Engaging Worldview:

A Snapshot of Religious & Spiritual Campus Climate

Part I:

Dimensions of Climate & Student Engagement

2014

PROJECT OVERVIEW

THE STUDY

The Campus Religious and Spiritual Climate Survey (CRSCS) aims to examine how features of campus structures and educational practices influence students' ability to engage across religious and worldview differences. As an assessment tool, the CRSCS assists campus leaders as they navigate the possibilities and complexities that religious and worldview diversity bring to higher education institutions.

The CRSCS began in 2008 under the direction of Dr. Alyssa Rockenbach, Associate Professor of Higher Education at North Carolina State University, and Dr. Matthew Mayhew, Associate Professor of Higher Education at New York University. Following several years of survey development and testing, Dr. Mayhew and Dr. Rockenbach partnered with Interfaith Youth Core (IFYC) in 2011 and expanded the survey to directly assess interfaith engagement and action, as well as additional attitudinal outcomes. The partnership has resulted in a comprehensive instrument designed in response to the many questions and challenges regarding religious diversity with which postsecondary leaders are currently contending.

THIS REPORT

The findings described in this report are based on data collected from 8,463 students attending 38 US colleges and universities during the 2011-12, 2012-13, and 2013-14 academic years. Since fall 2011, the CRSCS has been administered annually to undergraduate students attending participating institutions. All students, with the exception of first-semester, first-year students, are eligible to participate. Detailed information on the survey instrument and sample can be found in the appendix.

Participate In IDEALS

In fall 2015, the research team will launch a longitudinal survey, Interfaith Diversity Experiences and Attitudes Longitudinal Survey (IDEALS). IDEALS will help determine the impact of college on students' interfaith behaviors and pluralism attitudes, as well as identify best strategies for practice.

Costs of participation are entirely covered by the research team, but space is limited. If you are interested in participating, visit **www.ifyc.org/ideals** to register or email **survey@ifyc.org** for more information.

INTERFAITH YOUTH CORE

is a movement building organization working to make interfaith cooperation a social norm. IFYC's people, programs, and partnerships are focused on engaging the higher education sector to ensure that emerging leaders leave college as *interfaith leaders*, with the skills and knowledge base necessary to engage others across lines of difference and make real change in the world.

To talk with IFYC about how we can support you in advancing interfaith cooperation on your campus, contact a staff member at **info@ifyc.org**.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The research team has worked together over the last few years to make this report possible. The analysis and interpretation for this report was conducted by Dr. Alyssa Rockenbach, Associate Professor of Higher Education at North Carolina State University, and was supported by Alana Kinarsky, Manager of Assessment at IFYC.

We thank the full research team for their many contributions to this project:

- Dr. Matthew Mayhew, Associate Professor of Higher Education, New York University
- Mary Ellen Giess, Vice President of Program Strategy & Chief of Staff, IFYC
- Katie Bringman Baxter, Vice President of Institutional Engagement, IFYC
- Rachel Schwartz, Mission Delivery Associate of Assessment, IFYC

We also wish to thank Jenny Small for providing early edits and Brian Holl for his work on the design of this report.

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OVERVIEW

American colleges and universities are located in one of the most religiously diverse countries in the world, and are therefore uniquely situated to provide a context for constructive engagement across lines of religious and worldview difference. Campus leaders have continuously risen to that challenge by designing educational initiatives intended to promote attitudes, knowledge, and skills necessary for productive global citizenship. However, while innovative practices have flourished, questions remain regarding the most effective ways to help students develop as interfaith leaders - citizens who are prepared to engage, serve, and lead with others in a religiously diverse society.

This report illuminates how students perceive campus climate and engage with people of diverse worldviews. Specifically, it presents evidence that addresses the following questions:

- How present are diverse worldviews on campus and how is that diversity being engaged?
- How do people of diverse worldviews perceive and accept one another on campus?
- What opportunities do students have to engage with worldview diversity and what is the lasting impact?

Based on a multi-year study of campus climate for religious and spiritual diversity, this report gives particular attention to differences in student perception and engagement by institution type and student characteristics (e.g., gender, sexuality, race/ethnicity, year in college, worldview).

Additionally, the report offers approaches for higher education leaders and practitioners to utilize in their daily work. While each campus environment is unique, these general tips and resources are intended to be adaptable to a variety of contexts.

DEFINING WORLDVIEW

Because the survey is designed for students of diverse perspectives, researchers gave particular attention to identifying the best language to ensure that students from a variety of backgrounds understood the questions being asked. After multiple pilots, the researchers selected the term "worldview" to reference a guiding life philosophy, which may be based on a particular religious tradition, spiritual orientation, non-religious perspective, or some combination of these. The survey instrument provided this definition and then asked students to select a worldview that best captures their own religious or non-religious perspective.

To streamline analysis and reporting, researchers identified four over-arching worldview categories by grouping students with similar self-identification:

- **WORLDVIEW MAJORITY (57%)** students who identify as Protestant, Orthodox, or Roman Catholic Christians.

- **WORLDVIEW MINORITY (12%)** students who belong to a faith tradition that is a numerical minority in the United States, including Baha'i, Buddhism, Confucianism, Daoism, Hinduism, Islam, Jainism, Judaism, Mormonism, Native American traditions, Paganism, Sikhism, Unitarian Universalism, and Zoroastrianism. In addition, students identifying as "spiritual" are included here.

- **NON-RELIGIOUS (25%)** includes students who identify as Agnostic, Atheist, Non-religious, None, or Secular Humanist.

- **ANOTHER WORLDVIEW (6%)** students chose to respond by writing in a response rather than selecting one of the available options.

For a more detailed breakdown of the survey sample, see the appendix.

The presence of non-religious young adults in the U.S. has been on the rise in recent years, a trend that is reflected among entering college students who increasingly identify their religious preference as "none".

Putnam, R. D., & Campbell, D. E. (2010). *American grace: How religion divides and unites us.* New York, NY: Simon & Schuster.

How present are diverse worldviews on campus?

One critical, preliminary question is whether a campus make-up provides students with an opportunity for interfaith engagement. In other words, is a spectrum of religious and non-religious beliefs present on campus to facilitate opportunities for engagement? This concept, known as "structural worldview diversity," can serve as a signal to students that their campus values and proactively creates a diverse and welcoming environment.

According to the findings, students generally perceive a moderate degree of worldview diversity on campus. As shown in Table 1, 72% of respondents affirm it is "very" or "extremely" accurate that diverse students, faculty, and staff are present on campus. Yet, smaller numbers of students are convinced that the degree of structural diversity adequately represents different worldviews, including their own. For example, just one-half of students are "very" or "extremely" satisfied with religious and worldview diversity on campus.

Structural worldview diversity is an indicator of whether students "see" and are satisfied with the level of diversity at their institution. Students are asked to what degree they agree with the following statements to identify structural worldview diversity:

Q There are students, faculty, and staff on this campus who represent diverse worldviews.
Q The religious organizations on this campus are diverse in terms of the faith traditions they represent.
Q This institution's mission is inclusive of diverse religious and non-religious viewpoints.

TABLE 1: PERCEPTIONS OF STRUCTURAL WORLDVIEW DIVERSITY	Percent of students reporting "very" or "extremely" accurate
There are students, faculty, and staff on this campus who represent diverse worldviews.	72%
This institution's mission is inclusive of diverse religious and non-religious viewpoints.	57%
I am satisfied with the religious and worldview diversity on this campus.	50%
This campus is religiously diverse.	41%

The study also examined influences on students' perception of structural worldview diversity based on the type of institution they attend, year of study, racial/ethnic identity, and worldview identity.

