

# Diversity & Democracy

CIVIC LEARNING FOR SHARED FUTURES

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## FEATURED TOPIC

**Religious Diversity** challenges educators seeking to prepare students with intercultural skills for effectiveness in a pluralistic society. As students and faculty grapple with the roles that spirituality and belief play within and across disciplines, this issue of *Diversity & Democracy* opens the door for more rewarding conversations.

## ISSUE HIGHLIGHTS

- 04 | Educating Ourselves Into Coexistence
- 07 | Diversity: Challenges and Opportunities in the College Classroom
- 10 | Beyond Spirituality: A New Framework for Educators
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## Religious Diversity and the Making of Meaning: Implications for the Classroom

■ R. EUGENE RICE, senior scholar, Association of American Colleges and Universities

For over a decade, AAC&U has emphasized the critical link between diversity in our institutions of higher education and civic learning in a diverse democracy. That this second issue of the newly redesigned *Diversity & Democracy* should focus on religious diversity signifies religion's increasingly prominent place among the shifting conversations about diversity and democracy in a global context. *Diversity & Democracy's* editors might have chosen to focus on another critical topic such as race, class, gender, or ethnicity. A decade ago—even five years ago—that probably would have been the case. In the 1990s, many within higher education, particularly faculty, would have agreed with Richard Rorty that religion was “a conversation stopper” and preferred to avoid the topic, especially when different religious perspectives in the classroom or the place of religion in the public square were at issue (1999).

But the context in which we teach and learn has changed dramatically. The events of September 11, 2001, and their aftermath have reinforced our need to develop a richer understanding of religious diversity. Responding to the growing influence of evangelical Christianity on our politics and campuses is challenging. And within the greater context of globalization, religious literacy as a core responsibility of our colleges and universities has become even more essential. If faculty members are to prepare students to build viable democratic communities in the United States and abroad, attention to religious diversity is imperative.

### The Making of Meaning and the Changing Faculty Role

Recently, several major studies have challenged the reluctance of faculty to address the larger questions of meaning, purpose, and faith. Among these is the *National Study of Spirituality in Higher Education: A Study of College Students' Search for Meaning and Purpose*, conducted by the Higher Education Research Institute (HERI) at the University of California, Los Angeles (2005). The HERI study found that students have a “strong interest and involvement in spirituality and religion,” but that faculty and institutions do little to foster student interest in questions of meaning and purpose. In a follow-up study, when asked explicitly whether “colleges should be concerned with facilitating student ‘spiritual development,’” less than one-third of faculty agreed (2005).

I am convinced that for most faculty, teaching and learning now take place in a markedly different intellectual and social environment. Postmodern debates, expanding global awareness, and dramatic pedagogical changes have made open discussions about the construction of meaning and purpose not only possible, but necessary. I believe that when pressed to their deepest levels, questions of meaning

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**Note:** *The opinions expressed by individual authors in Diversity & Democracy are their own and are not necessarily those of the Diversity & Democracy editors or AAC&U.*

## ABOUT THIS ISSUE

Even in a country founded on the principles of religious freedom, open dialogue about religious differences is the source of deep-seated anxiety in college and university classrooms. As faculty, staff, and administrators prepare students to live in a world where religious beliefs profoundly influence global relations, they must enter the deep and uncertain waters of spirituality and religious inquiry. College students need—and often request—guidance about these topics that are inextricable from their personal identity explorations and their preparation for public roles.

This issue of *Diversity & Democracy* begins to examine the place of religion and spirituality in the American classroom. Our contributors embrace the difficult questions, asking not only whether spirituality belongs in the academic setting, but also how to best educate students for conversation across religious divides. Knowing that belief affects learning across disciplines, from physics to history to political science, our authors provide practical advice to educators wishing to understand this aspect of American diversity and prepare students for citizenship in a religiously pluralistic world.

and purpose take on religious and spiritual implications. These are the issues on which students are now saying they want faculty to be approachable and open.

### Modernization and Secularization

A probing understanding of the place of religion in teaching and learning requires that we briefly review the assumptions—implicit and explicit—that have dominated faculty views of the processes of modernization and secularization in recent years. The period between roughly 1957 and 1974 represented a time of transformation in American higher education. Pressed by the post-World War II baby boom and the GI Bill, the demands on colleges and universities escalated rapidly. The launch of Sputnik in 1957 contributed dramatically to a “Cold War” that fueled funding for science and technology. As priorities shifted toward scientific inquiry and the products of technical, quantitative approaches, broader definitions of scholarship narrowed into more positivistic pursuits.

The scientific accomplishments of the period were remarkable, but connections to any concrete sense of identity, meaning, or purpose were diminished.

Moral considerations, spiritual interests, and religion—the normative dimensions of life—were either disregarded or explained away as the result of more important or more “real” factors. By the end of the 1960s, the environment that had inspired confidence in rational analysis, scientific inquiry, and technological productivity was beginning to erode.

### The Impact of the Postmodern Era

Postmodernism hit campuses at a time of serious cultural, social, and political turmoil. The Vietnam War was escalating, with protests spreading across colleges and universities. Students were challenging authority vested in institutions—family, church, corporations, government, and universities, including the faculty. Within this context, the civil rights movement, through which revered religious leaders made a moral call for social justice, probed how social identity shapes one’s understanding of the world. Similarly, feminist leaders promoted “women’s ways of knowing” as a counterpoint to knowledge that flourished in the then-male-dominated academy. These demands for inclusion of diverse identities and ways of

thinking eventually coalesced in the call for multiculturalism in the classroom.

At its radical edge, postmodernism joined with Nietzsche and ended in nihilism, dismantling both the values that sustain religious belief and those that define modernity itself: reason, freedom, and the rights of the autonomous self. But nihilism was not the only response to the limitations of modernity.

Postmodern debates, expanding global awareness, and dramatic pedagogical changes have made open discussions about the construction of meaning and purpose not only possible, but necessary.

Postmodernism also invited a new appreciation for a wide range of cultural traditions, including religious traditions. A diversity of approaches to inquiry and new ways of knowing offered faculty opportunities for rethinking the place of faith in the academy.

### Symbolic Realism

As a student in Robert Bellah's classes, I remember his quoting the poet Wallace Stevens with some frequency: "The final belief is to believe in a fiction, which you know to be a fiction, there being nothing else. The exquisite truth is to know that it is a fiction and that you believe in it willingly" (1970). As a student with an evangelical Christian background, I found his use of the word "fiction" both provocative and disturbing. But Bellah was not a relativist, and his use of the term reflects not disrespect for the power of religious and spiritual symbols, but the seriousness with which he took our human limitations.

Bellah agreed with Stevens that the patterns of meaning by which we choose to order our lives are social and cultural constructions. He went on, however, to contend that symbols created by communities and individuals as ways

of grasping human existence can have a reality of their own. These transcendent meanings are powerful enough to serve as anchors for human life and to provide a sense of moral order.

Bellah referred to this view as "symbolic realism." It is an approach that avoids both the literalism of fundamentalist faith and the smug dismissal of religion as nothing more than a human

creation. As an antireductionist, Bellah observed that "the radical split between knowledge and commitment that exists in our culture and in our universities is not ultimately tenable. Differentiation has gone about as far as it can go. It is time for a new integration." His insight remains helpful today. Both positivist reductionism and postmodern nihilism have proved untenable. Emerging in their place, as the HERI study illustrates, is a deep spiritual hunger and quest for meaning among college and university students across the nation. Higher education needs to respond.

### A Pedagogical Revolution

In *Big Questions, Worthy Dreams*, Sharon Daloz Parks proposes an epistemology that, like Bellah, recognizes that every perspective is rooted in personal, social, and cultural conditions (2000). This epistemology "invites faculty and students to bring the competence of contemporary scholarship to the search for critically composed and worthy forms of faith within a relativized world." Located at the intersections between personal meaning-making and academic scholarship, Parks's alternative approach gives voice not just to racial, ethnic,

gendered, and class perspectives that have been marginalized by the dominant approach to knowing. It also recognizes the legitimacy of spiritual and religious dimensions—the power of community and commitment in the lives of all of us.

Faculty have an obligation to respond to students' demands that religion and spirituality find a new place in the classroom. In this context, raising critical questions is not enough. Faculty must explore the larger questions of meaning in ways that respect the personhood of their students—including their fundamental right and responsibility to construct their own meaning without external coercion.

As Clifford Geertz once noted, human beings are animals "suspended in webs of significance" that they themselves have spun (1973). Students are now calling for faculty to be more open to probing conversations about those webs of meaning that give our lives significance. It is an invitation that colleges, universities, and their faculties can hardly refuse. ☐

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[RELIGIOUS DIVERSITY]

## Educating Ourselves Into Coexistence

■ ANOUAR MAJID, chairman of the English department at the University of New England

Many years ago, a devout Muslim man who was a friend of mine, an avid reader of Islamic medieval theological texts and a bright scientist completing an engineering doctorate at an American university, discovered a secret about the United States that had eluded him in all the years he had lived in this country. He had always found Americans hospitable, but to him they were still Christian, Jewish, or even worse, atheist, and would do better if they could be guided to Islam, God's final revealed religion. It

dously. I read the Koran chapter by chapter and took notes. We continued our conversation, now going on to Islamic jurisprudence and poetry. Yet our daily lives could not have been more different. While I went for long periods without thinking about the Koran or my religious beliefs, my pious interlocutor focused on every detail of daily life: He ate only halal food; averted his eyes from women; didn't watch much TV; played soccer with long, baggy pants; and prayed regularly and often.

