

THE UNIVERSITY OF NORTH CAROLINA AT CHAPEL HILL

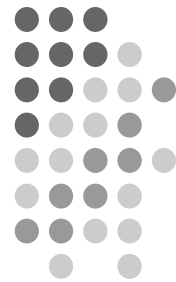
# Difficult Dialogues Initiative Discussion Guide

*Promoting Pluralism and Academic Freedom on Campus*

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“Difficult Dialogues’ are in a sense what we’re engaged in here at the University.  
The issues expressed are core questions of the project of university education.”

—UNC Faculty Member



Judith Welch Wegner  
Co-Principal Investigator

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DIFFICULT DIALOGUES INITIATIVE  
UNC College of Arts & Sciences  
432 Greenlaw Hall, CB 3520  
Chapel Hill, NC 27599

Phone: (919) 962-4029

Fax: (919) 962-3520

E-mail: [dd@email.unc.edu](mailto:dd@email.unc.edu)

[http://difficultdialogues.org/projects/uofnc\\_chapelhill.php](http://difficultdialogues.org/projects/uofnc_chapelhill.php)

## Personal Faith and Conscience:

### How, When, Where and With Whom Can We Speak Our Minds on a Public University Campus?

#### INTRODUCTION

College communities around the country have in recent days experienced a growing pattern of religious intolerance, threatened restraints on free inquiry, and difficulties in sustaining informed political and civil discourse. As university populations have become more diverse, they are confronting new realities in which differing voices struggle to be heard and respected. Political forces have increasingly highlighted “wedge issues” that pit deeply held religious and moral judgments against emerging social and scientific trends. As polarization has increased outside university walls, it has been increasingly difficult to maintain the long tradition of open and respectful inquiry within university settings. New forms and norms for communication seem to fuel tendencies to attack and belittle competing viewpoints rather than to engage in open-minded exploration of ideas.

In 2005, the Ford Foundation announced its “Difficult Dialogues Initiative,” inviting colleges and universities around the country to join it in addressing these concerns. As the Ford Foundation’s President eloquently stated: “Open and honest dialogue is one of the defining characteristics of a vibrant academic community ... [and] is an essential component of a strong civil society on which democracy depends. We must strive to ensure that all members of the community are treated as full and equal partners in the intellectual and institutional life of colleges and universities, especially those who may hold minority political views or religious beliefs. Campus leaders also must create an atmosphere of mutual respect, in which diversity is examined and seen in the context of a broader set of common values. We need to ensure that our discourse not only remains open but civil.”

As one of the campus partners in the Difficult Dialogue Initiative, UNC Chapel Hill is endeavoring to make the practice of dialogue second nature on our campus, and invites colleagues elsewhere to do the same. A group of faculty, students, and student affairs leaders has worked intensively to develop a framework in

which differing viewpoints on these issues can be engaged and explored in a respectful and open-minded way. Our goals are to foster freedom of expression and respectful attention for a wide range of viewpoints, engage in intellectually serious analysis and defense of multiple viewpoints, and explore common ground without ignoring genuine differences.

We invite you to engage with us in deep and candid conversation about *Personal faith and conscience: how, when, where, and with whom can we speak our minds on a public university campus?* This formulation is a powerful one in which each word has a deliberate meaning.

- We hope the conversation will draw forth genuine, *personal* views that will be respectfully treated and openly considered.
- We seek to grapple with the *full range of faith- and conscience-based* beliefs since such beliefs are rooted in personal values that include those held not only by individuals committed to traditional Judeo-Christian viewpoints but also by those who embrace other religious traditions, agnostics, atheists, and those with moral vantages that arise from sources other than traditional religion.
- We emphasize the process of “*speaking our minds*” by which we intend a focus on oral and written communication (rather than the clothes one wears or other sorts of expression).
- We use the word “*we*” very deliberately, with the intent to exploring how all members of our campus community interact with each other—including students interacting with fellow students of similar or different faith traditions, faculty interacting with faculty and students in the classroom and elsewhere, and staff interacting with all.
- Our *discussion* will explore varied approaches to this question, including some that have emerged from our work to date, but also others that will emerge in this Forum that involves a wider range of participants. We will

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deliberate--rather than debate--using safe and fair ground rules to be considered at the outset so that we can all speak, listen, and learn from each other. No votes will be taken. All viewpoints will be welcome.

#### USING THE DISCUSSION GUIDE AND PARTICIPATING IN A DISCUSSION FORUM

This discussion guide is organized in two parts. Part I important background information that bears on the growing tensions relating to personal faith and conscience on college campuses. Part II outlines four approaches that members of college communities—individual students and faculty as well as campus leaders-- might be taken in response to these tensions.

**Background Information.** Part I includes background information designed to help fuel the conversation that follows. Forum participants have found that meaningful discussion and deliberation depends on sharing some baseline information and recognizing their own operating assumptions (as well as others' assumptions they may not share). The background information provided here has been culled from many sources and viewpoints in an effort to grasp the reasons that dialogues about personal faith and conscience can prove so difficult. This material will serve as a good starting point for discussion, since it provides fresh facts and viewpoints that not everyone may have encountered before. The forum moderator will help introduce participants to relevant background information at the start of the discussion so that everyone will feel comfortable, and a short video will be shown in order to help participants engage with the challenging issues raised. Participants in forums that use this discussion guide will also be an important source of ideas and insights. Suggestions for augmenting the appendix will be welcome so that the discussion guide can be improved over time.

**Discussion Not Debate.** This discussion guide and related discussion forums are intended to foster deeper reflection and insight about challenging issues. It uses an approach

developed by the National Issues Forums in cooperation with citizens and communities across the country in connection with difficult questions such as immigration policy, end-of-life decisions, and racial tensions. In these settings it has proved important to clarify the differences between discussion and debate. For example, in the experience of the National Issues Forums:

- Debate involves a deep investment in and defense of the rightness of a particular position, a search for weaknesses in another's position, a focus on "winning," an emphasis on oppositional reasoning, and a treatment of key assumptions as truth.
- Deliberative discussion involves an effort to understand the basis and nature for disagreement, an honest effort to hear and explore insights from many vantages, a focus on understanding rather than "winning," an emphasis on collaboration, and a willingness to re-evaluate key assumptions (including ones own) where warranted.

Participants in discussion forums using this guide will therefore develop additional insights and skills that should add to their repertoire in deciding how best to deal with difficult dialogues in other settings as well as the one at hand.

**Group Agreements and Group Ground Rules.** The forum moderator will start the discussion by share a set of proposed group process guidelines that have been found useful in other contexts when discussion address challenging topics. Participants will be asked whether they find these guidelines acceptable and whether there are other guidelines they'd propose to help shape the discussion they are about to undertake. Here are some of the possible guidelines:

- Everyone is encouraged to participate.
- The purpose is to have an open dialogue rather than a debate.
- Every individual will make an effort not to

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dominate the discussion, and will try to self-monitor the duration of his or her comments.

- An atmosphere of respectful listening is desired. It is fine for participants to choose to be silent, but it is not okay for anyone to feel they are silenced.
- No one is ever expected to disclose information that is private or personal in the forum, but they may choose to do so if they wish.
- All comments are to be respected and welcomed.
- The responsibility for doing the work of deliberative discussion belongs to the group.

**PART I: BACKGROUND INFORMATION.** What do we know about recent experiences on college campuses with issues of personal faith and conscience? What factors may contribute to the views of students, faculty, and members of the public about the role that personal faith and conscience should play in campus life?

#### Campus Experiences.

Recurring Tensions. Evidence of tensions relating to personal faith and conscience and academic inquiry may be found at numerous universities around the country. The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill is merely one case in point.

- In 2002 the University chose *Approaching the Qur'an: The Early Revelations* by Michael Sells as its summer reading selection. The decision was roundly criticized by many legislators and members of the public. Subsequently the American Family Association's Center for Law and Policy brought suit on behalf of three students, an alumnus and a state citizen, claiming that their First Amendment rights have been violated. The federal district court subsequently concluded that the choice was permissible since it did not advance or endorse religion and did not compel

students to engage in a "religious exercise."