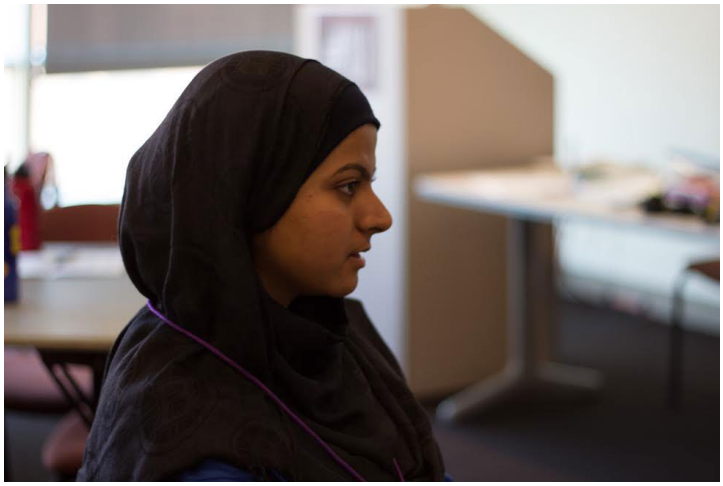
STUDENTS AT PUBLIC AND CATHOLIC INSTITUTIONS PERCEIVE MORE STRUCTURAL WORLDVIEW DIVERSITY

The type of institution a student attends shapes their perceptions of religious diversity on campus. Students at public and Catholic colleges and universities have somewhat higher levels of satisfaction with campus religious diversity than students attending Protestant and private nonsectarian institutions.

Indeed, while both Protestant and Catholic institutions have missions that align with a faith tradition, the data demonstrates that students at Catholic institutions have a stronger perception of their institutions' ability to draw people of diverse worldviews into the campus community.

FIGURE 1: PERCENT OF STUDENTS REPORTING THEY ARE "VERY" OR "EXTREMELY" SATISFIED WITH RELIGIOUS AND WORLDVIEW DIVERSITY ON CAMPUS (BY INSTITUTION TYPE)

WORLDVIEW MINORITY AND NON-RELIGIOUS STUDENTS ARE LESS SATISFIED WITH WORLDVIEW DIVERSITY ON THEIR CAMPUSES



Compared to the worldview majority, students in the worldview minority, non-religious students, and students indicating "another worldview" perceive less structural worldview diversity on campus. In other words, students in the minority tend to report less satisfaction with campus diversity.

Given their larger numbers on most campuses, worldview majority students may be less inclined to notice the absence of those whose religious perspectives are different from their own. However, students of other religious and non-religious perspectives appear to be aware of their minority status and are sensitive to how well (or poorly) different worldview groups are represented.

FIGURE 2. PERCENT OF STUDENTS REPORTING THEY ARE "VERY" OR "EXTREMELY" SATISFIED WITH WORLDVIEW DIVERSITY ON CAMPUS (BY WORLDVIEW)

TIPS & RESOURCES

Enhance student exposure to worldview diversity by building connections and establishing partnerships with community organizations and nearby institutions.

One way to expose students to different worldviews is to organize religious and interfaith site visits. Before you do so, review this site visit guide meant to help faculty and university staff support the learning experiences of students that are being introduced to religious spaces and practices different from their own. Use the *Guide for Religious and Interfaith Site Visits.*

Get this and other resources at: *IFYC.org/resources*

AFRICAN AMERICAN/BLACK AND LATINO/A STUDENTS PERCEIVE A GREATER DEGREE OF WORLDVIEW DIVERSITY ON CAMPUS

African American/Black and Latino/a students perceive a greater degree of worldview diversity on campus than do White students, which can inform a more favorable perception of the religious and spiritual climate. This finding is surprising in light of research indicating that students of color generally perceive the campus racial climate more negatively than do their White peers[1].

Factors that contribute to students' perceptions of campus climate represent a promising direction for further study. The current finding sets the stage for such research by demonstrating that different aspects of personal identity may uniquely shape how students perceive and experience their campuses.

FIGURE 3: PERCENT OF STUDENTS REPORTING THEY ARE "VERY" OR "EXTREMELY" SATISFIED WITH RELIGIOUS AND WORLDVIEW DIVERSITY ON CAMPUS (BY RACE/ETHNICITY)

[1] Harper, S. R., & Hurtado, S. (2007). Nine themes in campus racial climates and implications for institutional transformation. In S. R. Harper, & L. D. Patton (Eds.), *Responding to the realities of race on campus. New Directions for Student Services (No. 120, pp. 7-24). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.*

STUDENTS PERCEIVE LESS STRUCTURAL DIVERSITY THE LONGER THEY ARE IN COLLEGE

On average, students who have been in college longer have greater reservations about whether their campus is structurally diverse. It is possible that students who have been on campus longer have had more opportunities to develop a realistic – albeit more critical – view of their institution. Notably, the difference is most pronounced between first-year students and their more experienced peers, suggesting that first-year students may come to campus with some idealism about campus diversity and become more critical in their appraisal over time.

> *"We need to better understand the different faiths represented on campus."*
> *– Undergraduate Student*

How do people of diverse worldviews perceive and accept one another on campus?

An analysis of the psychological climate on campus offers insight into how comfortable students feel expressing their identity on campus and what factors contribute to that comfort level. Assessments of psychological climate shed light on students' impressions of the "warmth" of the campus (e.g., is it a supportive and accepting place?), as well as any "chilly" climate indicators (e.g., is there conflict and discrimination on campus?).

Students report adequate space for support and spiritual expression and few are afflicted by a high level of conflict or division. However, students of different worldview categories do not express the same feelings of support across the board. It's clear that some worldview groups feel less accepted on campus than others, and institution type is often a factor as well. It is also important to note that lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) students are at risk of experiencing religiously-motivated discrimination.

The psychological climate reflects the extent to which students:

- Feel supported and free to express their worldviews.
- Observe acceptance of diverse worldview groups.
- Sense insensitivity or coercion on campus.

A warm psychological climate is one in which community members feel a sense of belonging and, in turn, advocate for inclusion of diverse religious and cultural groups. This is vital for cultivating spaces conducive to learning and success, especially for students of minority worldview identities who may be at greater risk of feeling marginalized.

SPACE FOR SUPPORT AND SPIRITUAL EXPRESSION

An important measure of psychological climate is whether students feel there is space for their own spiritual expression, including support for celebrating religious holidays and seeking help when navigating spiritual challenges and questions. This measure also includes questions that assess whether the faculty are supportive of religious observance needs and the degree of safe space for expression in classes.

"The meditation room on campus is a resource for all students...it is nice sharing a space because you find people practicing their own form of prayer."
– Undergraduate Student

While three-fourths of students (72%) feel that their campus is a "very" or "extremely" safe place for the expression of their worldview, fewer students experience the same degree of support in the classroom. In fact, feelings about safe expression in the classroom are more mixed: 42% of students feel "moderately," "slightly," or "not at all" safe in class.

