



**Spirituality in Higher Education:  
A National Study of College Students' Search  
for Meaning and Purpose**

Higher Education Research Institute  
University of California, Los Angeles

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# Research Questions

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- How do students' spiritual qualities change during the college years?
  - What are institutions doing that promotes or inhibits students' spiritual development?
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# Design of the Study

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- Longitudinal Data on 15,000 undergraduates
  - 138 institutions
  - Surveyed 61,000 faculty
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# Spirituality Defined by 5 Measures

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Spirituality is a multifaceted quality that involves:

- an active quest for answers to life's "big questions":--  
**SPIRITUAL QUEST;**
  - a global worldview that transcends ethnocentrism and egocentrism: **ECUMENICAL WORLDVIEW;**
  - a sense of caring and compassion for others—**ETHIC OF CARING**—coupled with a lifestyle that includes service to others—**CHARITABLE INVOLVEMENT;**
  - a capacity to maintain a sense of calm and centeredness, especially in times of stress—**EQUANIMITY**
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# Spiritual Quest

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*(“an active quest for answers to life’s “big questions”)*

- Relevance to **“Striving for Excellence”**  
(“Searching for Knowledge”)  
(Concerned with “Purpose and Motivation”)
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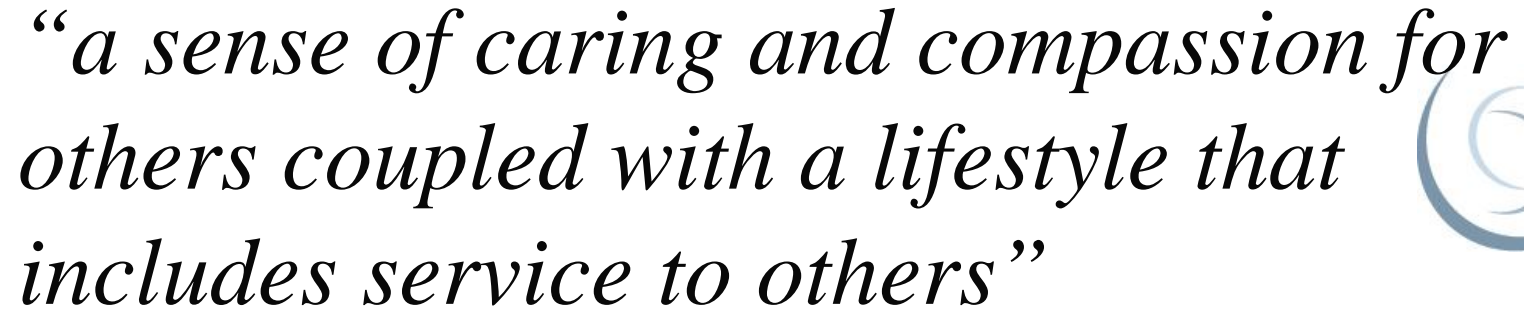
# Experiences that Promote Spiritual Questing

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- Taking service learning courses
  - Self-reflection
  - Professors who encourage students to explore questions of meaning and purpose
  - Religious engagement
  - Majoring in the health professions
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*“a sense of caring and compassion for others coupled with a lifestyle that includes service to others”*



- **Ethic of Caring**  
 (“caring about”)
  - **Charitable Involvement**  
 (“caring for”)
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# Relevance to “Contributing to the Larger Community”



- “humanitarian”
  - “giving of oneself”
  - “doing good for the sake of others”
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# Experiences that promote students' Ethic of Caring



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- Study Abroad
  - Interdisciplinary Studies
  - Living on Campus
  - All forms of Charitable Involvement
  - Faculty use of contemplation in the class
  - Majoring in biological or social sciences
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# Experiences that impede the development of Ethic of Caring



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- Majoring in engineering, mathematics, or business



# Factors that promote Charitable Involvement



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- Living on Campus
  - Participation in student clubs/groups
  - Faculty use of student-centered teaching in the class
  - Leadership training
  - Majoring in biological or social sciences
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*“a global worldview that transcends ethnocentrism and egocentrism”*

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## ■ **Ecumenical Worldview**

Relevance to **“Taking Seriously the Perspectives of Others”**:


*“openmindedness”*

*“cultural/social awareness”*

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# Factors that contribute to growth in Ecumenical Worldview



- Faculty who value diversity on campus
  - Interracial interaction
  - Faculty who promote exploration of meaning and purpose
  - All forms of Charitable Involvement
  - Leadership training
  - Membership in student clubs/groups
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# Forthcoming Book

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(Tentative Title)

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

[www.spirituality.ucla.edu](http://www.spirituality.ucla.edu)

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