- In 2003 a three-member Christian fraternity lost its status as an officially recognized student organization when it refused to sign the University's standard non-discrimination policy. The fraternity's law suit in federal court alleging that the University had unlawfully abridged the students' First Amendment rights to freedom of association, freedom of speech, and free exercise of religion was ultimately dismissed as moot.
- In spring 2004 an instructor was disciplined by her department for publicly accusing a student of hate speech after he expressed in her class his objection to homosexuality based on his religious beliefs.
- In 2005-2006, the campus newspaper ran a student column that cast Arabs in a disparaging light as well as a cartoon featuring a depiction of the Prophet Mohammed. Later a recent graduate drove his SUV into a popular campus gathering spot, injuring nine people and explaining that he had acted to demonstrate his commitment to Islam and to protest American foreign policy. Some students protested, asserting that his action should be labeled "terrorist" while others held a vigil in sympathy for Muslim students and those who had been hurt.
- In the last several years, the University established programs in Jewish, Islamic, and Christian studies. In 2005 and 2006, many liberal arts faculty protested discussions with a potential donor who was considering a proposal for funding of an initiative in Western Cultures. The donor had ties with other groups with conservative views that had publicly ridiculed faculty members who taught courses that emphasized diversity themes. The University subsequently withdrew the proposal in order to permit additional faculty review.

Hate Crime. UNC Chapel Hill has not been alone

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in facing challenges like these. Hate crime remains a problem.

- The United States Federal Bureau of Investigation indicated that in 2004 had received reports of 7649 hate crime incidents (of these, 52.9% reflected racial bias, 18.0% religious bias, 15.8% bias against sexual orientation, and 12.7% bias against ethnicity or national origin). Of the 1,374 incidents involving religious bias, anti-Jewish incidents predominated (954 incidents), with anti-Islamic incidents ranking second (156). Other incidents involved anti-Catholic sentiment (57), anti-Protestant sentiment (38), and anti-other-religion (128). Of the 898 hate crimes reported on school or college campuses, 492 related to race, 184 to religion, 150 to sexual orientation, 68 to national origin, 2 to disability and 2 to multiple biases.
- In April 2006, the United States Commission on Civil Rights held hearings and issued a statement on growing anti-Semitism. The Commission found that on some campuses, "students have alleged patterns of threatening or intimidating behavior, derogatory remarks, vandalism, and use of Swastikas and other symbols of hatred or bigotry....On many campuses, anti-Israeli or anti-Zionist propaganda has been disseminated that includes traditional anti-Semitic elements, including age-old anti-Jewish stereotypes and defamation. This has included, for example, anti-Israel literature that perpetuates the medieval anti-Semitic blood libel of Jews slaughtering children for ritual purpose, as well as anti-Zionist propaganda that exploits ancient stereotypes of Jews as greedy, aggressive, overly powerful, or conspiratorial."

**Students.** Students on college campuses are increasingly diverse even in states where residents have a significant preference in admissions. Economic shifts have resulted in greater mobility of families from other states and other countries so that residency no longer means

life-long ties to a particular state. In contrast to their parents' generation, college students today are more likely to encounter others with viewpoints rooted in cultures, faiths, and moral perspectives that differ from those at home.

#### Student Religious Affiliations, Attitudes and Implications

- Student religious preferences may vary from one campus to another. In 2005 UNC Chapel Hill's entering students reported affiliation with the following religions: Baptist (19.3%), Methodist (13.6%), Roman Catholic (13.1%), Presbyterian (9.6%), and "Other Christian" (9.7%). Fewer than 5% reported that they were Jewish (2.5%), Hindu (1.3%) or Islamic (.9%), while 16.9% reported no religious affiliation. In contrast, entering undergraduates at public flagship universities a much more heterogeneous mix, with more than double the percentage of Roman Catholics and Jewish students (27.5% and 5.9% respectively), far fewer Baptists, Methodists, and Presbyterians (5.2%, 5.3%, and 5.2% respectively), and even more students reporting no religious affiliation (22.6%).
- Patterns of religious preference correspond in interesting ways with student experiences and viewpoints. When compared to other flagship public universities, students entering UNC-Chapel Hill are more likely to have attended religious services, discussed religion, and prayed or meditated on a weekly basis during high school. They are also much more likely to regard "integrating spirituality into my life" as a high priority, and to believe that their religious beliefs will be strengthened during college. They are somewhat more socially conservative, and are more inclined to believe that dissent is an important part of the political process.
- A national study by UCLA researchers (with the support of the John Templeton Foundation) has provided other important insights about college students' beliefs. Nearly 8 in 10 first-year college students in

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the sample reported that they believed in God, with more than half perceiving God as "love" or as the "creator" and about half experiencing God as a "protector." Many reported deriving strength, support and comfort from their beliefs. Four in ten students reported that they felt "secure" in their beliefs, with one in four saying that they were "seeking," one in four reporting being "conflicted" or "doubting," and one in seven saying they were "not interested." Forty-seven percent reported that they "seek out opportunities to help [themselves] grow spirituality."

- The UCLA researchers also analyzed students with reference to "spirituality," "religiousness" (religious commitment, engagement, religious/social conservatism, religious skepticism, and religious struggle), and four other factors (charitable involvement, compassionate self-concept, ethic of caring, and ecumenical worldview). Using these variables, they found that religious commitment and engagement were closely correlated with religious/social conservatism and negatively correlated with religious skepticism. Those showing high levels of religious engagement tended to be conservative politically (self-identified conservatives outnumbered liberals by 3 to 1). Roughly equal proportions of politically conservative and liberal students earned high scores on either charitable involvement or compassionate self-concept, while liberals "substantially outnumber conservatives among those with high scores on ethic of caring (2 to 1) and ecumenical worldview (3 to 1).
- The UCLA research includes longitudinal studies of a much smaller set of college juniors. The juniors reported a decline in attendance at religious services (52% had reported attending religious services frequently the year before entering college, but only 29% reported attending frequently in their junior year). There was a significant reduction in self-perceived "religiousness" and "spirituality" (only 9% said that their religiousness was much stronger and only

13% said their spirituality was much stronger), yet there was some growth in those who said it was "very important" to integrate spirituality into their lives, develop a meaningful philosophy of life, and help others in difficulty. Students who spend more time partying show larger-than-average declines in attendance at religious services during the first three years of college. By junior year, it appeared that levels of religious commitment tracked student choices of major at least to some degree. Those who chose to major in the fine arts, education and humanities had the highest levels of religious commitment, with the lowest levels of religious commitment reported by those in biological sciences, history, political science and sociology. Only about 20% of juniors were "highly religious" while a similar proportion were found to have low levels of religious engagement (defined as a pattern of behavior that includes such things as attending religious services, reading sacred texts, attending religious/spiritual workshops or retreats, and joining a religious organization on campus).

Teenagers. To understand college student viewpoints and experiences more deeply, it is important to consider the rising generation of teenagers. In a recent book, *Soul Searching: The Religious and Spiritual Lives of American Teenagers*, (Oxford University Press, 2005), UNC Professor Christian Smith and graduate student Melinda Lundquist Denton analyzed data and interviews of teenagers aged 13-17 as part the National Survey of Youth and Religion. They found:

- Difficulty articulating beliefs: Very few of either devout or non-religious teens interviewed could explain the tenets of their religion or what it means. The researchers concluded that this difficult did not stem from communications difficulties, but rather from the fact that "our interview was the first time that any adult had ever asked them what they believed and how it mattered in their life."
- Religious outlook: The interviews suggested

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that many teens (whatever their religious affiliation) shared an outlook the researchers dubbed “Moralistic Therapeutic Deism” that embraced five major principles: (1) A God exists who created and orders the world and watches over human life on earth but from a distance; (2) God wants people to be good, nice, and fair to each other, as taught in the Bible and by most world religions; (3) The central goal of life is to be happy and to feel good about oneself; (4) God does not need to be particularly involved in one’s life except when God is needed to resolve a problem; and (5) Good people go to heaven when they die. Moral relativism was also common among teenagers interviewed.