Involvement in general religious and spiritual activities (e.g., participating in student religious organizations or campus programs that encourage reflection around meaning and purpose) appears to contribute to students feeling safe and able to express themselves spiritually. Co-curricular experiences focused on students' religious and spiritual development provide an outlet for students to voice their beliefs and values and find camaraderie with other students and mentors.

WORLDVIEW MAJORITY STUDENTS REPORT GREATER ACCESS TO RESOURCES AND SUPPORT

Overall, 76% of worldview majority students experience a high degree of support and space for their own spiritual expression, including support for celebrating religious holidays and seeking help when navigating spiritual challenges and questions. In contrast, roughly two-thirds of non-religious (66%) and worldview minority (68%) students feel similarly.

For example, 72% of worldview majority students report it is "very" or "extremely" accurate that they have a place (e.g., office, organization) on campus where they can seek help with spiritual or religious struggles and questions. However, only 47% of worldview minority students and 42% of non-religious students reported the same.

TIPS & RESOURCES

Spaces on campus designated for worldview practice or expression appear to be more available to worldview majority students than students of minority religious and non-religious perspectives.

To better understand the experience and needs of these students, invite them to participate in focus groups. Collect feedback and ideas for new initiatives. If possible, select focus group leaders who identify with a minority worldview.

Also, consider convening a taskforce comprised of key campus stakeholders interested in worldview diversity. Charge this group with surfacing ways to make your institution more inclusive for religious minority and non-religious students. *Interfaith Cooperation Committee Toolkit.*

Get this and other resources at: *IFYC.org/resources*

A SENSE OF SUPPORT FOR SPIRITUAL EXPRESSION TAPERS OFF AFTER THE FIRST YEAR OF COLLEGE

Compared to students with more years on campus, first-year students report feeling more supported and free to express themselves. This is consistent with the general trend that first-year students tend to view their campuses in a more positive light.

Given that students feel less supported after the first year of college, leaders and practitioners might consider how to bolster opportunities for sophomores, juniors, and seniors to re-engage the spaces and activities that are spiritually beneficial to first-year students.

"An institutional goal is to help students develop holistically, so staff should have the skills to help with that area of development. It would be helpful if all employees could engage when those conversations arise."
– Student Affairs Staff Member

TIPS & RESOURCES

Integrate religious literacy and interfaith themes into existing student leadership programs and train select leaders to engage religious diversity in their leadership capacities. Training orientation leaders, resident assistants, and student government officers will ensure that students with the opportunity to shape campus climate have a basic understanding of worldview diversity. See how one campus uses storytelling to foster student leadership with this *Case Study in Interfaith Leadership.*

Get this and other resources at: *IFYC.org/resources*

ACCEPTANCE OF DIVERSE WORLDVIEW GROUPS

Four scales on the survey are dedicated to asking questions about the acceptance of four particular groups on campus: evangelical Christians, Muslims, the non-religious, and Latter-day Saints/Mormons. These four groups were selected by the research team based on national studies that indicate biases against these groups in the U.S. Researchers were interested in understanding if and how these national trends may apply to interactions on college campuses[2].

This measure does not ask about respondents' own attitudes toward the groups; rather, it captures what they have observed regarding how that group is treated on campus. To assess this, students are asked about the degree to which individuals of these worldviews are accepted ("on this campus it is acceptable to be non-religious"), have a place ("LDS/Mormons have a place on this campus"), and share their perspectives openly on campus ("Muslims share their perspectives openly on campus").

OF THESE FOUR GROUPS, NON-RELIGIOUS PEOPLE ARE REPORTED TO BE THE MOST ACCEPTED ON CAMPUS WHILE LDS/MORMONS ARE LEAST ACCEPTED

Overall, students perceive that non-religious individuals are most accepted on campus, followed by evangelical Christians, Muslims, and LDS/Mormons. When students are asked about open perspective-sharing on campus, they indicate that non-religious perspectives are shared to a greater degree than perspectives of the other three worldview groups.

[2]Pew Research Center. (2014, July 16). *How Americans feel about religious groups: Jews, Catholics, & Evangelicals rated warmly, atheists and Muslims more coldly.* Retrieved from Pew Research Center, Religion & Public Life Project: http://www.pewforum.org/files/2014/07/Views-of-Religious-Groups-09-22-final.pdf

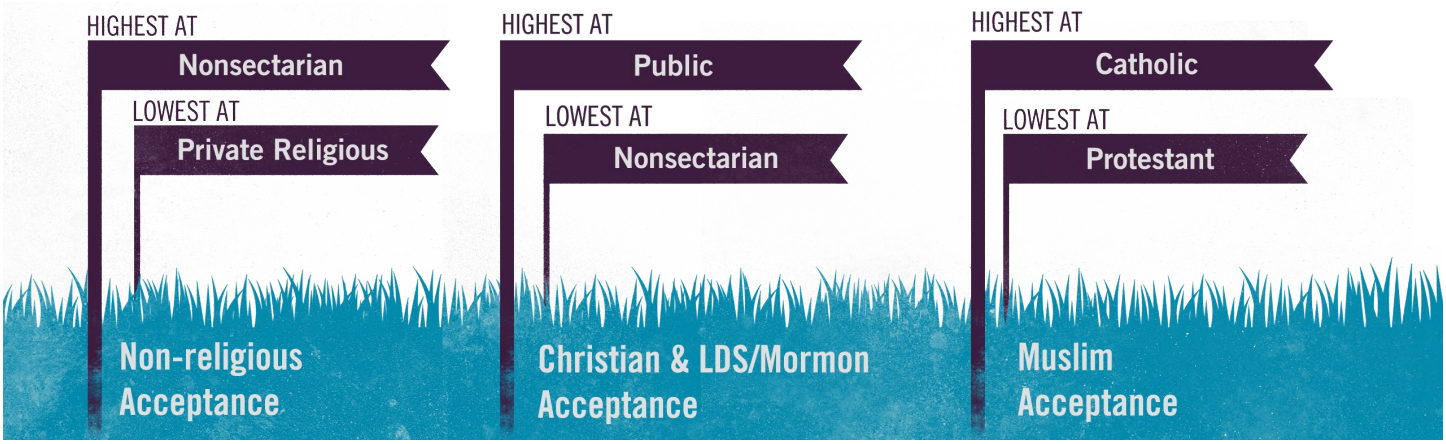
Students may perceive that non-religious viewpoints are esteemed in academic contexts – where arguments are often expected to be objective and neutral – relative to those that are explicitly religious. Alternately, this finding may align with the growing number of non-religious students in the millennial generation and a corresponding acceptance of that identity.

FIGURE 4. PERCENT OF STUDENTS REPORTING A HIGH LEVEL OF ACCEPTANCE FOR NON-RELIGIOUS, EVANGELICAL, MUSLIM, AND MORMON INDIVIDUALS ON CAMPUS

ACCEPTANCE DIFFERS BY INSTITUTION TYPE

Institutional context shapes how members of the campus community provide space for and accept religious diversity. Non-religious acceptance is highest at private nonsectarian institutions, evangelical Christian and LDS/Mormon acceptance is highest at public institutions, and Muslim acceptance is highest at Catholic institutions.

Alternatively, levels of acceptance are tenuous for non-religious students at private religious institutions, evangelical Christians and LDS/Mormons at private nonsectarian institutions, and Muslims at Protestant colleges.