*A required multicultural education solidly based in the humanities could do more for U.S. national security than all the resources of the military.*

was a sincerely held belief, felt without malice or condescension. He wanted his hosts—and me, too, because although I was born Muslim, I wasn't as observant as I could have been—to share his joy.

Knowing me to be a student of American literature, he talked about ideas and science in the Koran. Once he froze me on the spot by citing two or three verses that unambiguously showed that time was relative in the eyes of Allah. I had an interest in notions of time (having just read Stephen Hawking's *A Brief History of Time*) and was working my way through the second law of thermodynamics, having just read Thomas Pynchon's *The Crying of Lot 49*. The Koran also described in moving poetic detail the rotation of heavenly bodies; it even suggested that the sun was not stationary but drifting away at a slow pace.

All of that impressed me tremen-

Then, one day, he announced that the United States was a Muslim country. He had read the Declaration of Independence and was stunned to find that it—as well as the U.S. Constitution—embodied the Islamic tenets that he had spent his life promoting. Resistance to oppression, the ideals of social justice and good government, and the freedom of worship are what many committed Muslims want to see established in their home countries. Much like Jefferson and his revolutionary peers warned against the destructive effects of tyranny, the Koran recounts dozens of tales about rulers and nations who transgressed the limits of divine justice, and the horrible punishments that befell them. Now America's secular manifestoes appeared imbued with the same divine intent. Why don't more Muslims know about this part of American history and culture?

With the same zeal he had used to try to convert Americans, my friend now started explaining to perplexed fellow Muslim students his new thesis about the U.S. government. What a shame that Muslims, Allah's intended inheritors of such a wise political system, should be deprived of it. That was an old idea I had heard constantly while growing up in Tangier, a liberal city dismissed as hopelessly corrupt by conservative Muslims and Westerners alike. The idea is basic: Europeans and Americans are the true Muslims because they have justice and democracy, whereas Muslims are infidels because their behavior contradicts their proclaimed faith.

I recall the experience of the pious Muslim engineering student at this tragic moment in the world's history because we are, once again, misdiagnosing underlying causes of conflict and missing new opportunities to bring human cultures closer to one another. For I do consider that Muslim student, who had wanted to guide Americans to the truth, to have been guided by his reading of the founding documents of American democracy. His discovery disabused him of the misperceptions he had accumulated over the years—that nice, unsuspecting Americans (and Westernized Muslims) were a new people in desperate need of some uncorrupted, ancient truth.

Quite often, people like him wonder how such a permissive society could at the same time be a superpower. How could a just God allow infidels to rule the world while faithful Muslims suffered all sorts of indignities? Now he had the answer. The Declaration and the Constitution were the nation's moral compasses. That's why God allowed it to prosper, for God does not allow the unjust to flourish. The United States was doing something right.

In my almost 20 years of living here, studying and teaching American literature and culture, I have come to realize

that the United States, the groundbreaking social and political experiment of modern history, somehow remains totally unknown to much of the rest of the world. If Muslims were to study the making of the United States, they would quickly realize that the country taken to be superficial and new has a history and culture as rich and tragic as any that they know. If the Muslim engineering student reacted so positively to the Declaration, how would he have reacted had he read Jonathan Edwards and the texts of other early American writers about the varied religious movements in American history, all struggling to establish the ideal society on earth? That classic American struggle, pitting pure faith against worldly success, is something Muslims could learn from, particularly educated youth looking for answers to their own cultural frustrations and identity crises.

In the aftermath of September 11, commentators wrote that the attack on the World Trade Center was an attack on capitalism, America's ultimate expression



*Yeshiva University*

of freedom. Capitalism is certainly one of the key words that explains much of the present conflict, for consumer cultures invariably frustrate the religious life passionately sought by believers of all faiths. Mundane activities like banking, restaurant dining, reading magazines,

watching TV, and traveling become emotionally charged undertakings loaded with meaning, since they all challenge the piety of devout Muslims. And because we live in environments that are always luring us into never-ending cycles of consumerism, the faithful's anxieties are constantly being renewed, sparking an ever-mutating cycle of tension.

Many Americans, in some ways, share the Muslims' predicament. Granted, the U.S. Constitution (like Islam) never explicitly separated the unhindered flow of commerce from political freedom, but one still wonders whether Jeffersonian democracy is truly compatible with the dictates of the

prevailing economic ethos. Jefferson's enlightened Republicanism, with its stress on agrarian virtues, is obscured by the glaring lights of corporate logos, the blaring sounds of commercials, and the dizzying proliferation of franchises. Similarly, the Koran encourages trade but contains economic activity within the higher imperative of spiritual and social obligations.

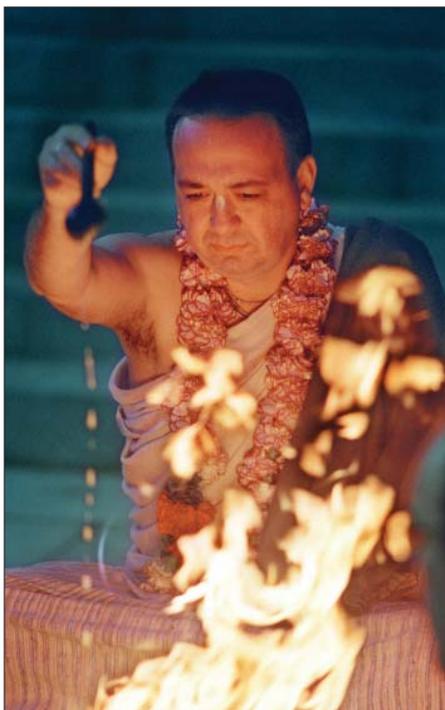
The question then is, how do religious and even truly enlightened secular cultures preserve themselves while they are fully inserted into the machinery of laissez-faire capitalism? Since a bland deculturating process is making all of us unrecognizable to ourselves (both as human beings and as communities), a strong consciousness of the corrosive powers of the reigning global economy is a necessary first step toward a cultural dialogue and a true multicultural human civilization. Education can play a vital role in this process, yet our educational systems, increasingly geared to accommodate the needs of the marketplace, are perpetuating that destructive tendency, not alleviating it. To restore the balance, we must reinvigorate the humanities as the central component of all academic curriculums.



*College of the Holy Cross*

[In the Fall of 2001], Lynne V. Cheney challenged educators to teach more American history and not spend so much time on efforts to devise a dubious multicultural agenda. In many ways, she is right. American students ought to know their history first, just as Muslims ought to know theirs. But what kind of history are students being exposed to?

Critics seem to suggest that multiculturalism weakens the national resolve and produces a breed of weak, uncertain citizens unfit to defend the nation in times of crisis. I'd like to suggest the opposite: that the problem with multiculturalism is that we educators haven't invested the concept with solid substance, or expanded it broadly enough. A required multicultural education solidly based in the humanities could do more for U.S. national security than all the resources of the military. It would allow students to realize how other nations and cultures are made up of human communities wrestling



Harvard University

with familiar issues, how all people are ultimately influenced by local dogmas, and that no one society holds the monopoly on a universal truth. Once we begin to see others not as others but as ourselves, the inclination to inflict injury on them diminishes; to humanize members of different cultures through education is to begin forging ties of sympathy with them.

By virtue of its diverse population representing every part of the globe, the United States has the unique opportunity of incorporating various experiences and points of view into its curriculums. Much of this is already being carried out through the globalizing of Western-civilization courses and the inclusion of indigenous, non-Western, and female perspectives in the literary canon. All it needs now is to strengthen the process by making it more rigorous, and then modeling the idea to Muslims who resist incorporating the study of other cultures and religions into their academic programs. Of course, not all Muslim countries are the same. Some, like Morocco, have fairly advanced bilingual—or even trilingual—curriculums that do a good job preparing students for higher education at home or abroad. For example, I studied Western literature and philosophy, Islamic thought, and the history and economy of the United States and other Western countries in high school.

Other Muslim countries load their curriculums with heavier doses of Islamic studies and neglect the study of other cultural and religious communities. Foreign students also miss out on opportunities to study the histories and cultures of their host countries, which is why many Muslim students in the United States and Europe know so little about Western philosophy and literature. A well-designed multicultural education that puts one's community in global perspective is good for everyone. Just as American students are

encouraged by many educators to question their own cultural assumptions, Muslims would benefit from asking such questions as whether Islam is the “only” true religion, or whether women and members of minority groups enjoy their God-given rights in Islamic states. Muslims who censor such questions to protect their faith are in fact impoverishing their intellectual heritage. Even major prophets, according to the Koran, challenged God to prove his existence.

A multicultural curriculum that showcases the contributions of other cultures is certainly consistent with Islamic teachings. The Koran states that God's will is to have a world made up of many different nations, and that the challenge for Muslims and others is to know one another and compete in the performance of good deeds. Such an education would allow students to see civilization as a mosaic of traditions ultimately sharing the same cosmic destiny. Even while Muslims and non-Muslims must do their utmost to preserve a world of diversities, we should all remember that our human civilization—as embattled and fragmented as it is—needs to be understood as a common venture. For better or worse, we are one another's keepers.