- Conversations in school: In school, 65% of religious US teens express their religious faith only some or a little. 12% of the teens express their faith a lot and 23% do not express their faith at all. The researchers also found that school is not viewed as being a hostile place to religious teenagers—fewer than 20% of teenagers reported that schools look down on teens who are openly religious.
- Views of others: Teenagers tend to see religion as not a particularly contested or conflictive aspect of their lives, but instead something that simply *is*, that is just not the kind of thing worth getting worked up about one way or the other. In confronting issues of faith difference, most teens take an inclusive religious pluralism stance on the matter of religious truth claims—60% of all respondents state that many religions may be true. The researchers noted that “nearly all U.S. teens seem to have adopted a posture of civility and a careful and ambiguous inclusiveness when discussing religion with possible ‘others,’ especially in public,” perhaps because of America’s strong tradition of individualism.

Intellectual Development in College. Students make important strides in intellectual development while in college, particularly when it comes to critical thinking. Often, however,

neither they nor their faculty have clear frameworks for recognizing the challenges that such development creates.

- Benjamin Bloom, of the University of Chicago, is widely regarded as among the foremost theorists of students’ intellectual development. He developed a “taxonomy” of educational objectives in the “cognitive domain” including: knowledge (the kind of intellectual capability that can be created even by rote memorization); comprehension (the ability to paraphrase, interpret and explain); application (the capacity to transfer ideas learned in one situation to use in another); analysis (the capacity to distinguish between subsidiary ideas that are part of a larger whole); synthesis (the capacity to bring disparate ideas together into a larger whole); and evaluation (the capacity to test or judge ideas against a set of larger standards).
- Bloom also considered the “affective” domain which concerns the way that people deal with emotional dimensions including feelings, values, appreciation, enthusiasms, motivations and attitudes. His five major elements in this taxonomy include: receiving phenomena (awareness, willingness to hear and attend to others with respect), responding to phenomena (responding to and questioning new ideals and concepts in order to understand them); valuing (attaching worth to particular values or phenomena, developing and acting on more complex commitments); organization (creating priorities from contrasting or conflicting values); and internalizing values (developing a value system that shapes personal behavior in a cohesive way, and acting in self-reliant ways that evidences commitment to ethical practice, consideration of others, weighing of new evidence). Development within the affective domain is often not addressed explicitly in college classrooms, and emotion in classrooms is often regarded as out of place.

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#### The Nature of Knowledge and Authority, and the Stages of Faith Development

- During college, students must grapple with the nature of knowledge and how different sorts and sources of knowledge are valued in the context of intellectual reasoning. One of the most widely known theories of intellectual and moral development in college students was developed by William Perry, based on interviews conducted among male students attending Harvard College some years ago. Perry identified several stages of development. The first three stages involve "dualism," a period in which a learner assumes that all questions have or can have "right" answers derived from external authorities; the absence of right answers is attributed to authority figures who lack relevant knowledge or to knowledge that has yet to be discovered. The next two stages involve "relativism," which treats knowledge as non-absolute in most cases, treats dominant knowledge as pertinent but not the absolute truth, sees most things as uncertain, finds no real basis for deciding absolute right and wrong, treats authorities as just individuals with opinions, and regards all ideas as having equal value before ultimately recognizing that learners must take responsibility for using and evaluating non-absolute knowledge in complicated settings. Perry's final three stages involve "commitment" and move beyond cognitive abilities to make judgments regarding one's values and identity, act on and balance associated commitments and responsibilities to self and others. Although Perry's work has been criticized a non-diverse population and as treating development as a linear process when it more likely involves cycles, his approach remains a standard framework for thinking about student development during the college years and beyond.
- Dr. James Fowler, of Emory University, developed a framework for thinking about the stages through which approaches to faith and spirituality evolve across the lifespan (in contrast to the content of faith- based or

spiritual beliefs). His most well-known work is *Stages of Faith: The Psychology of Human Development and the Quest for Meaning* (HarperCollins, 1981). In Fowler's view "faith" encompasses an individual's beliefs about their relationship with the universal, something that evolves throughout one's life. Fowler regarded faith as an ongoing activity (rather than something one "has"), reflecting the interplay of "conversion" (major changes in one's values or core beliefs) and "development" (a gradual maturation process). According to Fowler, there are six major stages in faith development, which foster insight of one's development, but should not used to evaluate or judge. College students may most commonly cluster in one of the three middle stages of Fowler's framework. Stage 2 is the "mythical-literal" stage in which faith has a more definite cognitive component drawn from the values of one's family or from exposure to other influences such as those of teachers, peers, and the media. In Stage 2, individuals tend to associate with those who are like them and be critical of those who differ, believe in "justice" insofar as the good are rewarded and the bad punished, often give symbols very literal meanings and engage in little self-reflection. Stage 3 is the "synthetic-conventional" stage in which individuals attempt to develop an integrated identity, based on values or beliefs typically derived from significant others without much internal examination. Those at stage 3 may have an "ideology" that involves a cluster of beliefs and values but may not be aware of it. They may also have internalized expectations in ways that make it difficult for them to manage the different roles and contexts in which they must function, and may be uncomfortable with conflict and controversy. Fowler describes stage 4 as the "individuate-reflective" stage, one that often involves critical assessment of prior experiences, values and beliefs. In stage 4, individuals move toward a grounding within an authentic self rather than relying most heavily on external expectations and roles, while also making explicit personal judgments

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about commitments based on deliberate examination of their core beliefs. Later stages are generally not reached until mid-life.

Values and Political Vantages. Observers of the American scene have in recent years noted a growing nexus between some dimensions of religious belief, political and policy positions. A recent study by the Harvard Institute of Politics conducted phone interviews of a national sampling of college students in March 2006 provides some important insights about the relationship between these important dimensions of students' lives.

- Differences in political viewpoint correlated with college students' views on how religion should play out in the public eye. Among Republican respondents, more than half wanted to hear candidates speak about their religious views, compared to about 1/5 of Democratic respondents. Republican respondents also wanted religious values to play a more important role in government. College students believed that a larger range of issues had "moral" dimensions compared to those generally highlighted as raising questions "values" in recent political discourse, referencing not only abortion, gay marriage and stem-cell research, but also the government's response to Hurricane Katrina, support for education, environmental policy, health care, Iraq and affirmative action (cited by between about a quarter and a half of both Republican and Democrat college student respondents in each case).

#### Faculty

##### Faculty Members' Personal Beliefs about Religion, Spirituality and Their Role on College Campuses

- Recent research on spirituality and the professoriate found that spirituality and religion plays a part in many faculty members' lives. Of those responding to a UCLA survey funded by the John Templeton Foundation, 81% described themselves as "spiritual," while 66% regarded themselves as "religious" to some or a greater extent

(29% and 37% respectively). When asked to agree or disagree with the statement "the spiritual dimension of faculty members' lives has no place in the academy," 57% of all respondents disagreed (including 49% of respondents from public universities). Academic disciplines seemed to shape or reflect respondents' viewpoints, with the highest disagreement reported by those in the health sciences, education, and business, and the lowest levels in social sciences, physical sciences, and biological sciences.

- Data from the 2004-05 survey of American college faculty found a substantial consensus in views regarding the goals of undergraduate education. Substantial proportions of faculty respondents rating the following goals as "very important" or "essential: developing student's critical thinking abilities (99%), helping students master knowledge in a discipline (94%), and promoting students' ability to write effectively (87%). For many faculty other goals included: enhancing students' self-understanding (60%), instilling a basic appreciation for the liberal arts (56%), the development of students' moral character (59%) and helping students develop personal values (53%). Only 30% agreed that "colleges should be concerned with facilitating students' spiritual development." Faculty members at public universities and colleges showed the lowest level of agreement with this statement (18%).
- Perspectives on educational goals were also framed against a general concern that many students were poorly prepared academically (while 67% of faculty at private universities agreed "somewhat" or "strongly" that "most students are well-prepared academically, only 37% of public university faculty shared that view). In light of the priority purposes of education and the concerns for student academic preparedness noted above, it is perhaps not surprising that emphasis on religion and spirituality is relatively rare in many classrooms.

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Liberal Education and the Curriculum. Faculty viewpoints on the role of religion and spirituality within the college classroom can also be discerned through academic decisions relating to nature of liberal education and the characteristics of the undergraduate curriculum.