STUDENTS OF COLOR PERCEIVE THE CAMPUS CLIMATE MORE FAVORABLY THAN THEIR PEERS

Perceptions of acceptance also vary by race/ethnicity, following a similar pattern observed earlier: relative to White students, some racial/ethnic groups perceive higher levels of acceptance of diverse worldview groups. In other words, students of color tend, on average, to perceive the campus religious and spiritual climate more favorably.

The difference in perspective may be linked to nuances in institutional environments, affiliation with a range of campus subcultures, and engagement in unique experiences. Where students find themselves

on campus – the organizations they are a part of, the peer groups they occupy, the mentors they engage – shapes how they see their college or university. The extent to which such experiences differ by racial/ethnic identity may help explain the distinctive ways that students of different groups view their campus.

Although these findings are not conclusive, college leaders can bear in mind that the religious and spiritual climate is not observed entirely by students through a religious lens. Race and ethnicity shape experiences and involvement, which in turn may shape perceptions of acceptance of diverse worldview groups.

AS STUDENTS ADVANCE THROUGH COLLEGE, THEY PERCEIVE LESS ACCEPTANCE FOR DIVERSE WORLDVIEW GROUPS

First-year students perceive higher levels of acceptance of diverse worldview groups compared to students with more years of college. It may be that first-year students, who are still acclimating to campus, are less aware of discrimination than their more advanced peers.

As students' observations of campus take a more negative turn later on, opportunities to process new realizations and address problems with acceptance on campus might be beneficial for students. Campus leaders can be proactive in providing opportunities to make meaning with their students as student perceptions grow and change throughout college.

DIVISIVENESS, INSENSITIVITY, AND COERCION

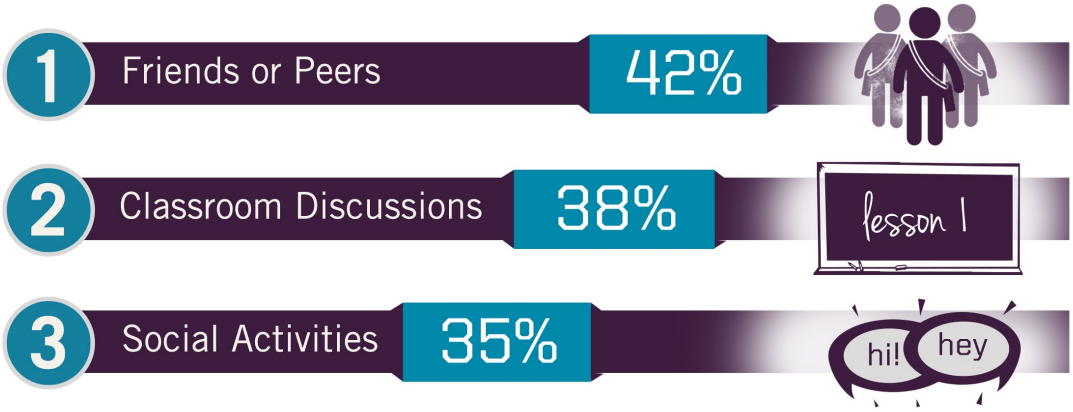
The final measure in this section reflects negative aspects of the campus climate.

- **Divisiveness:** conflict or separation that exists between different worldview groups on campus
- **Insensitivity:** the frequency of insensitive comments or behaviors directed toward different worldview groups
- **Coercion:** degree to which students report feeling coerced or pressured with respect to religion and worldview

It is promising to see that few students report high levels of the most negative aspects of campus climate. For instance, confrontation is low, with roughly 8% of students reporting it is "very" or "extremely" accurate that "there is a great deal of conflict among people of different worldviews on this campus" and "people of diverse worldviews quarrel with one another on this campus."

A significant minority of students has concerns about some of the less overt manifestations of divisiveness. A quarter of students indicate it is "very" or "extremely" accurate that "people of different worldviews on this campus seem separated into groups that rarely interact with one another." Moreover, roughly a third of respondents suggest it is "very" or "extremely" accurate that "this college or university seems to favor certain worldviews above others" (34%) and "others on campus hold stereotypes about my worldview" (32%).

Like divisiveness, extreme instances of insensitivity on campus are rare. In fact, 73% of students report low levels of insensitivity on campus and 75% say they have "never" been mistreated on campus because of their worldview. When students do report "sometimes" hearing insensitive comments, the source is typically friends or peers (42%), classroom discussions (38%) and informal social activities with other students (35%). Fewer students hear insensitive comments about their worldview from faculty (20%), campus ministry staff or religious speakers (18%), or campus staff/administrators (13%).



While this is something to pay close attention to, insensitive comments made by peers may be a reflection of the developmental process that students typically undergo. The college years present an opportunity to explore and test new ideas and may lead students to articulate points of view that are still under construction. Many forms of engagement are associated with both "good" and "bad" exchanges across difference, so it is important to encourage honest expression that honors the exploratory process while simultaneously providing guiding principles for constructive dialogue.

TIPS & RESOURCES

Whether facilitating a classroom discussion, supervising a student employee, or chatting informally, faculty and staff are regularly in conversation with students about meaning and values. The campus can leverage these opportunities by hosting sessions to help faculty and staff deepen their skills and create spaces for shared learning. These sessions could be built around discussing findings from this report or the case studies outlined in this resource: *Case Studies for Exploring Interfaith Cooperation: Classroom Tools*

Get this and other resources at: *IFYC.org/resources*

NON-RELIGIOUS STUDENTS REPORT EXPERIENCING MORE COERCION THAN THEIR PEERS

Non-religious students report experiencing or observing the most coercion. In particular, they are more likely to feel pressured to listen unwillingly to others' worldview perspectives and to keep their worldview to themselves when on campus.

However, worldview majority (44%) and minority (44%) students are more likely than non-religious students (37%) to "sometimes" hear insensitive comments about their worldview from peers. Approximately one–quarter of worldview majority students hear insensitive comments at least "sometimes" from faculty. For all other groups, less than 20% report similar experiences.

LGBT STUDENTS AND THOSE OF ANOTHER GENDER IDENTITY EXPERIENCE A MORE HOSTILE CAMPUS CLIMATE THAN THEIR PEERS

The intersections of gender, sexual orientation, and religion are critically important to the feelings of inclusion or exclusion experienced by sexual minorities on campus. When asked whether "someone on campus used his/her religious worldview to justify treating you in a discriminatory manner on the basis of your sexual orientation or gender identity," 62% of lesbian students, 58% of gay students, 34% of bisexual students, and 34% of students of another sexual orientation report experiencing such treatment at least "sometimes." By comparison, just 7% of heterosexual students report the same.

As shown in the table below, students of another gender identity perceive substantially higher levels of insensitivity on campus than female- and male-identified students, particularly with respect to discrimination on the basis of sex, sexual orientation, and gender identity.

TABLE 2. PERCEPTIONS OF INSENSITIVITY ON CAMPUS BY GENDER IDENTITY

Percent of students reporting...	Female	Male	Another Gender Identity
High or moderate levels of insensitivity on campus	**28%**	**26%**	**53%**
Someone on campus used his/her religious worldview to justify treating you in a discriminatory manner on the basis of your sex (at least sometimes)	**12%**	**8%**	**43%**
Someone on campus used his/her religious worldview to justify treating you in a discriminatory manner on the basis of your sexual orientation or gender identity (at least sometimes)	**10%**	**10%**	**62%**

These findings reflect current events and tensions surrounding equal rights and protections for lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) people. Religion has played an important role in movements for and against LGBT rights and appears to have a demonstrable impact on the campus climate, as well.