A solid education in the humanities is the answer to the post-September 11 world. Such an education would allow us to distinguish the essence of Islamic and U.S. cultural traditions from the proliferating dogmas and rampant commercialism that have come to replace them. A dialogue of cultures begins here. Every other strategy of containment will most likely make things worse. □

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## [RELIGIOUS DIVERSITY]

## Religious Diversity: Challenges and Opportunities in the College Classroom

■ MICHELLE LELWICA, associate professor of religion at Concordia College

In *Living Buddha, Living Christ*, Vietnamese Zen Master, peace activist, and poet Thich Nhat Hanh describes an exchange that occurred at a conference of theologians and religion professors. A conference leader addressed the assembly: “We are going to hear about the beauties of several traditions, but that does not mean that we are going to make a fruit salad.” In response, Hanh gently observed: “Fruit salad can be delicious!” In analyzing the incident, Hanh explains: “I do not see any reason to spend one’s whole life tasting just one kind of fruit. We human beings can be nourished by the best values of many traditions.” Hanh isn’t advocating that we abandon our own spiritual heritage. He is simply suggesting that we all have much to learn from different religious traditions.

As a professor of religion, I agree that the “fruit salad” Hanh envisions can be delicious intellectual fare. Yet I encounter a good deal of “fruit salad anxiety” among my students at a church-affiliated college in northwestern Minnesota. Most of my students come from Christian backgrounds, and many understand “religious diversity” as anything that deviates from their Christian norm. Within the assumptions students bring to the classroom, I have come to see embedded opportunities for cultivating a deeper understanding of “difference.” I hope that this understanding will enable my students to live responsibly in a world of multiple perspectives.

### Confronting Students’ Assumptions

My students enter the classroom with a range of assumptions. These vary

according to each student’s cultural background, educational history, and personal relationship to religion.

First among these assumptions is the belief that only one religion contains the “Truth.” This “exclusivist” approach, as Harvard religion scholar Diana Eck terms it, claims that other religions are misguided at best—and damned at worst (2003). This assumption causes students to fear that learning about other religions is a dangerous distraction from the one “Truth” they believe leads to salvation.

An alternative assumption suggests that, superficial differences aside, all religions are essentially the same. Although this “universalist” approach is less divisive than its “exclusivist” counterpart, it diminishes the genuine differences between religions. Most Buddhists, for example, do not believe in a supreme divine being, and few if any Muslims would recognize the divinity of Christ. By downplaying such differ-

ences, my students deprive themselves of the opportunity to learn from the insights of another tradition. They may also inadvertently perpetuate a kind of religious imperialism, interpreting the “underlying commonality” that supposedly unites all religions through a particular tradition’s beliefs (such as a Christian interpretation of “God”).

A variation of the “universalist” approach is “inclusivism,” the view that persons from “other” religions are *included* in the salvation offered by the “true” religion (Eck 2003). Like the “universalist” perspective, “inclusivist” perspectives fail to fully appreciate the actual differences among religions and tacitly promote a homogenizing spiritual agenda. Inclusivists see their own tradition as the culmination of other religions, which they deem incomplete by comparison. In the “inclusivist” view, religious “others” are neither threats nor opponents, but potential converts to the most “correct” path.

These three assumptions are common among students who are themselves religious. But what about students who identify as agnostic or “still searching”? These students arrive with different suppositions, such as the belief that



Concordia students visit a mosque in Cairo, Egypt. (Photo by Sheldon Green)

those from dominant traditions, especially Christianity, want to impose their beliefs on others. This perception reflects the historical legacy of religious imperialism, in which Christians sought to save religious “others” from their supposedly godless ways. It also reflects

Yet this distinction is the basic premise for the academic study of religion. Studying diverse religions is a wonderful way for students to discover that one need not subscribe to a spiritual worldview in order to appreciate its meaning in the lives of those who

Within the assumptions students bring to the classroom, I have come to see embedded opportunities for cultivating a deeper understanding of “difference.”

U.S. culture’s contemporary association of Christianity with the religious right and other exclusivist groups.

The four preceding assumptions aside, students often approach religious studies with a sense of general apprehension. One self-aware student expressed her anxiety by admitting, “I’m afraid that learning about another religion may cause me to lose faith in my own tradition.” It may seem obvious that learning about another religion need not require conversion to that religion, but students do not always grasp the distinction between understanding a religion and adhering to a religion.

hold it dearly. It is also an effective way for students to cultivate the kind of intellectual empathy they need to take seriously the views of “others.”

### Strategies for Countering Resistance

Just as students enter the classroom with a range of assumptions, I find a range of approaches useful in countering their resistance toward religious studies. Many of these are particularly effective in addressing specific types of resistance, but all can be useful in any context.

Early in the class, I ask my students to reflect on terms in their own tradition that have been used dogmatically, such

as “salvation.” As we analyze traditional imagery associated with “salvation” (such as the pearly gates of heaven), the metaphorical nature of such language becomes apparent to many students. I often point out etymological roots to broaden students’ conventional views—the word “salvation,” for instance, is related to the Latin *salve* (“good health”). In addition, by comparing concepts with which students are familiar with similar concepts from other traditions (comparing “salvation” to *moksha* or *nirvana*, for example), I invite students to consider the functions concepts like “salvation” serve for people in various traditions.

I also encourage students to attend the services of religious communities that are unfamiliar to them. Because my students are predominantly Christian, I arrange visits to the local mosque or synagogue to give them an embodied experience of another tradition. Study abroad opportunities can also provide rich, multidimensional encounters with other religions that enhance students’ understanding of the diversity of spiritual worldviews. Whether at home or abroad, visits to religious services require careful planning so that the experience is positive both for students and for the community being observed. Students have indicated that these close encounters with religious “difference” made them more aware of the sincerity and validity of other people’s faith.

One of the most effective ways to deconstruct students’ preconceived assumptions about other traditions is to encourage them to consider diversity *within* as well as *among* traditions. Just as there are various ways to be Christian—from the Baptist fundamentalist to the liberal Catholic to the evangelical environmentalist to the African Pentecostal to the monastic contemplative (to name just a few)—so there are various ways to be Hindu, Muslim, Buddhist, Jewish, or Native American. Even a relatively homogenous classroom

## Preparing to Visit an Unfamiliar Place of Worship

- Contact community leadership for permission to make such a visit and to arrange the best time/date to bring students to a religious service.
- Ask for guidelines to share with students that will enable them to participate and/or observe in a respectful manner.
- Invite a member of the community to speak with the class about what to expect during the service and (if applicable) about being a member of a minority religious community.
- Back in the classroom, ask students to reflect on what they experienced and observed during their visit. Encourage nonjudgmental comparisons and reflections.
- Consider sending a note of thanks to the community visited and invite students to sign their names as a gesture of appreciation.

—Michelle Lelwica

contains enough intellectual diversity to generate heated debate. Ultimately, when students recognize intra-religious diversity, they find stereotypes about religious “others” difficult to maintain.

Finally, historical reviews can help students better understand the role religion plays in the world. A survey of the history of Christian missionary work reminds students to consider the applied outcomes of the belief that “there is only one true religion.” Similarly, a review of the historical relationship between religion and politics reminds students that Christianity is not commensurate with the religious right. When studying Christianity, students often benefit from readings by postcolonial, liberation, and feminist authors, whose ideas challenge the superiority complex that has historically plagued Christianity. Although I have referred specifically to Christianity here, this historical approach can apply to other religions as well.

### The Fruits of Making Salad

Pluralists like Diana Eck demonstrate that dialogue with religious “others” can not only enhance spiritual self-awareness, but also generate the collective wisdom needed to address global problems,

from poverty and racism, to HIV/AIDS and hunger, to war and environmental destruction (2003). I see my classroom as a forum for this kind of dialogue, providing a space for students to consider a variety of spiritual insights that might help them address the most pressing issues of the twenty-first century.

Despite its considerable challenges, this work is rewarding. I once explained to Christian students in my introductory religion course that the Muslim practice of praying five times a day addresses humans’ propensity to forget their deepest values and behave in a self-centered manner while engaging with the world. Many of my students nodded as I offered this explanation, presumably recognizing this propensity in themselves. Helping my students appreciate Muslim tradition was particularly gratifying given the stereotypes about Islam that flourish in the United States today. It also underscored for me how studying diverse religions can be a way for my students to enrich their own spiritual self-understanding.

Returning to the fruit salad metaphor, I would observe that few of us live in a world that consists entirely of apples or oranges. Whether religious diversity

becomes a blessing or a burden will depend a great deal on the perspective we cultivate. Educational practices that help our students approach difference with curiosity, understanding, respect, and appreciation are crucial for their responsible participation in a diverse but deeply interconnected world. □

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## Students Respond to Religious Difference

“Before coming to college, any knowledge I had about other religions than my own (Christianity) came from people within my church, which means that all this ‘knowledge’ was very biased. I arrived onto a campus that has taught me how learn from other religions. I have found that when studying religions you do not have to believe what that religion teaches, you must only be able to understand how they have arrived at that belief. More importantly I have learned how to strengthen my own religious practices by seeing how others have put their faith into practice and then mirroring that in my own life and faith.”

(STUDENT, junior religion major at Concordia)

“Learning about religions other than my own has been enriching, challenging, fruitful, and life-giving. I’ve discovered some of the complexities of religion in society and culture, and perhaps, in doing so, have come closer to seeing what it means to live peacefully in a diverse, colorful world.”