- The American Association of Colleges and Universities defines “liberal education” expressed the goals of a liberal education in the following terms: “A truly liberal education is one that prepares us to live responsible, productive, and creative lives in a dramatically changing world. It is an education that fosters a well-grounded intellectual resilience, a disposition toward lifelong learning, and an acceptance of responsibility for the ethical consequences of our ideas and actions.” Many faculty, particularly those in Arts and Sciences disciplines, would agree with statements such as this.
- Colleges and universities adopt and periodically review general education requirements governing undergraduate study as a means of providing students with a shared foundation to guide their overall intellectual development. General education requirements often mandate that students take courses emphasizing moral reasoning, philosophy, history, cultural diversity, public policy, international affairs, psychology, sociology, literature, art or music and many other subjects in order to provide students with exposure to varied ways of thinking and a wide range of ideas. Many such courses touch at some point on the nature and role of faith and religion in the contexts in connection with the topics under consideration.
- Colleges and university curricula are also evolving rapidly. Many schools have incorporated “perspectives” or “diversity” requirements as part of their general education requirements to aid students in preparing for a complex world marked by interchange with those raised in cultures that vary in language, history, political and religious beliefs. Other courses bring to light

the many dimensions of personal identity and historic injustice, for example by examining the hidden history of people of color and women and the implications of sexual orientation. Biological sciences rely heavily on modern understandings of natural selection and evolution, and new scientific discoveries raise important questions regarding the role of stem-cell research and the nature of the human genome. Expansion of the traditional “canon” to include topics outside students’ prior experience with Western culture, local communities, and religious tenets may prove unsettling to those with deeply held traditional values and cultural views.

Disciplinary Frameworks. Faculty perspectives must also be understood in a broader historical and sociological context. In a working paper, Professor Mark Edwards (former President of St. Olaf College and currently associate dean of Harvard Divinity School, and author of a new book entitled *Religion on Our Campuses*) offers crucial insights.

- Historical trends have shaped the development of colleges and universities in the last 150 years. In the first half of the nineteenth century natural sciences were closely associated with Christian theology. In time the sciences were seen to provide evidence of divine design in the guise of rational thought and inquiry and the study of science was viewed as a means of praising God. By mid-century, scientists were able to discern causal explanations that made it possible to offer explanations of phenomena other than by reference to supernatural intervention. What constituted an explanation changed and scientists turned to scientific inquiry as the best means of explaining natural phenomena rather than simply invoking God. Other disciplines followed suit, as the humanities departed from moral philosophy and social sciences claimed their own identity.
- By the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, research universities began to develop, with instructors drawn from those who had sophisticated

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substantive expertise in specialized fields. As belief in the scientific method grew and the extent of knowledge burgeoned, only those with "disciplined" knowledge had the necessary legitimacy to claim a place in the academy. Such disciplined expertise was provided through advanced education at top research universities which provided intensive mentoring, and required advanced levels of scholarly performance which in time resulted in the award of a Ph.D. Professional legitimacy for scholars awarded teaching positions at universities was increasingly tested by scholarly writing that was reviewed by national and international peers with similarly advanced expertise.

- In Edwards' view, faculty members are now inculcated by intensive experience that can be described as "professional formation," just as is true for those who undergo "formation" to profess their beliefs as members of the clergy. As undergraduates, they choose a major and increasingly assimilate the knowledge, values, and intellectual approaches that characterize the academic discipline in question. They go on to graduate work and spend more years within a specialized academic community that deepens and tests such expert knowledge and ways of knowing through comprehensive examinations and research on the Ph.D. They are evaluated and selected for academic appointments through a process that emphasizes their disciplinary focus. They then pass on their ways of knowing to their own students, and gain professional acclaim based upon their scholarly contributions to their chosen academic field.
- Edwards argues that there may be room to reintroduce religious perspectives within the academy in certain circumscribed respects. He contends that religious views may be most appropriate with regard to moral claims, claims regarding human nature, and claims regarding maximally comprehensive views of reality (certain kinds of "metaphysical" claims). In his view, it may be appropriate

for certain religious insights to be offered in as an autobiographical explanation of "where I'm coming from," and suggests that the introduction of religious views in other settings should be undertaken with caution, and only in instances in which they contribute to the conversation and deepen understanding.

Academic Freedom. "Academic freedom," like academic disciplines, plays a central role in faculty members' understandings of the nature of American higher education. Academic freedom rests on core beliefs that the mission of higher education is to seek out and disseminate truth (however unpopular or inconvenient) and that the best way to accomplish this mission is to express ideas freely and subject them and to test them openly without fear of reprisal. It rests on a shared commitment to collegial interchange and a responsibility to maintain an open mind while testing one's own ideas as well as the ideas of others. Despite these core assumptions, the meaning and implications of the phrase and are surprisingly complex.

- The courts have recognized that academic institutions possess *institutional academic freedom* that is necessary: "to provide that atmosphere which is most conducive to speculation, experiment, and creation. It is an atmosphere in which there prevail "the four essential freedoms" of a university--to determine for itself on academic grounds who may teach, what may be taught, how it shall be taught, and who may be admitted to study." (*Sweezy v. New Hampshire*, 354 U.S. 234, 263 (1957) (Frankfurter, J, concurring))
- Academic freedom for *individual faculty members* has been described by the Association of American University Professors in the following terms: "Teachers are entitled to full freedom in research and in the publication of the results, subject to the adequate performance of their other academic duties. . . [1] Teachers are entitled to freedom in the classroom in discussing

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their subject, but they should be careful not to introduce into their teaching controversial matter that has no relation to their subject. . .

[2] College and university teachers are citizens, members of a learned profession, and officers of an educational institution. When they speak or write as citizens, they should be free from institutional censorship or discipline, but their special position in the community imposes special obligations. As scholars and educational officers, they should remember that the public may judge their profession and their institution by their utterances. Hence they should at all times be accurate, should exercise appropriate restraint, should show respect for the opinions of others, and should make every effort to indicate that they are not speaking for the institution.

- The *academic freedom of students* has likewise been recognized. In a joint statement issued in 1967, the Association of American University Professors, the United States National Student Association and other professional groups stated: "Freedom to teach and freedom to learn are inseparable facets of academic freedom. The freedom to learn depends upon appropriate opportunities and conditions in the classroom, on the campus, and in the larger community. Students should exercise their freedom with responsibility.... The professor in the classroom and in conference should encourage free discussion, inquiry, and expression. Student performance should be evaluated solely on an academic basis, not on opinions or conduct in matters unrelated to academic standards. 1. Protection of Freedom of Expression. Students should be free to take reasoned exception to the data or views offered in any course of study and to reserve judgment about matters of opinion, but they are responsible for learning the content of any course of study for which they are enrolled. 2. Protection Against Improper Academic Evaluation. Students should have protection through orderly procedures against prejudiced or capricious academic evaluation. At the same time, they are responsible for maintaining

standards of academic performance established for each course in which they are enrolled.

- The application of these principles is often complicated, in part because of the complexity of underlying legal analysis and because of the need to apply applicable policies to nuanced facts. For example, the academic freedom of individual faculty members and students is to some extent rooted in the First Amendment (which protects against abuse of free speech rights by government entities such as public universities but not to action by private parties). The statements of the Association of American University Professors (an organization founded in the wake of events at Stanford University early in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, when Mrs. Leland Stanford caused the dismissal of a noted economics professor Edward Lovejoy with whose views she disagreed) have been widely endorsed by academic organizations. They reflect a "professional standard" that is regarded as a statement of good practice within the academy, and thus has policy significance (but not necessarily legal significance) even when the First Amendment might not have application. At the same time, however, most colleges and universities around the country have adopted policies and tenure regulations that incorporate the AAUP standard and in turn give rise to contractual rights and rights to due process hearings by those protected under such policies.
- Longstanding expectations about university autonomy and academic freedom have been challenged in recent years on a number of fronts. For example, David Horowitz and others have argued that legislation called the "Academic Bill of Rights" should be adopted by state legislatures in order to force universities to weigh political ideology as part of their hiring practices and to provide additional legal protection to students who fear that they may receive poor grades based on ideological views. Several organizations such as Students for Academic Freedom and Campus Watch

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have also established websites that encourage students to report or “blacklist” their professors based on listed criteria. An initiative by a UCLA alumnus to pay students to record and submit details of classroom conversations was withdrawn in the face of legal challenge.