TIPS & RESOURCES

As educators on campus open the conversation around intersections of religion and sexual orientation, care should be taken to support and protect students who may be vulnerable to discrimination from peers or others.

Consider modifying existing programs to better promote safety for LGBT individuals by emphasizing how religious/spiritual perspectives shape attitudes and behaviors toward LGBT people.

What opportunities do students have to engage religious and worldview diversity?

Colleges and universities are uniquely positioned to equip a new generation of leaders with the skills to engage worldview diversity, as they have done for many other social movements, from multiculturalism to environmentalism. As local communities and campuses diversify, people of different worldviews are interacting with greater frequency than ever before. While these interactions can inspire collaboration and cohesion, they can also be a source of conflict and violence. Research demonstrates that when a diverse society finds ways to bring people of different backgrounds together in intentional ways, the community is more resilient; in addition, social cohesion, creativity, and productivity are likely to increase for that community[3]. Institutions of higher education have the infrastructure and resources to advance a knowledge base and skill set that equips students with the capacity to engage worldview diversity positively. Such programming and intention can help students establish the competency to navigate diverse perspectives and backgrounds. However, if not done well, they can also cause tension or hostility.

This final section sheds light on trends in interfaith engagement and illuminates opportunities for improvement when it comes to involving students in co-curricular and curricular initiatives. Strategies to involve students in constructive interfaith programming, while minimizing harmful interactions, are crucial and significantly impact students' outlook on campus climate.

Opportunities for students to engage religious and worldview diversity include the following measures:

- **PROVOCATIVE EXPERIENCES** captures whether students have had challenging or stimulating experiences with people of different worldviews. These experiences often challenge students to re-think their assumptions or prejudices.
- **NEGATIVE ENGAGEMENT** measures the negative quality of students' interactions with peers from other religious or spiritual traditions.
- **CO-CURRICULAR ENGAGEMENT** represents student participation in co-curricular experiences related to religious and spiritual life and is comprised of three sub-scales.
  - » **GENERAL RELIGIOUS/SPIRITUAL ACTIVITIES** include attending programs related to meaning and purpose, participating in campus religious organizations, and attending religious services on campus.
  - » **INTERFAITH ACTIVITIES** include serving with students of different worldviews, attending a multi-faith service or celebration, and participating in an interfaith dialogue.
  - » **INFORMAL ENGAGEMENT** involves socializing, dining, studying, and having conversations with peers of other worldviews.
- **CURRICULAR OR FACULTY-LED ENGAGEMENT** refers to how frequently students engage in academic pursuits addressing religion and spirituality.

[3]Putnam. R. (2007). *E pluribus unum:* Diversity and community in the 21st century. *Scandinavian Political Studies, 20(2).* Retrieved from http://www3.interscience.wiley.com/cgi-bin/fulltext/118510920/PDFSTART

"My institution has expanded my mind and way of thinking. We have a close community - I often stay up late and talk about religion with others."
– Undergraduate Student

Dimensions of climate are positively associated with one another, meaning that students with high levels of involvement in one area tend to exhibit high levels of involvement in the other areas. A similar pattern exists at the other end of the engagement spectrum; disengagement from certain curricular and co-curricular activities tends to go hand-in-hand with disengagement from other forms of involvement.

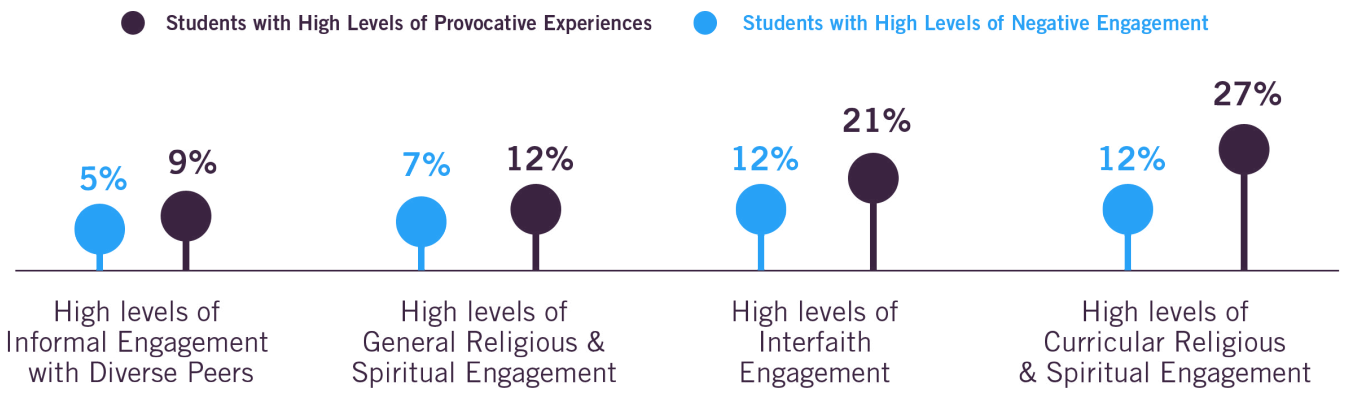
Students who are very engaged in religious and worldview diversity opportunities are more inclined to feel challenged to re-think their assumptions and prejudices than those who are less involved. Additionally, to a somewhat lesser extent, more engaged students are also more likely to have negative encounters.

TIPS & RESOURCES

Given that curricular and interfaith experiences may prove beneficial for student development, educators would do well to consider how to maintain the challenge embedded in both while reducing the overtly destructive exchanges that may arise in these stimulating and thought-provoking contexts.

Figure 5 illustrates the extent to which students with high levels of informal, general religious/spiritual, interfaith, and curricular engagement also experience high levels of negative engagement and provocative experiences. Simply put, these data demonstrate that opportunities for in-depth interaction yield informative occasions to confront one's own stereotypes, but may also open the door to tense, hostile, and unresolved exchanges across difference.

FIGURE 5. NEGATIVE AND PROVOCATIVE EXPERIENCES BY STUDENT ENGAGEMENT



PROVOCATIVE EXPERIENCES

Although provocative experiences may be somewhat uncomfortable for students, these encounters are developmentally significant because they motivate students to confront beliefs and assumptions that have perhaps never been questioned previously. New information from peers or others – even critical perspectives levied against one's own worldview – move students to reflect on closely held beliefs and values.

Overall, students report moderate levels of "provocative" experience, for example:

- 75% report at least "sometimes" having a discussion with someone of another worldview that had a positive influence on perceptions of that worldview
- 67% report at least "sometimes" having class discussions that challenged assumptions about another worldview
- 35% have at least "sometimes" heard critical comments from others that made them question their own worldview
- 34% at least "sometimes" had uncomfortable conversations that moved them to examine their own prejudices

STUDENTS AT PUBLIC INSTITUTIONS HAVE FEWER PROVOCATIVE EXPERIENCES WITH WORLDVIEW DIVERSITY

Relative to those attending nonsectarian, Protestant, and Catholic institutions, students in this sample attending public institutions have fewer provocative experiences with worldview diversity while in college.

For example, just over one-third of students at public institutions "rarely" or "never" have provocative experiences.

