

# ORAP Research Bulletin

Office of Research, Assessment & Planning  
Adelphi University

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## Summary of the Fall 2004 College Students' Beliefs and Values Survey

**The Project:** In 2003, the Higher Education Research Institute (HERI) at UCLA began a multi-year research project to identify and study spiritual development among college students, with a particular focus on how the college experience influences that development.

**The Research:** The HERI questionnaire, the College Students' Beliefs and Values Survey (CSBV), was administered to 120,000 entering freshmen at 240 colleges and universities in late summer and early fall 2004. These items appeared as an addendum to the Cooperative Institutional Research Program (CIRP) annual survey of entering freshmen. A total of 557 Adelphi University freshmen responded to the CSBV survey.

The survey's findings were released in the report *The Spiritual Life of College Students: A National Study of College Students' Search for Meaning and Purpose* at the National Press Club in Washington, D.C. on April 13, 2005. The full HERI report is available online at [http:// www.spirituality.ucla.edu](http://www.spirituality.ucla.edu).

This ORAP Research Bulletin presents highlights from the national study, comparing responses from all baccalaureate institutions and a subset of private nonsectarian institutions to those from Adelphi University.

### **Survey Highlights:** *Individual Items*

For those survey items focused on general "meaning of life" questions or concepts, Adelphi students' responses to the CSBV survey were comparable to those from private nonsectarian institutions and all baccalaureate institutions. Where differences in responses were noted, questions tended to focus on institutionalized religious expression or experience. On these latter items, Adelphi respondents' views (along with those attending other private nonsectarian institutions) tended to reflect lower levels of traditional religiosity and lower levels of social conservatism.

- Regardless of institutional affiliation, approximately three-quarters of all freshmen indicated that they are “searching for meaning/purpose in life” and that they have “discussions about the meaning of life with [their] friends.”
- When asked about their spiritual/religious views, all surveyed freshmen gave comparable responses: Approximately four in ten indicated that they feel “secure,” one in five claims to be “seeking,” and one in four reports being either “conflicted” or “doubting.” Respondents at Adelphi and other private nonsectarian institutions were slightly more likely than their peers overall to describe their spiritual/religious views using the phrase “not interested” (20% at Adelphi and other private nonsectarian institutions, compared to 15% for all baccalaureate institutions).
- A comparable proportion of freshmen at Adelphi (75%) and at all baccalaureate institutions (79%) indicated a belief in God. Respondents at other private nonsectarian institutions were less likely to express this belief (67%).
- More than two-thirds of freshmen from all baccalaureate institutions pray, with 61 percent indicating that they pray “at least weekly.” Slightly smaller percentages of freshmen at Adelphi and other private nonsectarian institutions indicated these same behaviors, with 49-50 percent reporting that they pray “at least weekly.”
- Four in ten freshmen at all baccalaureate institutions considered it very important to “follow religious teachings in [their] everyday life.” The comparable figures for Adelphi and other private nonsectarian institutions were significantly lower, at 29 percent and 32 percent respectively.
- Adelphi freshmen were less likely than their peers to have “had a spiritual experience while in a house of worship” (48% for Adelphi, compared to 57% for other private nonsectarian institutions and 63% for all baccalaureate institutions).

**Survey Highlights:** *Multidimensional Scales*

The authors of *The Spiritual Life of College Students: A National Study of College Students’ Search for Meaning and Purpose* developed multidimensional scales using the items in the CSBV questionnaire. These scales purported to measure (1) spirituality – constructed from the three factors Spirituality, Spiritual Quest, and Equanimity, (2) religiousness – constructed from the five factors Religious Commitment, Religious Engagement, Religious/Social Conservatism, Religious Skepticism, and Religious Struggle, and (3) four other dimensions the authors thought would be related to spirituality and religiousness – Charitable Involvement, Compassionate Self-Concept, Ethic of Caring (also named Social Activism), and Ecumenical/Pluralistic Worldview.

- Spirituality factors: Freshmen at Adelphi scored significantly lower on the Spirituality and Equanimity factors as compared to their peers. Scores on the Spiritual Quest factor were more similar across the three student groups.