- There are also instances in which faculty members have also been disciplined or dismissed notwithstanding the protections of academic freedom. For example, a professor at the University of Colorado who made what many regard as irresponsible comments about the 9/11 terrorist attacks was subsequently found by an academic panel to have engaged in research misconduct. Universities are also facing calls for greater public accountability from government leaders including the United States Department of Education and Congress. While academic institutions have traditionally been accorded great autonomy in setting academic standards and making operational decisions, growing concern to curb college costs and increase student learning and graduate rates may put these traditions to the test.

**The World beyond the Campus.** There can be little doubt that forces beyond campus walls influence the realities of American college campuses. These realities are therefore worth considering.

#### Americans' Personal Faiths

- The United States is a highly religious nation. A Gallup Poll conducted in December 2005 reported that 79% of American respondents said they were convinced that God exists, while an additional 12% said that they think God probably exists but have a little doubt. Regional differences were apparent, with 88% of Southerners expressing certainty about the existence of God, compared to 70% of Easterners, 71% of Westerners, and 77% of respondents from the Midwest. Those who attended church on a weekly basis were particularly likely to be certain God

exists (94%) but 61% of those who seldom or never attended expressed similar sentiments. In contrast, however, a CBS News Poll conducted in April 2006, asked respondents whether they believed that traditional religions could answer all or most of today's problems or whether they were largely old-fashioned and out of date. Just over half (54%) of respondents said that traditional religions can answer such problems, while 32% said such religions are old-fashioned and 14% said they didn't know or didn't answer. The same poll also asked respondents how important religious was to their daily lives, and found that 26% of respondents regarded it as extremely important, 33% as very important, 26% as somewhat important, 13% as not at all important, with 2% saying they didn't know or giving no answer.

- The United States Census does not collect information on religious affiliation so denominational information must be found by other means. The World Fact Book 2005 indicates that the American population is divided as follows: Protestant 52%, Roman Catholic 24%, Mormon 2%, Jewish 1%, Muslim 1%, other 10%, none 10% (2002 est.). The American Religious Identification Survey conducted using phone surveys by the researchers affiliated with the City University of New York in 2001 found that the proportion of those self-identifying as Christian had declined from 86.2% in 1990 to 76.5% in 2001. In 2001, 1.3% self-identified as Jewish, .5% as Muslim, .5% as Buddhist, .3% as Unitarian/Universalist, and .4% as Hindu. Others self-identified as atheists (9.4%), agnostic (0.5%) or refused to respond (5.4%). More nuanced polls have recently been conducted of those who are affiliated with Christian faiths. A poll conducted for National Public Radio in July 2006 of likely voters in the fall 2006 election found that 12% identified themselves as fundamentalist, 21% evangelical, 10% as charismatic/Pentecostal, 42% as moderate to liberal, 5% as something else, and 11% as

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unwilling to respond (or responding “don’t know”).

- Views on the role of the Bible and the relationship between religious belief and science vary. In Gallup surveys completed in May 2006, 28% of respondents indicated that they believed that the Bible is the actual word of God and is to be taken literally word for word; 49% said that it was the inspired word of God but not everything in it should be taken literally, and 19% regarded it as an ancient book of fables, legends, history, and moral precepts recorded by man. When asked about their views on the origin and development of human beings, 36% of respondents said that man developed over millions of years with God guiding the process, 13% said man developed over millions of years but God had no part in the process, 46% said that God had created man in his present form, and 5% gave other or no opinion. An April 2006 CBS news poll found that 26% of respondents believed the science and religion agreed with each other, 32% said they generally conflict with each other, 37% said they were not related in a meaningful way, and 5% said they didn’t know or gave no answer.
- Americans’ exposure to the religions beliefs and practices of others’ also appears limited. A June 2005 poll by CBS News asked respondents whether any of their close friends or family members who were of a different religion had introduced them to different teachings or philosophies that had become part of their own religious or spiritual practices. Of those responding, 23% said yes, 48% said no, 18% said they had no close friends or family members of other religions, 10% said religion wasn’t important to them, and 1% said they didn’t know or declined to answer.
- Americans also appear to associate religion in certain respects with conflict. In a July 2005 poll by the Pew Research Center for People and the Press, respondents were asked how much of a role religion plays in causing most wars and conflicts in the world. Responses indicated that 40% believed that religion

caused a great deal of conflict, 35% a fair amount, 13% only a little, 8% not at all, and 4% refused or said they didn’t know. When asked a similar question about the role religion plays in causing political conflict in the United States, 30% responded that it caused a great deal of conflict, 35% said a fair amount, 27% said only a little, 4% said none at all, and 4% said they didn’t know or refused to respond.

#### Legal Principles: Historical Perspectives.

Americans are clearly a religious people.

Significantly, however, the American constitutional experiment provided for the separation of church and state, a deliberate and unique departure from prior European tradition.

- The First Amendment states that “Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion or prohibiting the free exercise thereof.” The Founders thus rejected the European tradition that taxed all to support a single nationally-affiliated church, and sought to avoid sectarian strife that would likely arise from jockeying among the different religious affiliations prominent in the various states. They also barred government from intruding on individual religious beliefs and thereby protected freedom of conscience. These provisions of the United States Constitution have also been applied to the states, and many states have independently codified protections relation to religion as part of their state constitutions.
- In his recent book *Divided by God* (Oxford University Press, 2005) and related writing in the *New York Times*, NYU Professor Noah Feldman has discussed the core dilemma created by the American constitutional experiment with the relationship between church and state: how to negotiate “the challenge of preserving the unity of the sovereign people in the face of their flourishing spiritual variety and often conflicting religious needs.” Feldman notes the important ways in which social realities have impacted legal developments, including waves of immigration that have brought

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changing patterns of religious diversity to American shores, the 19<sup>th</sup> century influx of Catholics which raised issues public and parochial education, and the importance World War II and the Holocaust in highlighting the risk that religious minorities can suffer discrimination or even persecution when the German government adopted a stance favoring Christianity and opposing those of Jewish faith. Through it all, Feldman believes, we acknowledge our religious diversity while at the same time “we strive to be a nation with a common identity and a common project.”

- In Feldman’s view, current tensions reflect two conflicting viewpoints about the proper relationship of religion and government. Feldman describes “values evangelicals” who believe that “the right answers to questions of government policy must come from the wisdom of religious traditions,” and notes that those with such viewpoint can be found across the range of religious traditions. Feldman believes that “What all values evangelicals have in common is the goal of evangelizing for values: promoting a strong set of ideas about the best way to live your life and urging the government to adopt those values and encourage them wherever possible. To them, the best way to hold the United States together as a nation, not just a country, is for us to know what values we really hold and to stand up for them.” Feldman characterizes the second competing viewpoint as one held by “legal secularists” who “see religion as a matter of personal belief and choice largely irrelevant to government and who are concerned that values derived from religion will divide us, not unite us.” Such “legal secularists” may be active members of various religious faiths, but believe that *government* should be secular and be bounded by related legal constraints. According to Feldman, “legal secularists” believe that “full citizenship means fully sharing in the legal and political commitments of the nation. If the nation defines itself in terms of values drawn from

religion, they worry, then it will inevitably tend to adopt the religious values of the majority, excluding religious minorities and nonreligious people from full citizenship.”

- Feldman believes that neither “values evangelicals” nor “legal secularists” have been very effective in negotiating the core tension between Americans’ desire to recognize religious diversity while also maintaining a sense of unity, particularly in the days since 9/11. In his view, the “values evangelicals want to find shared values, but that leads them to rely on the unexamined assumption that deep down, Americans agree on what matters. The trouble is that ‘we’ often do not agree.” Such disagreement is particularly apparent on issues such as abortion where “values evangelicals” believe that they must stand for something and are generally unwilling to recognize that those with competing views may have legitimate claims to make decisions of their own. On the other hand, the belief by “legal secularists” that religious expression must be removed from the public sphere in order to make those of all faiths and viewpoints welcome has resulted in pressure to keep religious views private or at least outside of public settings associated with government (a matter of concern for example, for those who wish to see the Ten Commandments or Christmas crèches displayed). Banishing religious expressions from the public eye has in Feldman’s view made “values evangelicals” feel excluded and undercut the hunger for public expression of shared values, even though that is not the intent. These underlying tensions have been fueled in part by confusing legal developments that have reversed the original intent of the Constitution’s provisions on religion by eliminating religious expression in many public settings while at the same time allowing funding of faith-based activities.