(ANNA ROHDE, junior religion major at Concordia)

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—Michelle Lelwica

## [RELIGIOUS DIVERSITY]

# Beyond Spirituality: A New Framework for Educators

■ **KATHLEEN GOODMAN**, doctoral student in student affairs administration and research and research assistant for the Center for Research on Undergraduate Education at the University of Iowa, and **DANIEL HIROYUKI TERAGUCHI**, dean for diversity and academic advancement at Wesleyan University

Liberal education aims to prepare students for personal and social responsibility in a diverse and interconnected world. This goal requires a focus on the whole student, including the inner development and intellectual pursuits often associated with religious practices. Yet today's students adhere to a wide range of religious and nonbelieving perspectives. Thus educators often use an open framework of spirituality to help students find meaning and

separately. In doing so, we hope to provide learning opportunities that include students of all traditions and perspectives, providing these students with the tools to live in a world whose complexity is as unavoidable as the spirituality framework's internal tensions.

### Unintentional Biases

Educators often mean to be inclusive when using the spirituality framework. Yet in discussions of spirituality, they

Christian privilege appears in many forms on college campuses: in the structure of academic calendars, in the existence of physical facilities for worship, even in dining options that rarely provide the vegetarian, kosher, or halal foods required by some religions (Seifert 2007). When educators unself-consciously interpret "spirituality" in terms of the Christian traditions, they enact Christian privilege and alienate students of other faiths and non-beliefs.

Similarly, "religious privilege" operates even on campuses critiqued for being "too secular." Many in the United States often assume that religious individuals are morally superior (forgiving, kind, etc.). Yet five to ten percent of Americans follow no religious tradition, and these students find their values and morals questioned (Nash 2003). Religious privilege also appears in the assumption that religion is essential to everyone's life. Even those who intend spirituality to be an inclusive term often assume that all students believe in something like religion, even if not a western "god."

These and other biases in the spirituality framework can alienate students across the spectrum of religious and spiritual identities. The dominant spiritual development model used by student

Students need opportunities to develop both their knowledge of diverse religious traditions and their existential well-being.

purpose in life while introducing them to diverse ways of living in the world.

As a frame of reference for discussions about religion and inner development, spirituality can appear to be all-inclusive. Yet students and faculty interpret "spirituality" in different ways. Some students see spirituality as primarily concerned with religion. For other students, spirituality invokes inner development or existential well-being. For yet a third group, spirituality is not a relevant concept at all. Without a standard definition, students, faculty, and staff will find themselves talking past each other when attempting meaningful conversations about difference.

Moreover, an "all-inclusive" definition actually conflates two separate terms: religion and psycho-social development. Because of the conflicts associated with the term "spirituality," we believe it is time to retire the spirituality framework and address these two components

may default to religious paradigms, injecting unintended bias into the curriculum and co-curriculum.

Among the dominant religious paradigms in the United States are those centered in Christian privilege.



University of Iowa College of Education students study outside of Lindquist Center. (Photograph by Douglas Allaire)

affairs professionals is grounded in cognitive development theory and may not accurately reflect the spiritual development of students of color (Watt, 2003). Many gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender, and questioning (LGBTQ) students have had mixed or painful experiences with religion (Love, Bock, Jannarone, and Richardson 2005) (we know one student who described his experiences as “spiritual violence”). Furthermore, many students of traditional religious perspectives may feel that the spirituality framework trivializes their own religious beliefs by “hiding” religion under its inclusive umbrella. By moving beyond the spirituality framework, we reach out to these students and more fully address the range of their experiences.

### Beyond Spirituality

Moving beyond the spirituality framework allows educators to create intentional and inclusive opportunities for students to find purpose and meaning in life. Students need opportunities to develop both their knowledge of diverse religious traditions and their existential well-being. By providing these opportunities, institutions of higher education will address the aims of the spirituality framework in a way that includes all students, regardless of their religious or non-religious beliefs.

As this issue of *Diversity & Democracy* demonstrates, conversations about diverse religious perspectives on campus have already begun. The Society for Values in Higher Education (2006) provides excellent arguments and recommendations for addressing religious pluralism on campus. These efforts should take place in a context where faculty, administrators, and religious personnel purposefully include voices of all religious persuasions, including nonbelief.

Yet the question remains: How can educators best encourage students’ inner development? The answer may

lie in the traditions of liberal education. Liberal education encourages inclusive opportunities for students to develop holistically, fosters critical thinking, and produces robust dialogues among diverse communities as students pursue purpose, meaning, and belonging. Yet it does not exclude conversation about religious difference, which deeply informs personal and political relationships in the United States and in the global community. Student affairs educators also come from a long tradition of holistic student development focused on knowing oneself, exploring values and ethics, and developing authentic interpersonal relationships. They support the work of liberal education beyond the classroom and are likely partners for this type of work. Through the inner development framework, we can cultivate an environment that is more inclusive for all students, regardless of their religious perspectives or lack thereof.

Letting go of a spirituality framework requires open spaces for dialogue. It also requires educators to ensure that their institutions value multiple religious, non-religious, and nonbelieving perspectives.

By distinguishing between religion and inner development, we argue for inner development independent of religion, and for religious inquiry that values the many differences within and between religious traditions. This inclusive framework applies across all categories of difference and prepares our students to live in an intensely pluralistic world. ☐

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## Resources for Addressing Inner Development in the Curriculum

### ■ Big Questions Help Students Lead an Examined Life

[www.teaglefoundation.org/learning/essays.aspx](http://www.teaglefoundation.org/learning/essays.aspx)

By asking the “big questions,” professors can help all students explore topics that are often relegated solely to the domain of spirituality and religion. Examples of such questions include: Does evil exist? What does it mean to be human? What obligations do I have to other people?

### ■ Why Read?

Edmundson, M. (2004). *Why read?* New York: Bloomsbury Publishing.

This book promotes the humanities as a tool for encouraging students to explore who they are and what they believe. As an advocate of active citizenship as a goal of higher education, Edmundson suggests using literary texts to encourage students to know themselves and others.

—Kathleen Goodman and Daniel Hiroyuki Teraguchi

## [RELIGIOUS DIVERSITY]

# Speaking of Religion: Facilitating Difficult Dialogues

■ **VANESSA BING**, associate professor of psychology, and **ROSEMARY TALMADGE**, special assistant for organizational development—both at LaGuardia Community College

“I don’t believe I am familiar enough with other religions to do justice to any such discussion. . . . I am afraid that I would be less skillful at successfully facilitating these discussions.”

As comments like this suggest, faculty at many public colleges and universities tend to avoid the subject of religion. Instead of creating safe spaces for the

the challenges that faculty members face when assuming the role of “neutral facilitator” on a topic that is anything but neutral. By providing faculty

College leaders envisioned dialogue sessions as a way to learn more about the students and community, while providing a neutral space in which participants might safely explore religious differences and academic freedom.

free speech and religious expression necessary to conversations about faith and spirituality, the academy has created an “invisible barrier” that thwarts opportunities for dialogue. By breaching that barrier, we educators deepen our understanding of our students’ lives, clarify misconceptions about faith and religion, and expand our own knowledge of the interdependent world in which we live.

At LaGuardia Community College, where students come from 160 countries and speak more than one hundred languages, our faculty and staff have always celebrated and embraced the diversity of our student body. But like most colleges, LaGuardia had never tackled the daunting subject of religion in the classroom on an institutional scale. The Difficult Dialogues Project provided us with an opportunity to change this. Through a yearlong faculty pedagogy seminar funded as part of the Ford Foundation’s Difficult Dialogues initiative, the college sought to address

members with a safe space to examine the challenges of bringing religion into academia, the seminar expanded the faculty’s ability to explore difficult topics not only in the classroom, but also in the surrounding community.

## Preparing Faculty for Difficult Dialogues

The pedagogy seminar included fifteen faculty members from various disciplines, including math, science, history, psychology, art history, English, and English as a Second Language (both credit and non-credit programs). These faculty members shared a common fear of bringing religion into the classroom. They acknowledged that speaking about religion and faith requires knowledge, sensitivity, and an ability to finesse extremely uncomfortable moments—preparation that they felt they did not have. For faculty members in some disciplines, religion arose naturally in class discussions (in relation to theories of the origin of the universe in a science course, or in a discussion of the Reformation in a Western civilization class). Others found that when religion was not an explicit part of the curriculum, it entered the classroom in other ways, and they questioned how they might respond when topics related to faith and spirituality arose without warning.

Participants genuinely wanted to learn how to handle discussions of religion, but they were deeply apprehensive about discussing religion in



*Difficult Dialogues participants discuss their faith traditions and spiritual beliefs at an Interfaith Dialogue breakfast. (Photo by Randy Fader-Smith)*

the classroom. Faculty members felt generally unprepared to facilitate dialogue about religion, and they were often unfamiliar with the different religions represented at the college. They felt that they lacked expertise in managing conflict and feared losing control of the classroom. They wanted to present a “balanced” discourse that would respect the views of religious as well as “nonreligious” or “questioning” students while preserving their students’ privacy and the academic freedom of all involved. Faculty members also worried that by inviting religious discourse, they would have to reveal their own personal views—and they feared the possible impact on the student-teacher relationship. These and other concerns formed the barriers we hoped to address through the Difficult Dialogues project.

The pedagogy seminar used a multi-layered approach to help faculty consider questions of faith. Seminar elements provided a starting point for faculty to examine their relationships with religion, to learn about the religions practiced by the LaGuardia student body, to develop skills for facilitating difficult dialogues in the classroom, and to develop resources for the larger community.

### Taking Difficult Dialogues into the Community

In a companion piece to the faculty seminar, LaGuardia initiated a series of dialogues on religion in the community of Queens. Arguably the most diverse place on the planet, Queens is home to hundreds of faith communities housed in a range of settings, from living rooms to store fronts to cathedrals. College leaders envisioned dialogue sessions as a way to learn more about the students and community, while providing a neutral space in which participants might safely explore religious differences and academic freedom.

