strategic planning. Alumni, supporters, and donors to the institution value such information in making financial and other supportive efforts in support of the historical mission and purpose of MCC.

- The Office of Student Development has built a strong program of out-of-class experiences for students at MCC. The office has the potential to use the research findings here to explore ways to build on adding spirituality in the conversation as it relates to leadership opportunities and organizations at MCC for students. Intercollegiate athletics may use the information to share with

coaches as a helpful way to view overall student-athlete perceptions and experiences at MCC. Finally, student development at MCC can use the information about overall engagement and spirituality to help make decisions about better understanding the connections of student experiences inside the classroom and outside the classroom and the important opportunities for partnering with academic affairs in support of enriching the overall campus experience for students at MCC.

- The campus ministerial association at MCC has some valuable information from the research to continue the relevancy and importance for the spiritual development and continued support for students at MCC.

- The research findings here will provide MCC leaders with data-driven information to support informal decision making for student success initiatives, programs, and services at MCC.

Overall, MCC appears to be providing an environment that helps students to connect with the five components of spirituality as identified from the research conducted by Astin et al. (2011b). Students who participated in this survey report high grade point averages and most appear to be engaged with at least one form of campus activity or program.

One of the areas from the College Students' Beliefs and Values Survey was to ask the students who participated in this research project to rate their satisfaction with the overall college experience at MCC: 39% from MCC report being very satisfied, 48% report being satisfied, 9% reported as being neutral, and only 3% report being dissatisfied with overall college experiences at MCC.

Finally, the data confirm that students at MCC are seeking answers to life's big questions: What is the meaning of life?, Why am I here?, and Why do bad things happen? In light of recent global and national events, MCC is already geared towards facilitating the discussions in the classroom setting towards helping students find the answers to these very important questions. MCC has the opportunity to build on creating those same connections for out-of-class experiences.

Final Thoughts and Recommendations

In the early part of Chapter I, I made the comment that when our students pose the difficult questions of what is the meaning of life, why am I here, and why do bad things happen, I made mention that we often do not have answers for students or we make a referral for the student to the counseling office or to our campus ministerial leaders. After all of the research and work put into this effort, combined with the information I was able to gain from studying students at MCC, I am now convinced of the following items.

First, responding with having no answers should never be an acceptable strategy. We have enough information now to engage our students with a healthy dialogue about what is going on in their lives and how it can relate to what they see, hear, and learn in their classrooms. Students are spiritual. What they think and feel in the classroom can also be implemented in their lives for out-of-class experiences. Difficult life questions can be discussed on the football field, the basketball court, the student government leadership room, and through all campus clubs and organizations. We know our students are very interested in supporting charitable organizations, they care about those around them, and many view the world through a diverse set of lenses. As administrators, we should not be shy about having these conversations with our students. It is an important

part of their development and life journey. We should welcome and embrace it! As a leader in student affairs administration, I intend to implement this awareness, training, and philosophy into any student affairs division that I may lead in the future. It would be my duty and obligation to train my staff colleagues as to why we should and need to do this.

Secondly, we have a potential through these interactions to encourage our students to have the same talk with their faculty. Faculty are our partners on campus. We need to thus have similar conversations as leaders in student affairs with our faculty colleagues to encourage them to be receptive to such inquiries from our students. Supporting our faculty colleagues and training them to feel comfortable with the conversations can enhance the faculty-student interactions that we imagine to be ideal for our campuses.

Finally, utilizing our campus ministerial organizations and counseling centers will be helpful in some cases. It is important to note that this is not always the case. The difficult questions posed by our students sometimes cannot be answered with organized religion. Some of our students do not wish to utilize counseling centers on campuses for a variety of reasons. Again, encouraging the conversations at our leadership level may very well help our students come to terms with answering the difficult questions of what is the meaning of life, why am I here, and why do bad things happen in the context of their own personal set of experiences, beliefs, and values they hold. Punting this challenge solely to our campus counseling centers and ministerial associations is not of service to our students. We can do much better than this simply by being comfortable with having the conversation.

These are thoughts and recommendations that I would share as a result of my research with my colleagues in student affairs. I believe I am a better student affairs administrator as a result of this important research project. And, I am also indebted to the exceptional administrators and students at MCC for making this study a reality.

In closing, we know from the data results of the survey conducted at MCC during the Spring 2015 semester that charitable involvement and ethic of caring relate to all three forms of engagement. All five spirituality constructs relate to in-class experiences for students at MCC. Equanimity, ethic of caring, charitable involvement, and ecumenical worldview all relate to out-of-class experiences. Only ethic of caring and charitable involvement relate to faculty interactions.

Implications for the practice of student affairs is that spirituality is an important part of our students' lives. The 2007 Astin et al. study showed students' overall spirituality increases while as an undergraduate. MCC students, in 2015, show strongest levels of engagement with the five spirituality constructs while in class. Perhaps the findings in this research project can help us to emphasize the power that the classroom experience can have in helping our students find the answers to the difficult questions in life. This research also has the potential to help professionals working with our students to work more closely and comfortably when they pose the Chickering questions of what is the meaning of life, why am I here, and why do bad things happen.

APPENDICES

Appendix A
IRB Approval

UN**D** UNIVERSITY OF
NORTH DAKOTA

DIVISION OF RESEARCH & ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

UND.edu

Institutional Review Board
c/o Research Development
and Compliance
Twamley Hall, Room 106
264 Centennial Drive Stop 7134
Grand Forks, ND 58202-7134
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Fax: 701.777.6708

March 3, 2015

Principal Investigators:	Hal Haynes
Project Title:	Spirituality and Student Engagement at a Small, Private College
IRB Project Number:	IRB-201503-267
Project Review Level:	Exempt 2
Date of IRB Approval:	03/03/2015
Expiration Date of This Approval:	03/02/2018

The application form and all included documentation for the above-referenced project have been reviewed and approved via the procedures of the University of North Dakota Institutional Review Board.

The Principal Investigator must send the letter of approval from   **College IRB to the UND IRB Office prior to beginning any research.**

If you need to make changes to your research, you must submit a Protocol Change Request Form to the IRB for approval. No changes to approved research may take place without prior IRB approval.

This project has been approved for 3 years, as permitted by UND IRB policies for exempt research. You have approval for this project through the above-listed expiration date. When this research is completed, please submit a Termination Form to the IRB.

The forms to assist you in filing your project termination, adverse event/unanticipated problem, protocol change, etc. may be accessed on the IRB website: http://und.edu/research/resources/human-subjects/

Sincerely,

Michelle L. Bowles, M.P.A., CIP
IRB Coordinator

MLB/jle

Enclosures

Cc: Margaret Healy, Ph.D.

Appendix B
Email Permission From UCLA

From: Kevin Eagan <mkeagan@gmail.com>

Date: February 13, 2015 1:48:42 PM

To: Hal Haynes <hal.haynesjr@icloud.com>

Subject: Re: Request and Permission to Use the 2007 College Student Beliefs and Values

Survey Instrument

Hal -

You are approved to use the CSBV instrument for the one-time administration at

███████████ for your dissertation.

Best,

Kevin

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