#### Legal Principles and the Courts.

- Litigation involving the public schools has

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illustrated the complex application of legal precepts embodied in the First Amendment's "free exercise" and "establishment" clauses when applied to educational settings. One of the fundamental legal tests applied in this setting is that articulated in *Lemon v. Kurtz*, a 1971 decision by the United States Supreme Court that required government decisions in the schools to be motivated by a secular purpose, to have primarily secular effects and not to entangle the state with religious institutions. Applying this and other tests in ensuing years, the courts have addressed numerous issues. For example, cases have addressed school prayer and moments of silence (permissible if students opt to do so but not permissible if mandated), school-sponsored prayer in public settings (impermissible), religious expression by teachers in classrooms (may be deemed officially sanctioned and impermissible especially with younger students), instruction *about* religion (permissible), and distribution of flyers (permissible to include information relating to religious activities but impermissible for schools to screen content so as to prohibit religious content if unfettered discretion). Courts have also entered the fray in the "intelligent design" v. evolution controversy, most recently finding that mandates to teach intelligent design represented an impermissible effort to incorporate religious doctrine in the classroom.

- Colleges and universities have also faced litigation about the implications of the Constitution's religion clauses and related "free speech" provisions. For example, the United States Supreme Court has held that a public university must make campus facilities available to student religious groups in the same way and to the same extent that it makes its space available to non-religious student organizations. Public universities must also make student fees available on the same basis for student groups whether they have sponsor or support religious and non-religious activities. On the other hand, the United States Supreme Court has concluded

that public universities may deny scholarship funds to college students majoring in the theology, in situations where state constitutional provisions dictate such separation (through the Washington "Blaine Amendment" that states that "No public money or property shall be appropriated or applied to any religious worship, exercise or instruction, or the support of any religious establishment"). Current controversies have focused on such issues as the legality of public universities' efforts to limit recognition of student organizations which refuse to comply with non-discrimination policies on the basis of religious beliefs that object to homosexuality or that require that leadership positions be filled by those who comply with certain religious tenets.

- The First Amendment also affords relevant protections beyond those found in the "free exercise" and "establishment" clauses. It also states that "Congress shall make no law ... abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble." The courts have interpreted these and other constitutional provisions to apply to the states and have also concluded that they protect freedom of association in intimate, expressive, and political contexts. These freedoms have some limitations, however. For example, the courts have said that freedom of speech does not allow someone to "cry fire in a crowded theatre" or to use "fighting words." The right to express oneself may depend on whether the setting for such expression has been established or treated as a "public forum," and whether the governmental entity has established reasonable, content-neutral "time, place, and manner" restrictions.
- Once again, the application of these additional First Amendment freedoms to public university campuses is more complex than might initially appear. For example, the University of Michigan had adopted a "speech code" that prohibited "Any behavior, verbal or physical, that stigmatizes or victimizes an individual on the basis of race, ethnicity, religion, sex,

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sexual orientation, creed ... and that ... Creates an intimidating, hostile, or demeaning environment for educational pursuits, employment or participation in University[-]sponsored extra-curricular activities." A university guide provided examples of conduct that were regarded as harassment, such as "You exclude someone from a study group because that person is of a different race, sex, or ethnic origin than you are." In 1989, a lower federal court found this policy to be vague and overbroad. In 1991, a University of Wisconsin policy that prohibited addressing a specific individual with "racist or discriminatory comments" was also struck down by a lower federal court because the policy was not narrowly enough stated to prohibit only "fighting words." Some colleges have endeavored to establish "free speech zones" in order to situate student protests, allow students to distribute flyers, and hold gatherings in areas that would not disrupt classes, and these strategies have brought challenges when the designated areas for such activity were very small. Public universities also face issues regarding the rights of the student press on their campuses. The United States Supreme Court has held that in the context of public high schools, school administrators can treat a student newspaper as a "non-public forum" and can punish or censor students for their expression if necessary for educational reasons. It specifically reserved the question of the status of college newspapers.

Religion and Politics. While the First Amendment thus restrains government in a number of important ways it does not preclude other actions that interject religious belief or affiliation into the political arena. The American electorate appears to have grown increasingly polarized and profoundly divided in recent years, with divergent religious beliefs and moral judgments playing significant roles in these developments.

- A recent study by the non-partisan research organization, Public Agenda, tracked changing attitudes relating to religion and

politics over the four years from 2000 to 2004 (just prior to the 2004 Presidential election). One of the survey questions asked whether respondents agreed with the following statement: "Even elected officials who are deeply religious sometimes have to make compromises and set their conflicts aside to get results while in government." The organization found a substantial drop in those agreeing with this statement between 2000 and 2004: the proportion of the general population agreeing fell from 84% to 74%, while the proportion of those attending church services weekly dropped from 82% to 63% and the proportion of evangelicals dropped from 79% to 63%. Another question asked whether respondents believed that deeply religious people should keep their faith private, be very careful about "spreading the word of God" so as not to offend others, or "spread the word of God whenever they can." In 2000, 18% of respondents said that deeply religious people should keep their faith private, while 46% said that people with such beliefs should be very careful, and 35% said that they should spread the word actively. By 2004, the total of those who believed that people should keep their faith private or proceed carefully had dropped to 57% and the number who believed that they should spread the word of God whenever they could rose to 41%.

- In 2005, the Pew Center for Religion and Public Life found that the closely-contested 2004 President election had been marked by a deep faith-based partisan divide. More specifically, they concluded that "Americans who regularly attend worship services and hold traditional religious views increasingly vote Republican, while those who are less connected to religious institutions and more secular in their outlook tend to outlook tend to vote Democratic," and that the divide was most marked by the difference between "traditionalist" religious outlook rather than denominational label. The Pew study also found that the most important cause of the church attendance gap was the "mix of social

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and cultural issues" such as abortion and gay marriage which have pushed "the religiously observant into one political corner and the more secular into the other." Regional differences have also contributed, with a "broad shift to the GOP among white voters in the Evangelical-heavy South." The Pew study also cited poll data indicating that "more than 70% Americans want their president to have strong religious beliefs," while "only a quarter of voters said that politicians 'mention religious faith and prayer too much.'" At the same time 65% of poll respondents said they thought that churches should not endorse political candidates.

- Academic observers have debated whether shifts represent a form of "culture war" that will endure or change in coming days. At a recent forum conducted by the Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life, Professors Alan Wolfe and James Davison Hunter highlighted competing viewpoints more fully aired in their new book, *Is There a Culture War: A Dialogue on Values and American Public Life* (Brookings Institution Press, 2006). Several important questions are worth considering such as: Does a small proportion of Americans (elites on both the left and right of the political spectrum) fuel the divide? What can be said about those situated in the vast center? Is there a growing tendency for religious denominations to splinter along ideological lines? Will there be a return to inter-religious conflicts rather than intra-religious conflicts? Will people of faith conclude that close alliance with political forces is inadvisable in the long run?
- Robert Bellah, the noted author of *Habits of the Heart*, a study of American values and patterns of interaction in a simpler day, has suggested that developments in the wake of the 9/11 terrorist attacks have deeply challenged Americans' sense of themselves, their country, and the "civil religion" (a term used by Rousseau to connote "the existence of God, the life to come, the reward of virtue and the punishment of vice, and the exclusion of

religious intolerance"). In Bellah's view, this "religion" does not correspond to or substitute for Christianity but instead facilitated a "wide sphere of personal piety and voluntary social action... left to the churches... [which] were neither to control the state nor to be controlled by it." Bellah has recently argued that the events of 9/11 present a challenge comparable to that of the Civil War when the country had to face fundamental questions about slavery and its implications for the nation's core values, and ultimately integrated the theme of sacrifice into its civic religion. Now, in Bellah's view, the challenge that confronts Americans and our civil religion is how we will use our power and whether we will be able to contribute in a meaningful way to the "attainment of some kind of viable and coherent world order" built upon "an awareness that our nation stands under higher judgment."

