



**For Immediate Release:**

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## **RESEARCHERS FIND COLLEGE STUDENTS' SPIRITUALITY ASSOCIATED WITH ACADEMIC GROWTH AND SATISFACTION WITH COLLEGE**

***Cultivating the Spirit: How College Can Enhance Students' Inner Lives* details the need for Academia to “attend more to students' spiritual development”**

**LOS ANGELES** – Researchers from UCLA's Spirituality in Higher Education project have found that spiritual growth in college students enhances academic outcomes such as scholastic performance, psychological well-being, leadership development and satisfaction with college. *Cultivating the Spirit: How College Can Enhance Students' Inner Lives*, written by Alexander W. Astin, Helen S. Astin and Jennifer A. Lindholm, is the first national longitudinal study of students' spiritual growth. The book's research represents a national study of college students' search for meaning and purpose.

For example, compared to students whose equanimity declines during college, those whose equanimity increases have a 50% better chance of earning at least a B+ average. Similarly, students whose Equanimity increases during college, compared to those whose Equanimity declines, are nearly *three times* more likely to end up being “very satisfied” with their college experience.

“We believe that the findings provide a powerful argument that higher education should attend more to students' spiritual development,” stated co-author Alexander Astin. “Spiritual development is not only an important part of the college experience in its own right, but also promotes other positive outcomes of college.”

The seven-year research study examined how students' religious and spiritual views change during the college years and the role that college plays in facilitating the development of their spiritual and religious qualities. The study surveyed 112,000 freshmen as they enrolled in 236 colleges and universities and then followed up with 14,527 of these students as they completed their junior year at 136 colleges.

Some of the findings include:

- Religious engagement among students declines somewhat during college, but their spirituality shows substantial growth. Students become more caring, more tolerant and more connected with others as well as more actively engaged in a spiritual quest.
- College activities contribute to students' spiritual growth. Some of these--study abroad, interdisciplinary studies, interracial interaction, and service learning--appear to be effective because they expose students to new and diverse people, cultures and ideas.
- Spiritual development is enhanced if students engage in "inner work" through activities such as meditation or self-reflection, or if their professors actively encourage them to explore questions of meaning and purpose. Spiritual development is impeded when students engage in activities that distract them from campus life opportunities--activities such as watching television and playing video games.

The seven-year study detailed in *Cultivating the Spirit* was funded through two generous grants from the John Templeton Foundation. The surveys were conducted as part of the Higher Education Research Institute's Cooperative Institutional Research Program, the nation's oldest and largest study of higher education.

## **Resources**

- Interviews with Alexander Astin, Helen Astin and Jennifer Lindholm can be arranged by contacting Charles Martin at 202.667.0901 or [charles.martin@widmeyer.com](mailto:charles.martin@widmeyer.com)
- Research methodology can be found at <http://spirituality.ucla.edu/background/methodology/>
- Purchase book at [www.josseybass.com/highereducation](http://www.josseybass.com/highereducation) or [Amazon.com](http://Amazon.com)

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## **About Spirituality in Higher Education**

For more information, visit <http://spirituality.ucla.edu/> and [www.cultivatingthespirit.com](http://www.cultivatingthespirit.com).

## **About the UCLA Higher Education Research Institute**

The Higher Education Research Institute is based in the [Graduate School of Education & Information Studies](http://www.gradschool.ucla.edu/) at the University of California, Los Angeles. The Institute serves as an interdisciplinary center for research, evaluation, information, policy studies, and research training in postsecondary education. HERI's research program covers a variety of topics including the outcomes of postsecondary education, leadership development, institutional transformation, faculty performance, federal and state policy, and educational equity. Visiting scholars, faculty, and graduate students have made use of HERI facilities and research resources since its affiliation with UCLA in 1973. For more information, see <http://www.heri.ucla.edu>.

## **About Alexander W. Astin**

Alexander W. Astin is the Allan M. Cartter Professor Emeritus of Higher Education at the University of California, Los Angeles and Founding Director of the Higher Education Research Institute at UCLA. He has served as Director of Research for both the American Council on Education and the National Merit Scholarship Corporation. He is the Founding Director of the Cooperative Institutional Research Program, an ongoing national study of some twelve million students, 300,000 faculty and staff, and 1,600 higher education institutions. Dr. Astin has authored 20 books and some 300 other publications in the field of higher education, and has been a recipient of awards for outstanding research from more than a dozen national associations and professional societies. He has also been elected to membership in the National Academy of Education, has been a fellow at the Center for Advanced Study in the Behavioral Sciences at Stanford University, and is the recipient of eleven honorary degrees.

## **About Helen S. Astin**

Helen S. Astin, a psychologist, is distinguished Professor Emeritus of Higher Education and Senior Scholar of the Higher Education Research Institute at UCLA. She served as the Associate Provost of the College of Letters and Science at UCLA from 1983 to 1987. Author of 11 books and over 100 other publications, Helen Astin has been honored with the Award for Outstanding Contribution to Research and Literature of the National Association of Student Personnel Administrators. She has also received the Distinguished Research Award of Division J of the American Education Research Association and the Howard Bowen Distinguished Career Award from the Association for the Study of Higher Education, and is the recipient of three honorary degrees.

## **About Jennifer A. Lindholm**

Jennifer A. Lindholm is Special Assistant to the Vice Provost for Undergraduate Education. From 2001-2006, she served as Associate Director of the Cooperative Institutional Research Program at UCLA's Higher Education Research Institute and Director of the Institute's Triennial National Faculty Survey. Her scholarship focuses on the structural and cultural dimensions of academic work; the career development, work experiences, and professional behavior of college and university faculty; issues related to institutional change; and undergraduate students' personal development.

## **About the John Templeton Foundation**

The John Templeton Foundation serves as a philanthropic catalyst for discoveries relating to the Big Questions of human purpose and ultimate reality. The Foundation supports research on subjects ranging from complexity, evolution, and infinity to creativity, forgiveness, love, and free will, and encourages civil, informed dialogue among scientists, philosophers, and theologians and between such experts and the public at large, for the purposes of definitional clarity and new insights. Visit [www.templeton.org](http://www.templeton.org) for further information.