Trained faculty and staff volunteers from the campus spoke about the project

at more than 50 churches, synagogues, temples and mosques. Campus representatives and community faith leaders held interfaith dialogue breakfasts, as well as a series of conversation circles on campus and at diverse community locations such as a Mormon temple, a Catholic church, and an Islamic school. Facilitators invited participants to share their personal religious and spiritual journeys, their perspectives, and their visions of the future, and guided them in developing ideas for further action.

More than 300 faculty, staff, students, and community members took part in these “difficult dialogues.” Many participants said it was the first time they had met or discussed religion with people of particular beliefs and nonbeliefs. They found they had more in common than

they expected, including a shared desire for Queens to be a place where all people are respected and can safely practice their religion and express their personal beliefs. Many participants made plans to continue their conversations and visit each other’s houses of worship. They voiced strong support for the College’s role as a neutral convener in this project.

While our work is hardly complete, we hope that our efforts will have lasting effects. We do not assume that we are now “experts” in handling religion in the classroom and community, but trust that by creating opportunities for inquiry, exchange, and self reflection, we are laying the foundation for transforming our academic spaces—creating institutions where academic freedom and religious expression can stand side by side. 

### Faculty Development Exercises

- *Research Projects:* Faculty members examined the history of religious freedom and oppression in America.
- *Religious Encounter:* Faculty teams met with members of religious communities with which they were not familiar and read texts that represented views of those faiths.
- *Classroom Project:* Faculty members examined courses they currently teach and considered how they might incorporate discussions of religion.
- *Personal Exploration:* Faculty members participated in clarification groups to examine how their personal relationship to religion shapes the way they respond to religious issues in the classroom.
- *Developing Facilitation Skills/Technique:* Faculty members acted out potential classroom conflicts and practiced techniques for creating an open climate for diverse and divergent viewpoints.

### Techniques for Facilitating Dialogue in the Classroom

- *Set the environment:* Establish ground rules, model appropriate sharing, be sensitive to timing, and make room for all voices.
- *Avoid attempting to come to an agreement:* Difficult dialogues require critical examination, not consensus.
- *Manage the discussion:* Encourage active listening, ask open-ended questions or questions for clarification, and refocus the topic when the conversation wanders.
- *Avoid taking sides,* but take steps so students who are presenting their positions alone aren’t scapegoated.
- *Be aware of psychological dynamics:* Students may experience internal conflict surrounding religion.

—Vanessa Bing and Rosemary Talmadge

## [PERSPECTIVES]

# Finding Theological Support for Religious Diversity

■ ANANTANAND RAMBACHAN, professor and chair of religion, St. Olaf College

I came to St. Olaf College in 1985 amidst debate and controversy. A few members of the wider community had great difficulty understanding why a church-affiliated college would appoint a Hindu to teach, of all places, in the religion department. One irate minister complained, “It seems that we are now giving a platform to the very people we would like to enlighten.” Another minister described

properly address the major political conflicts of our times—in India, Iraq, or Illinois—only through cooperative efforts across religious boundaries.

In the face of theological critique, however, these political arguments are inadequate. People of faith often see themselves as self-sufficient entities, dependent on their religious beliefs alone for guidance and sustenance. They may

Theological arguments for contact with the religious “other” can be difficult to identify. Yet at their core, many religious traditions call their followers to value those who are unlike them, including those of different religions.

my hiring as supporting what he termed “the heresy of universalism,” while a third suggested I might safely teach philosophy, but not religion. A similar conflict erupted when I was appointed chair of our religion department early this year. But despite the controversy, my colleagues recognized the value in religious diversity, and my appointment stood.

I see this conflict as significant not because of its effect on my career, but because it challenges all of us to think about what it means to be a religiously diverse college community. When encountering criticisms such as these, based as they are in personal theology, how do we educators argue for the value of religious diversity? It is easy to speak generally of the value of multiculturalism in creating a more equitable world. It is also easy to articulate a political argument for teaching and learning about different religions. After all, human lives are deeply interdependent, and we can

see people of other religions as entirely wrong or only partially correct. Such theological arguments do not provide space for mutually enriching relationships with others. By devaluing the beliefs of others, they often lead to mere “tolerance” of neighbors of other faiths. These theological arguments require responses that are likewise based in theology.

Theological arguments for contact with the religious “other” can be difficult to identify. Yet at their core, many religious traditions call their followers to value those who are unlike them, including those of different religions. As a Hindu, for example, I am deeply cognizant of the limits of human understanding and language in relation to the divine, which transcends all efforts at description and definition. As one Hindu sacred text puts it, the divine is “that from which all words, along with the mind, turn back.” I must be receptive to the possibility of meaningful insights



Anantanand Rambachan

from others that may open my mind and heart to the inexhaustible nature of the divine. Thus the Hindu tradition requires me to enter into relationships of humility and reverence with people of other faiths. As our students examine their own beliefs, we educators must encourage them to pursue their theological need for religious diversity as they prepare themselves for engagement in religiously diverse communities.

Those who opposed my role as a teacher in the religion department at St. Olaf College and my appointment as chair were unable to appreciate theological arguments for religious diversity. They were unable also to see the value in the study of religions other than their own, and they distrusted religious teaching by scholar-practitioners, who seek not to proselytize, but to expose students to diverse worldviews and ways of being. As my experience illustrates, theological interpretations of religious diversity determine what qualifies as acceptable teaching and learning practices. Thus institutions of higher education, particularly those with religious affiliations, must use theological arguments in addition to political arguments as they embrace diversity. Like our lives in this interdependent world, the theological and the political are ultimately inseparable and must be made mutually enriching. ☐

## [PERSPECTIVES]

## Que(e)rying Religion

■ **SUSAN E. HENKING**, professor of religious studies at Hobart and William Smith Colleges

When asked, I describe my Que(e)rying Religion course succinctly: “Que(e)rying Religion examines religion and lesbian/gay/queer lives.” My syllabus lists assignments, office hours, and readings. But a course is much more than its syllabus. It is the conversations that emerge, the actions that students and professors take, the psychological events that occur, and the letters that appear years later in my mailbox. I see my course as an intervention in the academy and in the world that I make for personal, professional, and professorial reasons. What, then, is the purpose of this intervention?

A quick glance at newspapers reveals why such courses are important: religion and sexuality intersect in

**Because our culture depends on the assumption that identity is immutable, many Americans treat topics surrounding religion and sexuality as though they have no history.**

American and global culture. Today’s polarized debates about same-sex marriage and the ordination of gay bishops are only the most recent examples of this convergence. In 1964, ministers and rabbis of the Council on Religion and Homosexuality led San Francisco’s first organized protest against police harassment of gay men and lesbians. More recently, at the 1995 UN Conference on Women in Beijing, debate regarding the rights of gay and lesbian persons divided religious and non-religious participants. To be a citizen, either in the United States or globally, eventually and inevitably means to enter into these debates. To be liberally educated means

to do so with the goal of creating shared public discourses fueled by critical thinking. I see it as my responsibility to prepare my students for this task.

We in the United States learn to avoid the topics of sex and religion in public discourse—and yet we also talk about them obsessively. They are sometimes-silent but pervasive influences on the lives of our students, and on civic life in general. Rendered personal and individual, such subjects are often relegated to the co-curriculum under the rubrics of religious life or student services. Many consider these subjects to lie outside the realm of reason and therefore outside of the realm of academic inquiry. Yet by focusing academic attention on them, educators can help

students understand the roles of religion and sexuality in public and private lives and in the history of determining what qualifies as acceptable public discourse.

Because our culture depends on the assumption that identity is immutable, many Americans treat topics surrounding religion and sexuality as though they have no history. But reflection on sexuality and religion requires students (indeed, requires us all) to set aside seemingly ahistorical certainties to which we are attached. By bringing these topics together in academic discourse, we challenge their unquestioned ahistorical status and move beyond easy binaries that permit ignorance of religion



*Susan Henking*

(and religious studies) on the part of LGBTQ Studies and embed heterosexism in religion and religious studies.

Ultimately, teaching about these topics enables us to explore how knowledge and power are conjoined in the modern world. When we locate religion and sexuality outside history and outside the realm of critical intellectual discourse, we ignore the particularities of history, just as we do when making distinctions between the curriculum and co-curriculum, between “mind” and “heart,” between fact and value, and between other polarized subjects. By studying these topics together, we expose not only their epistemologies, but also the process of historical creation itself.

Whether or not we teach about these subjects, we educators are embedded in institutions that are fundamentally influenced by the histories of religion and of gender/sexuality. We share these spaces with students who are religious and not; queer, lesbian, gay—and not. These students form a community of inquiry and accountability. They remind me of how difficult subjects of identity are to discuss and how important it is to challenge ourselves to do so—in the service of critical inquiry and hope for an engaged citizenry that is not merely diverse, not merely tolerant, but committed to an ethic of pluralism and inclusion. ☐

## [CAMPUS PRACTICE]

# Campus Conversations: Modeling a Diverse Democracy through Deliberative Polling

■ **ROBERT CAVALIER**, professor of philosophy at Carnegie Mellon University and codirector of the Southwestern Pennsylvania Program for Deliberative Democracy

Like many liberal democracies, the United States constitutionally mandates a range of practices to ensure inclusiveness. Yet we in the United States struggle to realize the full benefits of diversity, including the value added to the democratic process when a wide range of perspectives is considered. The practice of deliberative democracy, as applied through deliberative polling, promises an approach that more thoroughly embraces diversity. At Carnegie Mellon we have explored this model through a program called “Campus Conversations.”