#### Part II: CHOICES:

##### WHAT SHOULD WE (FACULTY, STUDENTS, STAFF OF A PUBLIC UNIVERSITY) DO IN THE FACE OF SUCH TENSIONS?

In the section that follows, four possible approaches are outlined that allow considered discussion about the issues presented in the background reading above.

*Please bear in mind that these possibilities are addressed to faculty, students, and other members of college communities, and are not suggested as formal policies that universities themselves should adopt. Instead, they are offered as possible responses by individuals who are prepared to grapple with the difficult question:*

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These approaches were developed through repeated discussions that sought to "frame" a core question about what is currently troubling us on public university campuses, and to provide fair-

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minded alternatives that address some of our concerns. These are not the only alternatives, and there are likely to be ways in which those using this discussion guide will agree and disagree with each. They are presented in this format to facilitate careful consideration of multiple, authentic viewpoints in a deliberate way that informs and enlightens us.

In very brief terms, the four principal approaches are:

Approach 1: Pursue questions of personal faith and conscience in private and maintain the university's neutrality.

Approach 2: Enhance student options and engage outside the classroom.

Approach 3: Engage personal faith and conscience in the classroom, respectfully, if faculty choose

Approach 4: Engage questions of faith and conscience widely, actively, and deliberately

The materials that follow develop each of these approaches though a more detailed description and enumeration of pros and cons. Please probe and weigh these alternative approaches, but remember that the point of this discussion is to illuminate rather than to score debating points or to resolve things by a formal vote. You will also have an opportunity to suggest additional approaches toward the end of this conversation.

A set of "scenarios" culled from recent events are provided following the four approaches. These scenarios are designed to provide a "reality check" and an opportunity to test participants' thinking as they consider actual events that have occurred on campuses around the country in the last few years.

#### **APPROACH 1: PURSUE IN PRIVATE AND MAINTAIN UNIVERSITY NEUTRALITY**

*Description:* Speech about personal faith and conscience belongs in private settings or off campus, in keeping with public universities' secular character and obligations of neutrality.

Under this approach, individual students and faculty who wish to explore faith-based beliefs and judgments of conscience could do so in private settings with friends and family, in faith-based communities, or in other groups. The university would respect the desire of community members to engage in such discussions, but would not make special efforts to encourage or discourage such discussions. Thus, students and faculty could continue to discuss such their beliefs and views over coffee, or attend gatherings or services with whomever they choose. The university as an institution would maintain its historical neutrality rather than giving more attention to faith-based beliefs or matters of conscience.

*Pros:* Those who support this approach tend to emphasize the following ideas in support of their views.

- Personal faith-based beliefs and judgments of conscience arise in the innermost hearts and minds of individuals. They're something that should be protected from intrusion and thus should best be addressed in settings that are private and voluntary, as has traditionally be the practice.
- Some students say that they're most comfortable in talking with peers about faith-based beliefs and judgments of conscience when they can do so very informally with those they trust in private settings.
- Many opportunities exist to explore faith-based and conscience-based viewpoints in private conversations with friends and family members, in churches and synagogues, or in other faith-based or community groups. Universities lack relevant expertise and should defer to others in these settings. In light of these options, there's no need for public universities to intervene.
- Public universities should focus on academic matters that are more properly within their expertise and should steer clear or involvement with matters of faith and conscience as they affect individual members

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of university communities. As a matter of policy, it's best to maintain neutrality in this arena and attempt to steer clear of the "culture wars" that trouble the larger society.

- Constitutional principles relating to the "wall" between church and state should be observed. Members of the public who are taxed to fund public universities expect that such institutions will observe legal requirements relating to separation of church and state, much as they expect such neutrality from public elementary and secondary schools. Faculty and students likewise choose public universities with a full understanding that they are different from other colleges and universities with faith-based affiliations.

*Cons.* Those who disagree with this approach tend to emphasize concerns such as the following:

- Personal faith and conscience cannot be readily separated from day-to-day life so this approach is artificial and impractical.
- Many students and faculty have deeply held beliefs rooted in personal faith and conscience and this approach would make the campus less hospitable and welcoming for them.
- Artificial efforts to encourage discussions of personal faith and conscience primarily in private settings marginalize such questions. Requiring discussion of personal faith and conscience to take place elsewhere is anti-intellectual since these are important topics that need to be engaged when they arise.
- Critical issues facing society are the proper subject of intellectual inquiry within university settings. Faculty members currently cover topics that raise issues of personal faith and conscience when relevant to their subject matter. More emphatic emphasis on neutrality might make it difficult for them to pursue the issues that they believe in their best judgment are appropriate, and might impinge on the academic freedom of them and their students.
- The "wall" between church and state is not

clearly delineated. It is likely that conflicts will arise whether or not the university attempts to embrace "neutrality." The tensions found in the larger society will lead to litigation involving public universities whatever they do.

#### **APPROACH 2: ENHANCE STUDENT OPTIONS AND ENGAGE OUTSIDE THE CLASSROOM**

*Description:* Students should have ample opportunities to explore issues of personal faith and conscience if they choose to do so, but such opportunities should be situated primarily outside the classroom. Consideration of such matters is particularly important during the college years. Many students express serious interest in developing meaningful philosophies of life and in deepening their sense of spirituality. The most suitable setting for such exploration lies outside the standard classroom so that students express their own beliefs without discomfiting challenges from professors and classmates in more formal settings. At the same time, students be provided with support structures and varied occasions in which issues of faith and conscience can be explored. Students could work with those involved in student affairs on campuses to develop additional supportive strategies, for example through public service options, housing choices, additional campus programming, leadership development programs, counseling opportunities, or "safe zone" training.

#### Pros.

- Students have important educational and developmental needs related to faith and conscience, and should have meaningful opportunities to work with these issues on campus rather than having to pursue them elsewhere.
- This approach allows campus ministries and student organizations to take leadership and to share their expertise, and respects the academic freedom of faculty to address other subjects in the classroom.
- Speech about personal faith and conscience on

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campus is best situated outside the classroom where faculty are not involved in judging or grading students' views.

- This approach accommodates the views of all members of the campus community, including those of varying faith-based traditions and those who are agnostic, atheistic, or non-religious.
- This approach emphasizes the potential for creative initiatives led by students in order to meet their most substantial interests and needs.

#### Cons

- People of faith who oppose compartmentalization might find this approach artificial since it precludes conversations about personal faith and conscience in the classroom.
- Faculty who wish to address such issues in the classroom might feel that this approach marginalizes opportunities for engaging with pressing issues in the classroom, or creates false impressions that addressing relevant issues in the classroom is undesirable.
- Those who have a very evangelistic view of their faith and wish to express it in all aspects of their life may believe the university is cutting into or policing their faith by encouraging discussions to be held outside the classroom rather than in classroom settings.
- Giving personal faith and belief an institutional place on campus in non-classroom settings might be seen by some as intruding on the principle of university neutrality.
- Students and student affairs professionals may find it difficult and uncomfortable to deal with the kinds of conflicts and contention that increasingly characterize religious and political debates going on outside campus walls.

#### **APPROACH 3: ENGAGE PERSONAL FAITH AND CONSCIENCE IN THE CLASSROOM, RESPECTFULLY, IF FACULTY CHOOSE**

*Description.* Speech about personal faith and conscience may occur on campus, including in the classroom, if conducted respectfully and if the professor believes it relevant. Some faculty members teach about topics that are directly relevant to personal faith and conscience, for example in courses in the sciences, literature, philosophy, public policy, gender and queer studies, history, journalism, political science, social work, nursing and medicine. Students would receive a poorer education if issues with implications for personal faith and conscience were not raised and addressed with a critical eye and an open mind in settings such as these. Faculty members have expertise in judging the relevance of topics and the best pedagogical techniques for exploring them. They should therefore be accorded considerable flexibility, in keeping with academic freedom principles, to determine when and in what ways issues of faith and conscience should be engaged. To encourage effective educational engagement in such settings, particularly in contentious times, faculty members should be provided with more extensive faculty development opportunities that help build skill in dealing with controversy in the classroom, and should be able to receive clear answers about their rights and responsibilities in such contexts. Students should also be given opportunities for training in handling "difficult dialogues" in the classroom so that they can actively participate and feel comfortable in doing so. Universities which believe that providing meaningful education on issues that intersect with personal faith and conscience might also find ways to encourage faculty members to incorporate such topics in their classes if relevant, and to flag classes raising such classes so that interested students can more readily enroll.