FIGURE 6. PERCENT OF STUDENTS REPORTING "RARELY" OR "NEVER" HAVING PROVOCATIVE EXPERIENCES WITH WORLDVIEW DIVERSITY

When asked about the frequency with which class discussions challenged students to rethink their assumptions about another worldview, just over half of students at public institutions reported such discussions took place at least "sometimes," compared to 66% or more at other types of institutions.

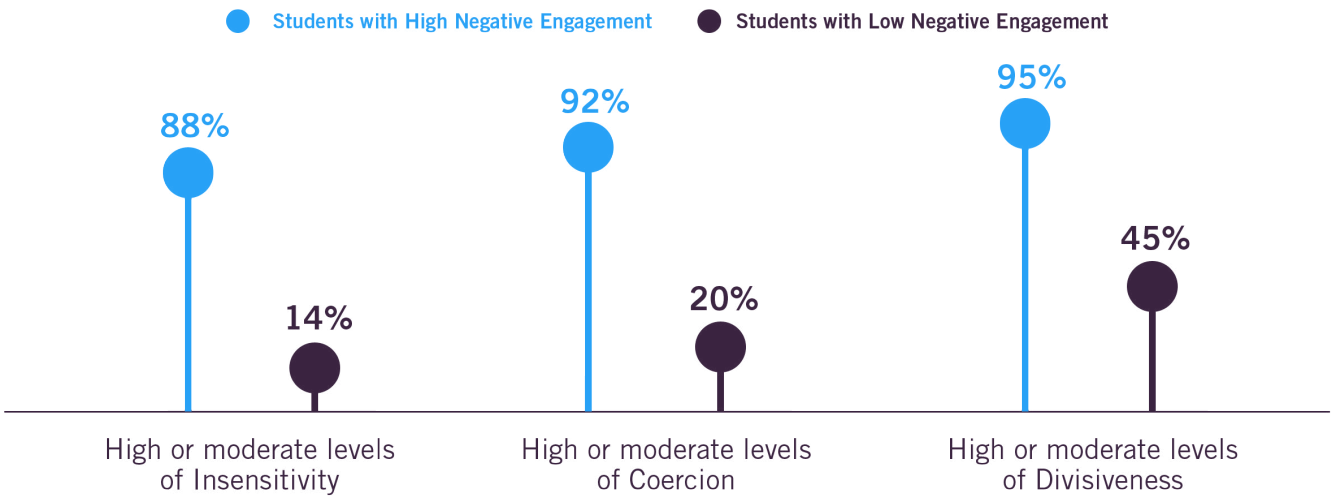
FIGURE 7. PERCENT OF STUDENTS REPORTING "SOMETIMES" HAVING CHALLENGING CLASS DISCUSSIONS

NEGATIVE ENGAGEMENT

Negative interworldview engagement, characterized by tense, hostile, and unresolved interactions with diverse others, is inversely related to a positive outlook on campus climate. As one example, just a quarter of students with "high" levels of negative engagement perceive a "high" level of space for support, whereas over half (59%) of students who rarely experience negative engagement perceive a "high" level of space for support. It appears that students who have hurtful conversations come away doubting whether their campus is a diverse, supportive, and accepting place.

The relationships shown in Figure 8 illustrate what is likely taking place during negative encounters: insensitive comments from others, pressure to change or silence one's beliefs, and isolation and conflict.

FIGURE 8. PERCEPTIONS OF NEGATIVE CAMPUS CLIMATE AMONG STUDENTS WITH HIGH OR LOW LEVELS OF NEGATIVE ENGAGEMENT



Students who regularly have negative interactions with others are more likely to perceive insensitivity, coercion, and divisiveness on campus.

While negative interactions are not a problem for the majority, educators should be mindful that these incidents are more common for certain groups, including:

- Students of minority sexualities and gender identities
- Students with minority worldviews and those who are non-religious
- Multiracial students and students identifying with "other" races/ethnicities
- International students
- Students with more years at the institution

Curtailing the extent of negative interworldview engagement – especially given that these exchanges are more common among populations that are already vulnerable to experiences with prejudice and discrimination – is a crucial endeavor for campus leaders to undertake.

CO-CURRICULAR ENGAGEMENT

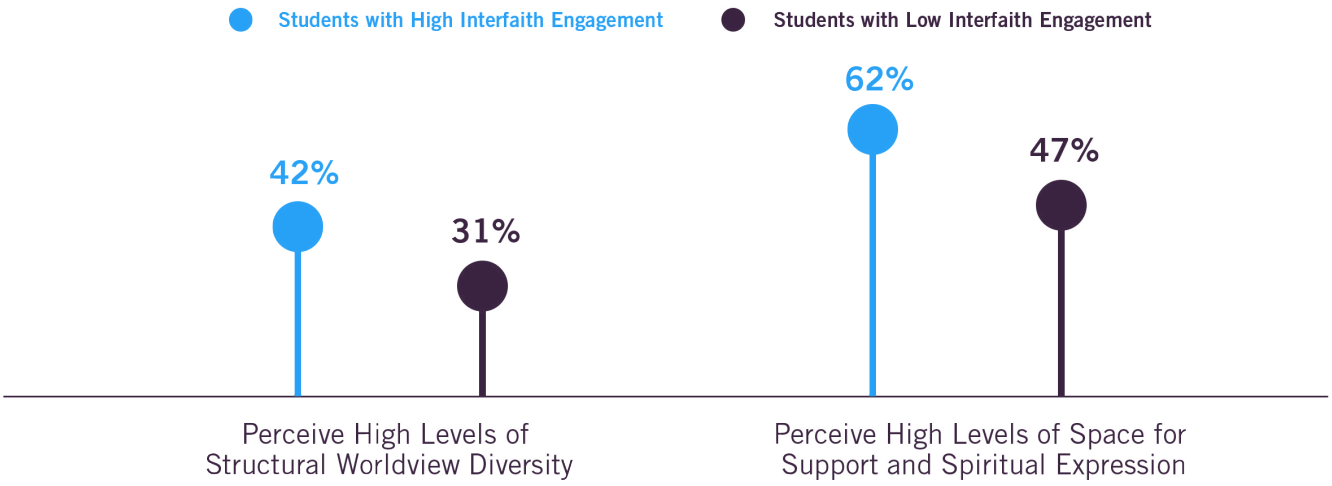
The college years are an ideal time to cultivate and practice interfaith leadership skills through acts of service and engagement with religiously diverse peers. Co-curricular engagement that encourages students to reconsider assumptions and stereotypes are important to preparing students for lives of interfaith leadership.

STUDENTS ENGAGED IN INTERFAITH PROGRAMMING ARE MORE LIKELY TO PERCEIVE THE POSITIVE AND NEGATIVE FEATURES OF CAMPUS

Involvement in interfaith activities influences how students perceive aspects of campus climate. Compared to students with "low" levels of interfaith engagement, students with "high" levels of engagement tend to perceive both the positive and negative aspects of campus climate to a greater degree.