### Deliberative Democracy: Why it Matters

The constitutions of liberal democracies typically provide a model of inclusive engagement, guaranteeing rights such as universal suffrage. But this model is not itself sufficient. Although citizens of liberal democratic societies enjoy the freedom to exercise their rights, they often see themselves as isolated individuals who happen to periodically vote (if they choose to do so). Candidates find these voters easy to manipulate through media campaigns and sound-bite debates. Missing from this model is an engaged and educated citizen base—a base which forms the heart of a “deliberative democracy.”

Deliberative democracy in a diverse society relies on open and informed conversations in the forum of ideas. This conversation requires both inclusive practices that invite all perspectives into the discussion, and access to the best information and arguments available.

Advocates of deliberative democracy have adopted these requirements as a strategy for reaching optimal decisions about a range of practical problems.

By participating in deliberative democracy, people become active citizens, engaged in the concerns of their *polis* and its development. In contrast to “thin democracies,” which have roots in the modern liberal tradition but fail to represent the republican ideals of an active citizenry, deliberative democracies are vigorous models of political involvement.

### Modeling Deliberative Democracy with Deliberative Polling

Developed and tested by Professor James Fishkin at Stanford University’s Center for Deliberative Democracy, a Deliberative Poll® begins with a random sample of the population. The group organizing the Deliberative Poll selects a topic for discussion and sends background information to members of this group. The individuals then gather in small groups to discuss the topic amongst themselves

and raise questions with experts. After deliberating a second time, they respond to a scientific survey. The result of this poll reflects how the community as a whole would respond to a particular issue or policy if that community had time to become informed about the issue through an intensive deliberative process.

Deliberative polling is nothing less than a new democratic decision-making process that articulates the informed voice of the people, potentially raising that voice to the level of “consulting power.” Deliberative polls at Carnegie Mellon have given students, faculty, staff and alumni the opportunity to weigh in on key issues on campus.

### Diversity, Community, and Input

Called Campus Conversations, Carnegie Mellon’s initiative seeks to (1) highlight the virtues of campus diversity as it is embedded in the nature of democratic deliberation, (2) create a sense of campus community as well as an appreciation for democratic practice and civic engagement, and (3) provide a tool for dissemination and feedback.

Carnegie Mellon’s Diversity Advisory Council supported the deliberative polling model when members of the council recognized that random sampling techniques create a diverse community. This community is inclusive not only in gender, ethnicity, and political and religious persuasion, but also disciplinarily, bringing



Participants in the Campus Conversations program participate in a roundtable discussion

together such diverse groups as fine arts and engineering students. Faculty, staff, and alumni join students in conversations, further highlighting the value of multiple perspectives. These structured roundtable discussions illustrate the virtues of diversity without didactically describing them to participants.

Structured dialogue of the kind involved in deliberative polling brings out the ‘citizen’ in each of the

**By participating in deliberative democracy, people become active citizens, engaged in the concerns of their polis and its development.**

participants. Participants come to see themselves as members of a community addressing common problems rather than as disengaged private individuals. In discussing the campus art policy or a student bill of rights, participants model active citizenship.

By combining structured protocols with random sampling, deliberative polling enhances dissemination and feedback loops, eliciting more informed responses from a wider range of constituents. Thus deliberative polling can immediately improve the quality of planning and decision making within the campus community, helping planners and participants understand the trade-offs and compromises that difficult decisions often require.

**Establishing Campus Conversations**

Practicing democratic principles is hard work, and instantiating deliberative democracy is even harder. But college campuses are uniquely positioned to play an important role in this process. Not only are colleges small societies in themselves, they are rich in intellectual resources and have the facilities necessary to adopt deliberative polling practices. We at Carnegie Mellon have developed a handbook to guide campuses through this process.

In the initial stages of the project, it is important to create a strong group of advocates. Secure a top-notch advisory board with representatives from all levels of campus leadership, including the university library and the alumni association. Appoint a committed individual as project lead. Recruit social sciences faculty and faculty with knowledge of document design and development who, in conjunction with the project lead,

rates had risen steadily, with nearly 100 students, faculty and staff members, and alumni participating in a Spring 2007 deliberative poll on Public Art Policy.

We are currently exploring the use of Campus Conversations to address controversial topics like same-sex marriage and matters of international concern such as climate change. These “talking values” deliberative polls don’t directly affect our institutional policies, but they do represent critical issues in the world at large. They can encourage active citizenship outside of the institution and highlight the broader advantages of a more deliberative approach.

We in the United States often speak of spreading democracy around the world, but we ourselves fail to model optimal democratic practices. We can and should do better. To this end, Campus Conversations instills a stronger notion of democracy, and encourages citizens at our colleges and universities to renew their appreciation for public deliberation, civic engagement, and diverse perspectives—first in local contexts, and then in the world at large.

For more information on Carnegie Mellon’s Campus Conversations and to download a free copy of the handbook, visit [caae.phil.cmu.edu/cc/](http://caae.phil.cmu.edu/cc/). 

will form the interdisciplinary core of the Campus Conversation project.

Our first attempt at a Campus Conversation (on unauthorized file-sharing) drew a small audience. We were satisfied with the design, but we later decided to expand attendance to include “convenience samples” (people we encouraged to attend even if they were not randomly selected). Our next Campus Conversation (on a proposed Student Bill of Rights) drew a larger audience and had the support of the Student Senate. By the time we entered the second year of Campus Conversations, our attendance



By practicing deliberative democracy, constituents develop informed opinions about a select polling topic.

## [CAMPUS PRACTICE]

# Promoting Multicultural Excellence in the Academy: A National Summer Institute

■ **FERNANDO R. GUZMAN, III**, assistant provost for multicultural faculty recruitment and retention, University of Denver

As immigration and other factors transform the United States, institutions of higher education must capitalize on increased diversity to prepare students to live in, work in, and contribute to an interdependent world. In this context, colleges and universities must train and recruit faculty from various backgrounds who can draw on their multiple cultures, worldviews, opinions, talents, gifts, and disciplines to educate their students (Turner & Myers, Jr.,

benefits of diversity, structural diversity presents a continuing challenge to colleges and universities (Hurtado, Milem, Clayton-Pedersen, & Allen, 1999).

Structural diversity refers to a variety of factors, both demographic (the number of faculty, staff, administrators, and students who are of color) and programmatic (policies for the recruitment and retention of diverse populations, programs that provide academic and social support, and other

In order to craft a faculty that reflects the greater population, institutions of higher education must prepare graduate students, particularly those currently underrepresented in academia, to assume leadership positions.

2000). Yet according to the *Chronicle of Higher Education*, in 2005, only “109,964 U.S. minority scholars held full-time faculty positions at American colleges and universities” (2007). In order to realize the benefits of diversity, institutions must improve their structural support for a diverse faculty.

### The Call for Structural Diversity

A diverse population of faculty, staff, and students yields tremendous educational benefits, including opportunities for cognitive and personal growth; chances for improving leadership abilities; and the creation of a rich social environment for promoting all students’ learning and development (Milem, Chang, & Antonio, 2005). Yet although higher education has begun to recognize the cultural

group-specific support mechanisms (Hurtado, Milem, Clayton-Pedersen, & Allen, 1999). Each of these mechanisms undergirds the others: a diverse faculty, for instance, requires supportive policies and programs throughout the institution. Although a lack of structural support has limited the recruitment and retention of faculty of color in the past, institutions are increasingly open to creative and innovative reforms.

One of these key reforms is in the area of early support for faculty-in-training. Only a small pool of doctoral students from underrepresented populations trained to join the professoriate currently exists. In order to craft a faculty that reflects the greater population, institutions of higher education must prepare graduate students, particularly those



*Institute faculty Caroline Turner, Kris Ewing, Malaika Culpepper and Steven Culpepper (with newborn) reminisce about their doctoral experiences. (Photo by Lamont Sellers)*

currently underrepresented in academia, to assume leadership positions. In pursuit of this goal, the University of Denver has created a national summer institute to train men and women of color and white women to enter the faculty pipeline.

### Training Future Faculty

The institute, entitled “Promoting Multicultural Excellence in the Academy,” fulfills several functions necessary to prepare students for academic careers and to increase the pool of underrepresented faculty candidates. These are:

- Encourage participants to clarify their goals in relation to pursuing a faculty position, and provide them with the information necessary to pursue these goals in the competitive job market.
- Increase the national pool of faculty of color and women, providing structural support for enhanced learning environments.
- Develop a national network of men and women of color and white women in academia who can support each other in their searches, thereby increasing the odds that candidates will remain in the faculty pipeline.

In addition, the institute brings highly qualified and sought-after scholars to Denver with the hope that they will eventually seek employ-

ment and diversify applicant pools at the University of Denver (DU).

Hosted by the Office of Multicultural Faculty Recruitment and Retention within the Center for Multicultural Excellence and the Office of Graduate Studies and Research at the University of Denver, the four-day institute consists of seminars on a variety of topics essential to graduate students hoping to enter the faculty pipeline. National experts from around the country provide participants with cutting-edge practical information and insight into the process of entering the academy. Fellows come from institutions throughout the United States and represent a variety of disciplines. Thus the institute draws a group of participants whose diversity encompasses categories beyond race, ethnicity, and gender.

Participant responses indicate that the institute has been a valuable experience. “I never would have gotten [this information] from my department or university,” one participant said. Another expressed, “I’m encouraged by what I learned and the people I met.”