#### Pros.

- Faculty members whose courses touch on matters of faith and conscience should have

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the opportunity to introduce such topics as they believe relevant and wise.

- Classroom discussions provide for powerful learning opportunities by linking teaching with learning that takes place both inside and outside the classroom
- Inclusion of such discussions in the classroom allows faculty and students to engage with each other authentically rather than artificially separating matters of faith and conscience so as to compartmentalize their lives.
- This approach allows students to engage with faculty members if the students are conversant with their faith and ready to talk about it or are struggling with how their faith relates to issues raised in class.
- This approach is most consistent with universities' educational and intellectual mission, which anticipates active efforts to explore difficult questions and current issues including those relating to personal faith and conscience.

#### Concerns

- This approach may create blurry lines about what is relevant in class or what responses are "respectful," and leaves these decisions in professors' (rather than students') hands.
- This approach may give rise to expectations of in-class discussions when professors are hard-pressed to cover material in courses as it is or may reasonably believe that such discussions are not relevant or may feel that this approach intrudes upon their academic freedom.
- Professors and students may not be skilled in addressing challenging, hot-button issues where issues of faith and intellectual inquiry collide, so that it may be difficult to conduct such dialogues in ways that foster effective learning.
- Students and professors may feel put on the spot if asked to express their views on issues of this sort.

- This approach may result in faculty and students engaging with issues of faith and conscience in the classroom, when such issues might best be addressed in other settings (such as in student settings, dormitories, faith-based communities or with friends)

#### **APPROACH 4: ENGAGE QUESTIONS OF FAITH AND CONSCIENCE WIDELY, ACTIVELY AND DELIBERATELY**

*Description.* Public universities should actively encourage more widespread conversation and engagement with issues of personal faith and conscience throughout their campuses, including in private, student, classroom, and academic settings. Personal faith and conscience are great personal importance as well as increasing social importance yet have led to increasing division within modern societies including the United States. Public universities, no less than their private counterparts, need to engage more actively with related issues and competing viewpoints in order to prepare students for global realities and future roles as citizens. University leaders, faculty and students have worked actively in recent years to engage with issues of multiculturalism and the implications of gender, race, ethnicity, sexuality. Questions of faith and spirituality may in some ways seem more personal, private, and fraught with political overtones. Nonetheless, current conflicts and misunderstandings between those of different faith- and conscience-based traditions unless there are active efforts build bridges that do not currently exist. Special care will be needed to proceed deliberately, creatively, and sensitively in meeting associated challenges. A comprehensive, active approach might include efforts relating to the curriculum, such as: strengthening curricular offerings relating to philosophy, religious studies, or faith-related components of varied courses; developing new courses; or draw on existing models used in other contexts (perhaps a new type of "Great Decisions" course that emphasizes issues of faith and conscience rather than international affairs). It might also be desirable to expand speaker programs focused on issues of faith and conscience featuring either campus-based or visiting speakers. Student affairs

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programming might be expanded in ways discussed under Approach 2. Campuses might also draw together members of the public from differing faith- and conscience-based viewpoints to engage with those on campus.

#### Pros

- This approach addresses the range of objectives noted with regard to earlier approaches.
- Public universities are appropriate settings in which to engage with the full-range of pressing social issues and competing viewpoints so that they can be understood more fully. They may be able to bring light (rather than heat) to matters currently confounding the larger society.
- Developing tools for and experience with discussion of deeply-felt differences is important for the future of society and civic life.
- Engaging respectfully with issues of faith and conscience allows students and faculty to learn from others' viewpoints without forcing one's beliefs on others. Issues of faith and conscience are of great importance to students and citizens and it is better to engage with them than to marginalize them in unhealthy ways.
- A multi-faceted, comprehensive approach that engage members of the campus community in a range of contexts are more likely to be effective in broadening understanding and respect than are approaches that limit related discussions to more narrow contexts such as those detailed in earlier approaches.

#### Cons

- Taking on issues of faith and conscience in a comprehensive way within a public university may create controversy and division. Some faculty, students, parents, and members of the larger community might experience this approach as overbearing and inappropriate in

light of their own personal faith and conscience-based beliefs. This approach might also create risks of interference from external forces tied to religious or political viewpoints, or public opprobrium if good-faith efforts prove problematic in execution.

- Some faculty member might worry that this approach could compromise the intellectual ideals and secular nature of the universities or blur important distinctions between the type of critical thinking and intellectual inquiry that is central to a university education and more personal views rooted in conscience and faith-based beliefs. Intermingling issues of faith and conscience in public higher education institutional settings may prove difficult because of the multitude of diverse faith- and conscience-based perspectives or create concerns that such beliefs are not treated with equal respect or attention.
- The University may lack the capacity and competence to undertake such an effort, given other curricular obligations, academic priorities, and resource constraints. Faculty and students may also lack the skills, perspectives, and interests to be navigate challenging topics and conversations effectively.
- Depending on how it would be implemented, this approach might raise legal questions relating to the appropriate roles of publicly funded higher education, faith-based institutions, and individuals' freedom of conscience.
- This approach is less well-defined and may raise expectations that cannot be realized.

#### **PART III: SCENARIOS FOR DISCUSSION**

**Approach 1:** Pursue questions of personal faith and conscience in private and maintain the university's neutrality.

- A. Admissions Decisions.** A college admissions

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officer is facing a difficult decision in evaluating several prospective undergraduates' high school transcripts. One student had attended a religiously-oriented high school and sought to apply three courses toward required basic admissions requirements in English, history and government: "Christianity and Morality in American Literature," "Christianity's Influence on American History" and "Special Providence: American Government". Another student's transcript included courses on "Race, Class, and Gender in Modern America," "Feminist Issues throughout U.S. History," and "Introduction to Jewish Thought" toward the high school credits required (though not in required areas such as English, history, and government). (based on issues facing UC-Davis)

- B. Personal Advice: A faculty member in a technical field is devout and reveals his own religious background to students on the first day of class. Many of the students write on their information sheets that one of their life goals is to develop a closer relationship with God. In a public forum on religion in his department, he asked whether it would be appropriate for him to suggest prayer to those struggling students who have revealed to him their own desire to connect to God. (based on University of Michigan "Difficult Dialogues" scenario).
- C. Living and Learning. A resident adviser at the university has contacted students on her dorm floor inviting them to attend a study group she's created on Buddhism. Other students have decided to organize a standing dinner discussion group at the campus cafeteria to discuss Islam. (based in part on example from UW-Eau Claire)

**Approach 2: Enhance student options and engage outside the classroom.**

- D. Student Speaker. An elected student government leader has been asked to give a welcoming speech to incoming students at a public university. He urges them to set their

sights high and goes on to say that he has accepted Christ as his savior and hopes they will as well. Other students criticized his actions, saying he had been elected to represent the whole student body, including those of diverse faith-related viewpoints. (based on Dartmouth incident)

- E. Student Organizations. A university requires every student organization wishing to use university facilities and receive student fees in support of its activities to sign a pledge stating that the organization will not discriminate in its membership based on race, ethnicity, gender, creed, religion, nationality, age, disability, or sexual orientation. A student group affiliated with a particular religious sect refused to sign the statement, saying that its mission required it to admit only those who shared a particular religious faith. The group also approached Student Congress and requested funding for a proposed new student publication designed to encourage others to adopt the faith of its members. (based on examples at UNC-CH, and elsewhere)
- F. Residence Hall Choices. A group of students has asked the university to establish a special dorm "theme floor" for students who are Roman Catholics or interested in Roman Catholicism. An evangelical Christian group has met with the dean of students and student government officers to demand that rules that currently prohibit solicitation in dormitories be changed so that their members can go door-to-door to distribute leaflets and talk with students living there about their beliefs. (based in part on example from UW-Madison).

**Approach 3: Engage personal faith and conscience in the classroom, respectfully, if faculty choose**

- G. Recommendation Letter. A student approached the undergraduate adviser in the biology department, and requested a recommendation to medical school. The adviser reviewed her transcript and noted that she had not yet taken a required course in evolutionary biology. The student said that