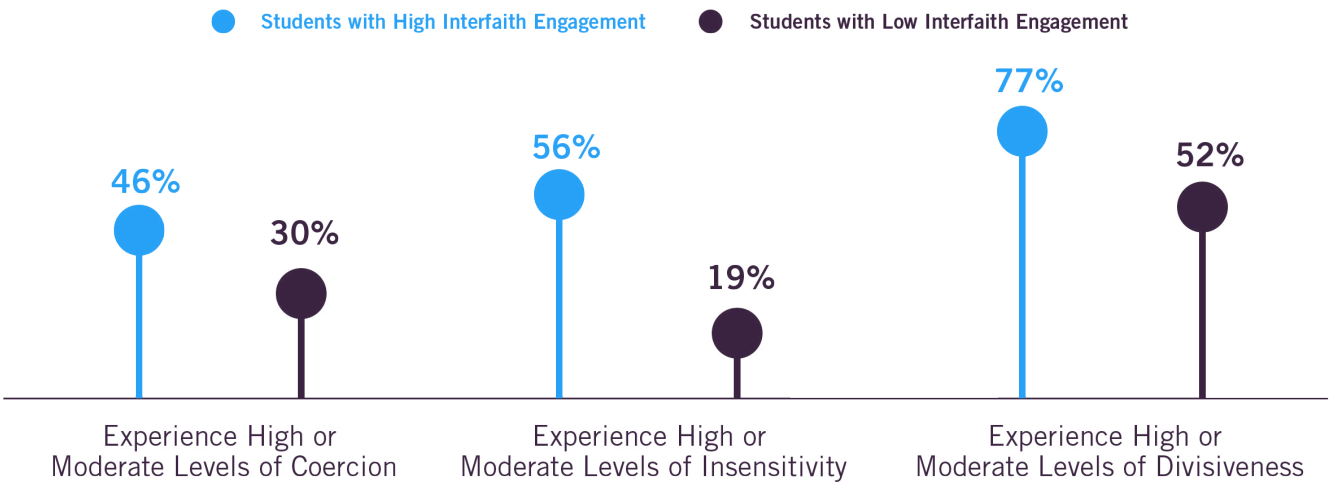
For example, students with high interfaith engagement are more likely to perceive their campus as more diverse. They are also more aware of support structures and opportunities for spiritual expression than those with low interfaith engagement.

FIGURE 9. PERCEPTIONS OF POSITIVE CAMPUS CLIMATE AMONG STUDENTS WITH LOW OR HIGH ENGAGEMENT IN INTERFAITH ACTIVITIES



Furthermore, perceptions of climate and interfaith engagement are mutually reinforcing, which inspires action and enhances awareness. It may be that interfaith engagement encourages students to appreciate promising signs that their campus is diverse, accepting, and supportive without overlooking potential problems such as divisiveness, insensitivity, and coercion. Or it may be that upon witnessing certain aspects of campus climate—both good and bad—some students feel motivated to get involved in interfaith programming.

FIGURE 10. PERCEPTIONS OF NEGATIVE CAMPUS CLIMATE AMONG STUDENTS WITH LOW OR HIGH ENGAGEMENT IN INTERFAITH ACTIVITIES



ENGAGEMENT IN INTERFAITH ACTIVITIES IS LOW AND NOT ALWAYS INCLUSIVE

Only a small segment of the sample, 3%, report being highly engaged in interfaith activities. Worldview minority students, women, and students with more years in college have the highest levels of engagement.

Based on these group differences, efforts by practitioners to engage men and non-religious students in interfaith leadership and service will be important to ensuring the inclusivity of these initiatives. Moreover, engagement of first-year students in interfaith activities will inspire an early investment in the interfaith movement as students are beginning college.

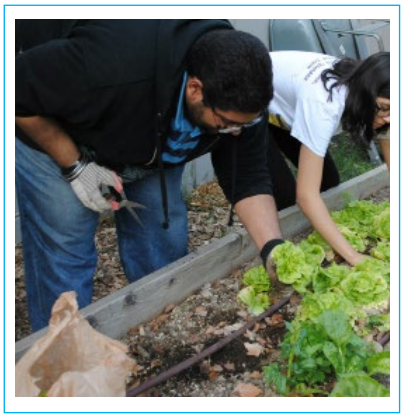
TIPS & RESOURCES

Incorporate modules on engaging worldview diversity and interfaith reflection into existing orientation programming. These programs often already engage other types of diversity such as race, gender, and sexual orientation, and set a standard for how students should approach these issues from the outset of their education.

Following a service project, have orientation leaders facilitate a reflection on the shared values of service across religious and secular traditions. This will help you get started: *Shared Values Facilitation Guide*

Get this and other resources at: *IFYC.org/resources*

OF STUDENTS INVOLVED IN INTERFAITH ACTIVITIES, A MAJORITY HAVE WORKED WITH A DIVERSE GROUP ON A SERVICE PROJECT OR PARTICIPATED IN INTERFAITH ACTION



We know that service projects and interfaith action, defined as people of different religious and non-religious identities working together on issues of common concern, are important co-curricular opportunities for students. Such programs promote positive personal contact with people from different worldviews, which then contribute to positive attitudes towards those religions and communities[4].

In this study, we find that student involvement in interfaith activities varies by the type of opportunity. For instance, more than half of students:

- Work together with students from other worldviews on a service project **(67%)**
- Participate in interfaith action, such as having an impact on critical issues like hunger or poverty **(58%)**
- Participate in/attend a religious service for a worldview other than their own **(53%)**
- Utilize a multi-faith space/chapel on campus **(51%)**

By comparison, some activities have fewer participants:

- Interfaith dialogue **(16%)**
- Worldview debate **(14%)**
- Campus interfaith group **(13%)**

INFORMAL ENGAGEMENT WITH DIVERSE PEERS IS COMMONPLACE ON CAMPUS

Relationships with people from diverse cultural backgrounds and religious traditions drive attitude change and promote compassionate citizenship in a pluralistic society. Very few students have never had these types of encounters. The vast majority of students have done the following, even if only rarely:

- Socialized with someone of a different worldview **(97%)**
- Studied with someone of a different worldview **(93%)**
- Worked on an academic project with someone of a different worldview **(92%)**
- Dined with someone of a different worldview **(91%)**
- Discussed religious or spiritual topics with other students outside of class **(86%)**
- Had conversations with students from diverse worldviews about shared values **(81%)**

[4] Putnam, R. D., & Campbell, D. E. (2010). *American grace: How religion divides and unites us.* New York: Simon & Schuster.

Informal engagement with diverse peers is more typical among students attending nonsectarian institutions relative to students attending other types of institutions. Also, worldview majority students have the least informal engagement with diverse peers, likely because they are present on campus in greater numbers.

It is promising to see that students cross paths with peers of different worldviews. The more educators can do to set a context for this kind of engagement to occur, the better.

CURRICULAR ENGAGEMENT

As religious diversity increases on campuses and religion continues to play a prominent role in public affairs, many institutions are exploring ways to address this in the classroom. However, this type of engagement is extremely limited with only 3% of students reporting high levels of participation in religious and spiritual curricular opportunities. Most students report moderate (45%) or low levels of curricular engagement (52%). Higher levels of curricular religious and spiritual engagement are apparent for:

- Students attending private religious colleges
- Worldview minority students
- African American/Black students
- Students with more years of college

With respect to how students do have curricular experience:

- 49% have read a sacred text as part of class
- 45% have taken a religion course exploring a religious tradition other than their own
- 34% have at least "sometimes" shared their worldviews in class
- 30% have discussed religious diversity in class

> *"Religion professors have yelled at me because I disagree with them. Shouldn't religion classes welcome a diversity of perspectives?"*
> *– Undergraduate Student*

To engage a broader range of students, leaders might consider special efforts to recruit populations that are less inclined to enroll in religious diversity coursework (e.g., worldview majority and non-religious students, most racial/ethnic groups, first-year students) or perhaps establish general requirements for introductory courses in world religions and interfaith studies.