### Lessons Learned about Faculty Recruitment

The process of creating our institute has reinforced several lessons about recruiting and retaining women and men of color and white women:

- In order to attract outstanding faculty, colleges and universities must invest personnel resources in a variety of programs designed specifically to increase and retain the number of underrepresented faculty. The institute at the University of Denver represents one such initiative.
- Institutions of higher education must deliberately educate doctoral candidates about pursuing faculty careers. Of the eighty-four fellows who have participated in the program over four years, only one indicated that his department or

university had provided the information he received at the institute.

- College administrators need to examine campus climates, particularly at the departmental level. According to Turner and Myers, “the predominant barrier [toward recruiting and retaining faculty of color] is racial and ethnic bias resulting in unwelcoming and unsupportive work environments for faculty of color” (2000). Department culture is often a major contributor to this “unwelcoming” climate.

Institutions of higher education must act systemically and proactively to improve their structural diversity. Needless to say, improvement will require creative and innovative solutions. We hope that more universities will contribute to the training, preparation, recruitment, and retention of diverse faculty populations through initiatives like the National Summer Institute on Promoting Multicultural Excellence in the Academy. In doing so, they will improve not only professional equity, but also the overall educational experience for their students, faculty, and staff—and their students’ preparation to contribute to our intercultural world.

For more information on the National Summer Institute on Promoting Multicultural Excellence, contact Fernando Guzman at [fguzman@du.edu](mailto:fguzman@du.edu) or visit our Web site at [www.du.edu/cme/](http://www.du.edu/cme/). 

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## Practical Strategies for Future Faculty

Future faculty members often need pragmatic guidance on how to attain and leverage their doctoral degrees. Institute workshops outline practical steps such as the following.

*Strategies for completing the dissertation:*

- Create a vision for your finished product
- View the dissertation as a series of steps
- Set realistic expectations
- Determine what is “good enough”
- Start with “the hard stuff”

*Factors to consider when negotiating a contract:*

- Competitive salary
- Cost of living in the region
- Moving expenses
- Research support
- Teaching support
- Professional development support
- Child care
- Opportunities for family members to obtain employment in the region/town

*Pointers to keep in mind when beginning a faculty career:*

- Identify a mentor
- Understand expectations regarding tenure, teaching load, publications, and community service
- Have a clear research agenda
- Develop relationships with other faculty of color and women’s groups on campus

—Fernando R. Guzman, III

## Recent Diversity Research

### ***E Pluribus Unum: Diversity and Community in the Twenty-first Century***

Robert D. Putnam's article in the *Scandinavian Political Studies Journal* claims that increased community diversity leads first to reductions in "social capital" (the existence of social bonds, including trust), but ultimately to its resurgence. The full article is available at [www.blackwell-synergy.com](http://www.blackwell-synergy.com).

### ***Choosing Hispanic-Serving Institutions (HSIs): A Closer Look at Latino Students' College Choices***

Excelencia in Education's recent report on Latino/a student's college choices attempts to explain why nearly one-half of Latino/a undergraduates attend HSIs. Based largely on student interviews, the report finds that Latino/a students, by prioritizing such concerns as cost and proximity to home, "create" HSIs through their college choices. The report is available at [www.edexcelencia.org](http://www.edexcelencia.org).

### ***College Access for the Working Poor: Overcoming Burdens to Succeed in Higher Education***

This Institute for Higher Education Policy report details the unique challenges to degree attainment facing students classified as "working poor." Despite students' general recognition of the importance of education, factors such as family obligations and insufficient financial aid prevent these students from completing degrees. The entire report is available at [www.ihep.org](http://www.ihep.org).

## [RESEARCH REPORT]

# The Study of Religion in the United States

Realizing that religious difference deeply informs social and political interaction, and that inter-religious communication is key to creating a more just and equitable world, several centers across the country support research projects that facilitate greater understanding of the role of faith in society.

### **The Pluralism Project at Harvard University**

Formed in 1991 to study the evolving religious diversity of the United States, the Pluralism Project expanded in 2000 to include religious pluralism around the globe. Under the guidance of director Diana L. Eck, the project examines religious diversity through various lenses: American religious demography, religious communities, interfaith encounters, and the meaning of religious pluralism within domestic American and international contexts.

The Pluralism Project specializes in qualitative field research, the results of which are made available on the Web site ([www.pluralism.org](http://www.pluralism.org)). Recent reports include a review of Gujarati Hindu Temples in Houston, Texas; an inquiry into American Muslim Music; and "International Portraits" of several countries (the United Kingdom, Malaysia, Indonesia, and Thailand). The Web site also includes resources grouped by geographical location and religious tradition. In addition to these online resources, the project has produced a number of multimedia resources.

The project enacts Eck's abiding belief that pluralism is a practice that reaches beyond diversity, beyond plurality, beyond relativism, and beyond tolerance. In Eck's view, pluralism

comes into being only through committed dialogic encounters between diverse groups. The project's contributors model and encourage this type of sustained dialogue through their work.

### **The Higher Education Research Institute: "Spirituality in Higher Education"**

Since 2003, UCLA's Higher Education Research Institute (HERI) has examined the place of spirituality on American campuses. Principal researchers Helen S. Astin and Alexander W. Astin have conducted several surveys to determine the attitudes of faculty and students toward spirituality. Jennifer A. Lindholm serves as project director.

The fall 2004 survey on *The Spiritual Life of College Students* found that 80 percent of entering freshmen are interested in spirituality. Among other findings, survey results indicated a strong correlation between "religious engagement" and politically conservative views, and a high correspondence between "Ecumenical worldview" and political liberalism. Other results related spirituality and religiosity to psychological health, and detailed the practices and beliefs of freshmen. The survey differentiated between religion and spirituality, but found a high correlation between these two categories.

*Spirituality and the Professoriate*, a survey of faculty at colleges and universities, gathered similar data on faculty attitudes toward spirituality. Eighty-one percent of faculty surveyed indicated that they considered themselves to be spiritual people, with the extent to which faculty considered spiritual develop-

ment of students to be an essential goal of college varying according to discipline. Results were partially disaggregated by race and discipline.

The project team conducted a follow-up survey of the 2004 freshmen in the spring of 2007. This data will be used to correlate faculty attitudes with student spiritual development. For more details, visit [spirituality.ucla.edu](http://spirituality.ucla.edu).

**Indicators of Students' Spirituality**

| INDICATOR   | PERCENT |
|---|---------|
| Believe in the sacredness of life                       | 83*     |
| Have an interest in spirituality                        | 80*     |
| Search for meaning/purpose in life                      | 76*     |
| Have discussions about the meaning of life with friends | 74*     |
| My spirituality is a source of joy                      | 64**    |
| Seek out opportunities to help me grow spiritually      | 47***   |

\*Describes students to some or a great extent

\*\*Agree strongly or somewhat

\*\*\*Consider it essential or very important

**Indicators of Faculty Members' Spirituality**

| INDICATOR  | PERCENT |
|--|---------|
| Consider myself a spiritual person               | 81*     |
| Goal: Developing a meaningful philosophy of life | 70**    |
| Seek out opportunities to grow spiritually       | 69*     |
| Engage in self-reflection                        | 68***   |
| My spirituality is a source of joy               | 47**    |

\*To some or a great extent

\*\*Essential or very important

\*\*\*To a great extent

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**Georgetown University's Berkley Center for Religion, Peace, and World Affairs**

The Berkley Center explores and encourages study of the intersections between religion and public affairs via extensive programming and ongoing database development efforts. Located in Washington, DC, the center provides opportunities for scholars, students, and community members to expand their knowledge of the place of religion in the modern world.

The Center's programs bring a wide range of prominent scholars, writers, and activists to DC, where they share their scholarship and collaborate toward greater inter-religious understanding through symposia and conferences. Recent

events include a symposium on the UN's Alliance of Civilizations Report (January 2007) and a symposium on the State of West-Islamic Dialogue (October 2007).

The Center's Web site includes a wide range of resources created by faculty and students. Prominent among these are four databases: Religious Perspectives (which compares scripture from different traditions), West-Islamic Dialogue (which tracks inter-religious events), Faith 2008 (which documents religion's role in the 2008 U.S. presidential election), and Religion and Development (which indicates the role of different religious groups in global development work). To view the databases or learn more about the center, visit [www3.georgetown.edu/centers/berkeley/](http://www3.georgetown.edu/centers/berkeley/). 

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## In Print

***Interfaith Encounters in America***, Kate McCarthy (Rutgers University Press, 2007, \$22.95 paperback)

In this compact but expansive study, Kate McCarthy surveys the place of religious pluralism in contemporary American culture. Recognizing that inter-religious contact occurs within “often asymmetrical systems of power and privilege that are prominent features of global societies,” McCarthy sets out to identify when, where, why, and between whom this dialogue occurs in the United States. The study covers extensive ground, with chapters on current theoretical approaches to religious diversity, political activism, community organizations, inter-religious families, and online discourses. McCarthy finds that somewhere between fundamentalism and assimilation, religious pluralism is “alive and well.”

