

Table Topic #1: Religious Literacy*
Colleges and universities need to do more to educate students for a religiously pluralistic world.

Some questions to consider:

- Do you agree that higher education should teach about religion?
- What do students need to know about religion by the time they graduate?
- If we were to assess student learning about religion, what would the “core competencies” be?
- What are the best ways to educate students for a religiously pluralistic world? Where does religion belong in the curriculum? In co-curricular programming?
- What barriers and challenges would you face on your campus if you were to promote this kind of education?

Summary of your discussion (key viewpoints, suggestions):

* 2006, Nancy L. Thomas, Society for Values in Higher Education, www.svhe.org, NO PERMISSION NEEDED to copy or circulate – open source.

**Table Topic #2: Preserving Public Reason
Colleges and universities must support learning that is value-neutral
and affirms standards of intellectual reason and academic freedom,
particularly in the face of religious assertions.**

Some questions to consider:

- Do you agree with this statement? Why or why not?
- What pressures and ideological interference do you experience on your campus? Is that interference religious or secular?
- By offering or not offering religion as a field of study, are campuses advancing particular worldviews or religious perspectives?
- Do colleges and universities, other than those that are religiously affiliated, operate in culturally biased ways that privilege secular and liberal values?

Summary of your discussion (key viewpoints, suggestions):

#3 Religion in the Classroom

Passionate believers and committed nonbelievers will learn through their individual lenses. Both are equally entitled to academic freedom in the classroom.

Some questions to consider:

- Do you agree with this statement? Why or why not?
- Can the classroom be open to religious insights without promoting or denigrating specific religious or spiritual beliefs? If so, how?
- How should you handle the student who says, "I won't discuss that because it is against my religion" or the student who is intolerant of the religious or spiritual views of others?
- What are the ground rules for inviting religion into the classroom?
- Should faculty "check their religious or spiritual beliefs" at the classroom door?

Summary of your discussion (key viewpoints, suggestions):

#4: Spirituality

As educators, we should encourage students to search for spiritual meaning and to explore the spiritual dimension to their learning.

Some questions to consider:

- Do you agree with this statement? Why or why not?
- Can faculty ignore a student's social identity, personal values, beliefs, and experiences?
- Do students learn differently if there is a spiritual dimension to their learning? If yes, how is learning different?
- Is it possible to support a student's spiritual exploration and also preserve the highest standards of intellectual inquiry and excellence?
- Is the spiritual dimension to student learning academically rigorous?
- Is it appropriate for some disciplines and not others? Which ones?

Summary of your discussion (key viewpoints, suggestions):

#5 Tolerance and Public Discourse

Colleges and universities should be teaching tolerance and promoting ground rules for public discourse on matters of religion, faith, and spirituality.

Some questions to consider:

- What are the implications of reports that Americans, especially those who attend church regularly, are weakening in their ethic of tolerance and are less willing to compromise with others of different values?
- What are the ground rules for public discourse on matters of religion, faith, and spirituality?
- What are some of the assumptions and anxieties about religious fundamentalism? The "spirituality movement?"
- How do we recognize, acknowledge, and respond to some of the critiques of secular culture as well as those of certain religions or faith-perspectives?

Summary of your discussion (key viewpoints, suggestions):