TIPS & RESOURCES

Include religious and spiritual diversity in the campus-wide diversity requirement or an interfaith dimension to the general education curriculum. By tapping into existing resources, you can create a strong platform for your work and anchor interfaith efforts to what matter most for your campus.

The *Pluralism and Worldview Engagement Rubric* may help in setting learning outcomes and objectives.

Get this and other resources at: *IFYC.org/resources*

CONCLUSION

Recent campus climate studies have placed particular emphasis on the extent to which campus structures, policies, and individual attitudes and behaviors foster or inhibit the inclusion of diverse identities, primarily in terms of gender, race/ethnicity, and sexual orientation. Dimensions of religious and worldview diversity have been largely absent from the research literature on campus climate despite the fact that, within the broader global context, conflict stemming from religious diversity is one of the greatest social concerns of the 21st century.

To begin to address this gap, this report outlined key insights and observations on how campus structures and educational practices influence students' abilities to engage across religious and worldview differences. The report opened with an overview of how students experience and engage with religious and spiritual diversity on campus. The document continued by examining how people of diverse worldviews perceive and accept one another on campus. The final section explored what informal, curricular, and co-curricular opportunities students have to engage religious and worldview diversity. As staff, faculty, and administrators navigate the possibilities and complexities that religious and worldview diversity bring to higher education institutions, the findings and recommendations summarized here can serve as a resource.

Part two of this report, which will be released in winter 2014-2015, will focus on what campus experiences and educational practices foster behaviors and attitudes that are essential for interworldview cooperation in a pluralistic society. The findings will, as in part one, explore differences by institution type and demographic characteristics.

Participate In IDEALS

In fall 2015, the research team will launch a longitudinal survey, Interfaith Diversity Experiences and Attitudes Longitudinal Survey (IDEALS). IDEALS will help determine the impact of college on students' interfaith behaviors and pluralism attitudes, as well as identify best strategies for practice.

Costs of participation are entirely covered by the research team, but space is limited. If you are interested in participating, visit **www.ifyc.org/ideals** to register or email **survey@ifyc.org** for more information.

APPENDIX

THE SAMPLE

The findings described in this report are based on data collected from 8,463 students attending 38 U.S. colleges and universities across the 2011-12, 2012-13, and 2013-14 academic years. As shown in Figure 1, the majority of institutions are private, either religious or nonsectarian. Of the private religious institutions in the sample, 12 are Catholic and 15 represent a variety of Protestant denominations. Five of the institutions in the sample have an undergraduate population of at least 13,000 – and all of the public institutions fall into this category.

Turning to the breakdown of the student sample by institutional type (see Table 1), 40.5% of students attend Protestant institutions, 22.5% attend Catholic institutions, and 20.9% attend private nonsectarian institutions. Although only three of the 38 campuses are public, students from the three publics comprise 16.2% of the student sample.

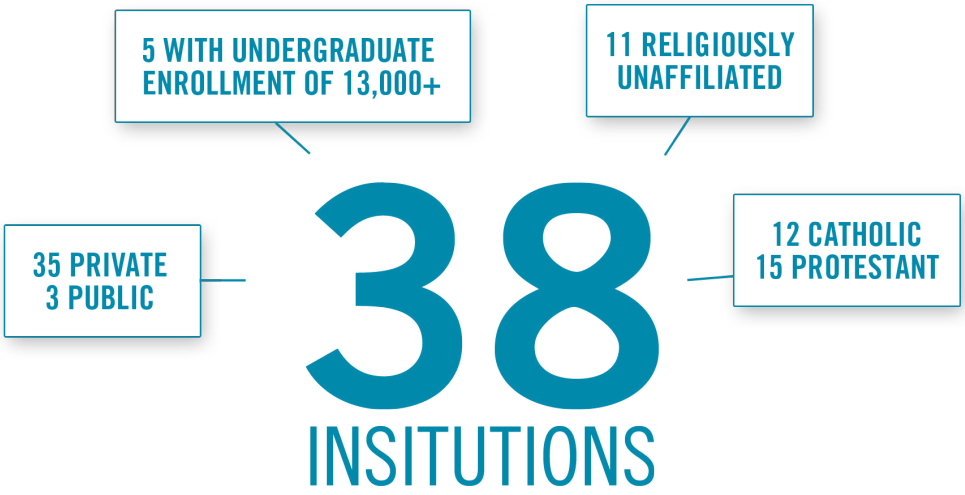


FIGURE 1. INSTITUTIONAL SAMPLE CHARACTERISTICS

TABLE 1. NUMBER AND PERCENT OF STUDENTS BY INSTITUTION TYPE		
Private Religious Institution - Protestant	3424	40.5%
Private Religious Institution - Catholic	1901	22.5%
Private Nonsectarian Institution	1768	20.9%
Public Institution	1370	16.2%
Total	8463	100%

The student sample includes students from every year in college with the exception of first-semester, first-year students.

TABLE 2. YEAR IN COLLEGE		
First	1468	17.5%
Second	2064	24.6%
Third	2213	24.6%
Fourth	2026	26.4%
Fifth or higher	608	7.3%
Total	8379	100%

TABLE 3. ACADEMIC MAJOR		
Social Science & Education	2249	26.8%
Science & Math	2155	25.7%
Arts, Humanities, & Religion	1643	19.6%
Business	879	10.5%
Other Major	755	9.0%
Health Professions	712	8.5%
Total	8393	100%

TABLE 4. GENDER IDENTITY		
Female	5480	65.6%
Male	2827	33.9%
Another Gender Identity	42	0.5%
Total	8349	100%

TABLE 5. SEXUAL ORIENTATION		
Lesbian	66	0.9%
Gay	115	1.5%
Bisexual	313	4.2%
Another sexual orientation	201	2.7%
Heterosexual	6770	90.7%
Total	7465	100%

TABLE 6. RACE/ETHNICITY		
African American/Black	352	4.2%
Asian American/Asian	527	6.3%
Latino/a	407	4.9%
White/Caucasian	6259	74.9%
Another Race/Ethnicity	150	1.8%
Multiracial	663	7.9%
Total	8358	100%

TABLE 7. RELIGION/WORLDVIEW		
Worldview Majority	**4788**	**56.6%**
Christianity, Protestant	2742	32.4%
Christianity, Orthodox	176	2.1%
Christianity, Roman Catholic	1870	22.1%
Worldview Minority	**1014**	**12.0%**
Baha'i Faith	3	0.0%
Buddhism	107	1.3%
Christianity, LDS/Mormon	71	0.8%
Confucianism	1	0.0%
Daoism	12	0.1%
Hinduism	58	0.7%
Islam	123	1.5%
Jainism	3	0.0%
Judaism	201	2.4%
Native American Tradition(s)	8	0.1%
Paganism	49	0.6%
Sikhism	5	0.1%
Spiritual	302	3.6%
Unitarian Universalism	70	0.8%
Zoroastrianism	1	0.0%
Non-religious	**2101**	**24.8%**
Agnosticism	725	8.6%
Atheism	768	9.1%
Non-religious	379	4.5%
None	157	1.9%
Secular Humanism	72	0.9%
Another Worldview	**552**	**6.5%**
Total	**8455**	**100%**