***The Clash Within: Democracy, Religious Violence, and India’s Future***, Martha C. Nussbaum (The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2007, \$29.95 hardcover)

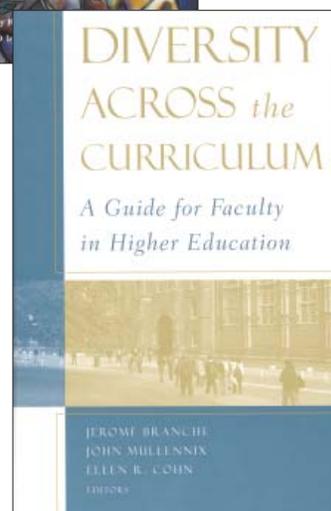
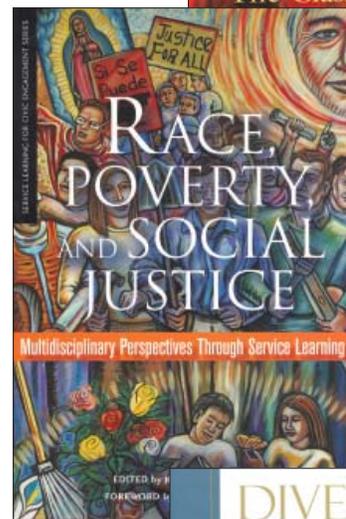
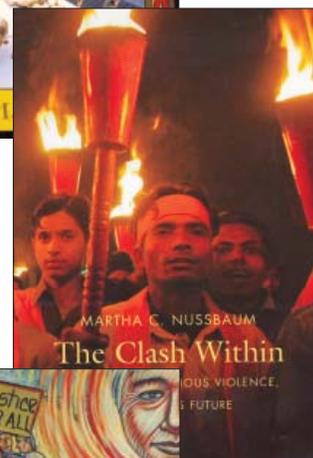
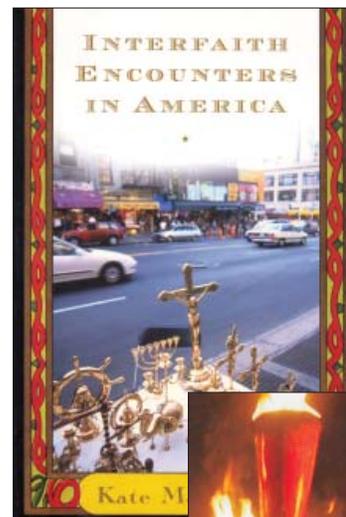
Taking India, and specifically the state of Gujarat, as a case study, Martha Nussbaum examines the complex and sometimes contentious relationship between religious diversity and democratic values. In Nussbaum’s exploration, the tragic deaths of Hindu pilgrims as a result of a 2002 train fire forms the nexus of an exposition into religious fundamentalism in Indian culture—and the complicated relationship between religion and democracy. Nussbaum’s analysis deconstructs the idea of a “clash of civilizations,” smartly shifting from an external analysis (of “East vs. West”) to explore the internal tensions (isolationism vs. global-mindedness) that prohibit and propel democratic citizenship. Her analysis is relevant not just to India, but to any pluralistic democracy in the modern world.

***Race, Poverty, and Social Justice: Multidisciplinary Perspectives Through Service Learning***, José Z. Calderón, Ed. (Stylus Publishing, LLC, 2007, \$27.50 paperback)

*Diversity & Democracy* advisory board member José Calderón promotes inclusive pedagogies geared toward democratic action with this collection of articles on service learning. Drawing from a theoretical perspective based in part on Paulo Freire’s pedagogies and AAC&U’s ongoing diversity initiatives, Calderón compiles a collection designed to advance service learning “beyond volunteerism (or charity) to a level of civic engagements that advances social justice in our institutions and a democratic culture in a civil society.” With topics ranging from day laborer centers and homelessness to preparing the student for life in a diverse global society, the collection provides practical strategies for achieving transformative learning in multiple contexts.

***Diversity Across the Curriculum: A Guide for Faculty in Higher Education***, Jerome Branche, John Mullennix, and Ellen R. Cohn, Eds. (Anker Publishing Company, Inc., 2007, \$40.00 hardcover)

This guidebook to integrating diversity throughout the curriculum is an excellent source for educators, particularly faculty members working to infuse diversity within their disciplines. Beginning with a multiarticle overview of the challenges of diversifying the curriculum, the book contains brief summaries of both institution-wide and discipline-specific approaches to diversity. Several articles detail specific institutional diversity initiatives, while faculty members present discipline-specific teaching methods in sections on the humanities, the health sciences, and the natural and social sciences. This collection presents a broad range of possible approaches to diversity and showcases classroom tools for encouraging students’ engagement with difference. □



## Resources

### Wingspread Declaration on Religion and Public Life

The Society for Values in Higher Education (SVHE), whose staff formerly included *Diversity & Democracy* advisory board member Nancy Thomas, published this declaration in 2005. The declaration applies the principles of deliberative democracy to the study of religion in colleges and universities, and underscores the need to broach the subject of religious difference both intellectually and interpersonally in order to prepare students for proactive engagement with the world. To download the declaration, visit [www.svhe.org/node/156](http://www.svhe.org/node/156).

### Project Implicit

As a data tool for ongoing research, Harvard University offers a series of Implicit Association tests free online through its Project Implicit portal. By taking a series of surveys, respondents can identify their own unconscious biases, laying the groundwork for deeper conversations about difference along such axes of difference as race, ethnicity, age, dis/ability, and gender. For more, visit [implicit.harvard.edu/implicit/](http://implicit.harvard.edu/implicit/).

### Race, Ethnicity, & Religion (Cornell University)

Cornell University Library's Race, Ethnicity, & Religion project exemplifies one way that colleges and universities can make resources on diversity available to their students through collaborative compilation. While resources listed are not accessible outside of the Cornell library system, the searchable bibliography provides a strong example for institutions wishing to create a Web-based resource. To view the site, visit [racereligion.library.cornell.edu/index.php](http://racereligion.library.cornell.edu/index.php).

## Opportunities

### Fulbright Scholarships

The Fulbright Scholar Program offers faculty and professionals opportunities for lecturing, research, or both in 140 countries and all regions of the world. Awards are in 45 disciplines and several interdisciplinary fields, and range from two to twelve months. The competition for the 2009-2010 academic year opens March 1, 2008 with a deadline of August 1, 2008. For individual award descriptions, tips on preparing a successful application, other eligibility requirements, and an online application, visit the Web site at [www.cies.org](http://www.cies.org).

### National Conference on Race and Ethnicity (NCORE)

The National Conference on Race and Ethnicity in Higher Education will take place in Orlando, Florida, from May 27 through May 31, 2008. Presentation proposals are due by February 2, 2008. Full submission details are available on the Web site at [www.ncore.ou.edu/callforpresentations.html](http://www.ncore.ou.edu/callforpresentations.html).

### Grant Opportunity: Henry Luce Foundation

The Henry R. Luce Initiative on Religion and International Affairs offers annual grants to a range of institutional entities in order to "deepen American understanding of religion as a critical but often neglected factor in international policy issues." For further information and a list of recent grant recipients, see [www.hluce.org](http://www.hluce.org).

### 2008 Pacific Rim Conference

The 2008 Pacific Rim Conference, an international educational forum focused on disability-centered research, service, and policy, will take place on April 14 and 15 at the Sheraton Waikiki Hotel & Resort. For more information, visit [www.pacrim.hawaii.edu](http://www.pacrim.hawaii.edu).

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# Upcoming AAC&U Meetings

| MEETING   | LOCATION                      | DATES                       |
|---|-------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| <b>AAC&amp;U ANNUAL MEETING:<br/>Intentional Learning,<br/>Unscripted Challenges:<br/>Knowledge and Imagination for<br/>an Interdependent World</b> | <i>Washington, DC</i>         | <b>JANUARY 23-26, 2008</b>  |
| <b>Integrative Designs for<br/>General Education and<br/>Assessment</b>   | <i>Boston, Massachusetts</i>  | <b>FEBRUARY 21-23, 2008</b> |
| <b>Discovering, Integrating and<br/>Applying Knowledge</b>  | <i>Austin, Texas</i>          | <b>APRIL 10-12, 2008</b>    |
| <b>Diversity, Learning, and<br/>Inclusive Excellence</b>  | <i>Long Beach, California</i> | <b>OCTOBER 16-18, 2008</b>  |

## AAC&U Associates

Enrollment in the Associate program provides an opportunity for individuals on AAC&U member campuses to advance core purposes and best practices in undergraduate education and to strengthen their collaboration with AAC&U's Office of Diversity, Equity, and Global Initiatives. Associates pay \$60 per calendar year and receive the same benefits as AAC&U Campus Representatives, including subscriptions to our print publications, *Liberal Education*, *Peer Review*, and *Diversity & Democracy*, electronic copies of *On Campus with Women*, invitations to apply for grant-funded projects, and advance notice of calls for proposals for institutes and meetings. For more information, please visit [www.aacu.org](http://www.aacu.org) or call Renee Gamache at 202-884-0809.

## About AAC&U

AAC&U is the leading national association concerned with the quality, vitality, and public standing of undergraduate liberal education. Its members are committed to extending the advantages of a liberal education to all students, regardless of academic specialization or intended career. Founded in 1915, AAC&U now comprises more than 1,150 accredited public and private colleges and universities of every type and size. AAC&U functions as a catalyst and facilitator, forging links among presidents, administrators, and faculty members who are engaged in institutional and curricular planning. Information about AAC&U membership, programs, and publications can be found at [www.aacu.org](http://www.aacu.org).

## From AAC&U Board Statement on Liberal Learning

AAC&U believes that by its nature...liberal learning is global and pluralistic. It embraces the diversity of ideas and experiences that characterize the social, natural, and intellectual world. To acknowledge such diversity in all its forms is both an intellectual commitment and a social responsibility, for nothing less will equip us to understand our world and to pursue fruitful lives.



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