- Religiousness factors: Adelphi freshmen scored significantly lower on three of the five factors used to construct the religiousness scale – Religious Commitment, Religious Engagement, and Religious/Social Conservatism – as compared to their peers. Students from other private nonsectarian institutions scored higher on Religious Skepticism than either comparison group. On the factor Religious Struggle, scores were similar across all three student groups.
- Other dimensions: Freshmen at Adelphi responded similarly to their peers on the factors Charitable Involvement, Compassionate Self-Concept, and Ethic of Caring (Social Activism). Students from all baccalaureate institutions scored lower than the comparison groups, and especially lower than students at private nonsectarian institutions, on the factor Ecumenical/Pluralistic Worldview.

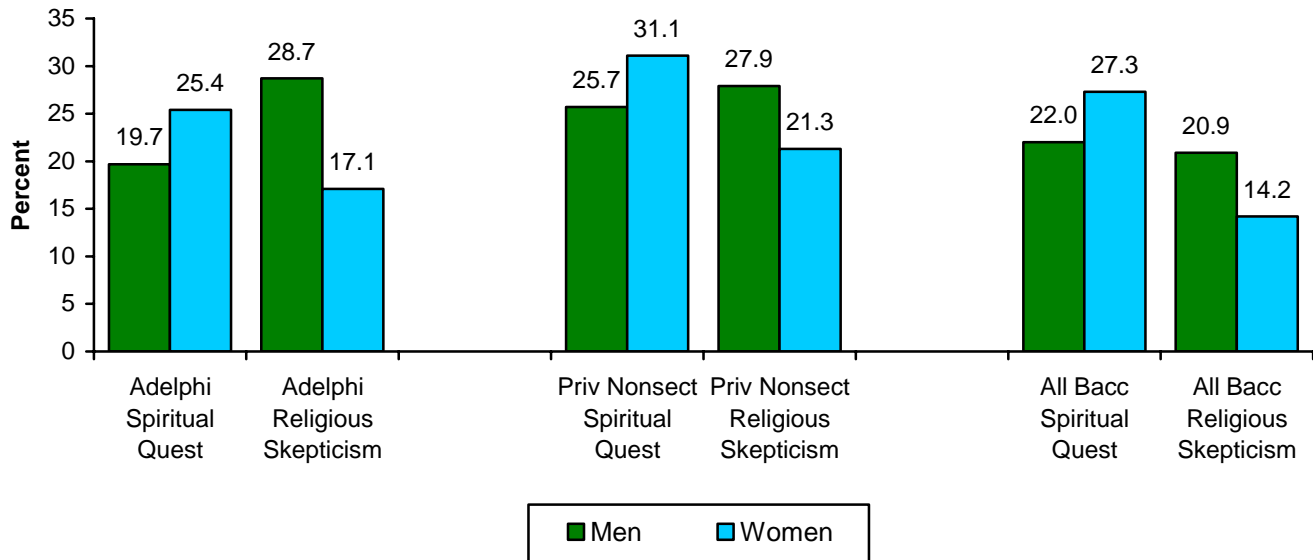
Percentage of students scoring “high” on the following factors:	Adelphi	Private Nonsectarian	All Baccalaureate
<b>Spirituality</b>			
Spirituality	9.8	17.0	17.2
Spiritual Quest	23.8	28.6	25.0
Equanimity	15.1	21.7	22.4
<b>Religiousness</b>			
Religious Commitment	27.3	34.3	37.4
Religious Engagement	9.7	15.0	19.5
Religious/Social Conservatism	7.7	17.6	23.3
Religious Skepticism	20.2	24.4	17.2
Religious Struggle	9.5	11.7	10.8
<b>Other Dimensions</b>			
Charitable Involvement	15.1	18.6	15.4
Compassionate Self-Concept	32.3	30.4	29.8
Ethic of Caring (Social Activism)	14.3	16.9	13.1
Ecumenical/Pluralistic Worldview	16.5	19.8	13.6

**Survey Highlights:** *Gender Differences*

In addition to overall totals, the authors of the CSBV survey provided factor scores by gender.

- Women in all three comparison groups tended to score higher on spirituality and religiousness items than did men. (Men reported higher levels of Religious Skepticism, which was negatively related to other spirituality and religiousness factors.) The discrepancies between men and women were, however, usually smaller for Adelphi than for other private nonsectarian institutions or all baccalaureate institutions.
- The two factors on which men and women at Adelphi University responded in more disparate ways were Spiritual Quest and Religious Skepticism. A higher proportion of women (25%) than men (20%) scored “high” on Spiritual Quest, and a higher proportion of men (29%) than women (17%) scored “high” on Religious Skepticism.

**Students Scoring "High" on Select Spirituality and Religiousness Factors by Gender and Institutional Affiliation**



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