

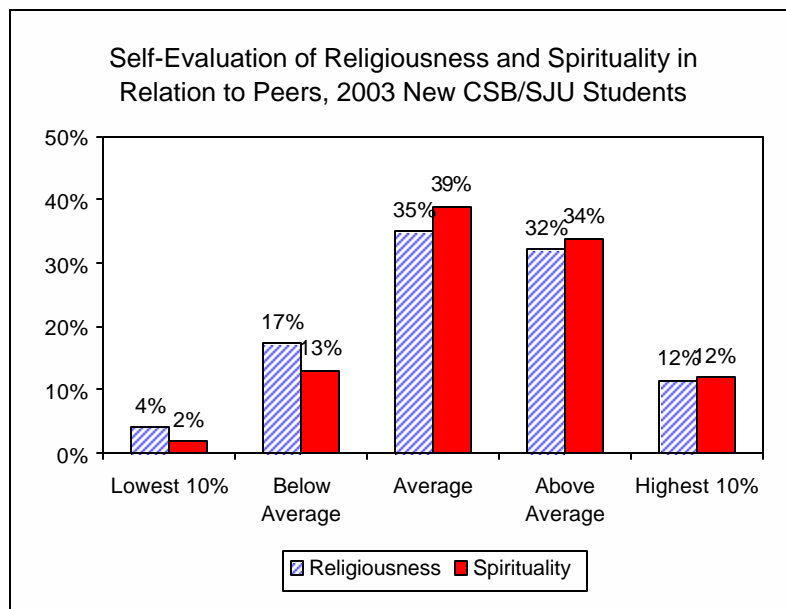
Most new CSB/SJU students describe themselves as spiritual and believe it is important to integrate spirituality into their lives

Spirituality among new CSB/SJU students

A recent study conducted by UCLA's Higher Education Research Institute indicated that a large majority of college students today express a strong interest in spirituality. The *College Students' Beliefs and Values Survey*, a study of nearly 3,700 undergraduates attending 46 colleges and universities across the country, found that the majority of college students describe spiritual development as a key life objective, though significantly fewer indicated that spiritual or religious reflection were a part of their academic experience. Spiritual development, vocational reflection, and the search for meaning and purpose are key mission commitments at the College of Saint Benedict and Saint John's University. The data that follow summarize the spiritual and religious commitments, engagement, and expectations of new entering CSB/SJU students.

Religious/Spiritual Commitment and Engagement

- Similar to prior years, 95% of all new CSB/SJU students in fall 2003 identified a denominational religious affiliation. Two-thirds said they were Catholic. Half of the remainder indicated they were Lutheran. Only 1 in 20 students said they had no religious affiliation at all. Saint Benedict and Saint John's students were more likely than their peers at Catholic colleges nationally either to identify a religious preference or to identify themselves as Catholic.
- Two-thirds of all new students said the religious identity of the College of Saint Benedict and Saint John's University was an important factor influencing their enrollment decision. The colleges' Catholic identity was particularly important among Catholic students – three-quarters reported it was an important or very important factor influencing their enrollment choice. However, even among non-Catholics, 40% reported that the colleges' Catholic identity was an important attraction.



Prepared by Jon McGee, Vice President for Institutional Planning, Research and Communication

- Nearly two-thirds of all new entering CSB/SJU students indicated that they regularly attended religious services. Only 4% said they never attended church services. The vast majority of new students (82%) also said they dedicated some time each week to prayer or meditation.

Fewer than 1 in 5 new students said they never prayed. New CSB/SJU students were more likely than Catholic college students nationally to report spending time in prayer each week. Nationally, nearly 30% of all new Catholic college students said they never prayed or meditated.

- Students typically not only prayed but also talked with others about religion. Fully one-third of all new entering CSB/SJU students reported that they frequently discussed religion. Less than 10% said they never talked about religion. More than 4 in 10 new students at Saint Benedict and Saint John's described their "religiousness" as above average in relation to their peers. Only 1 in 5 described their religiousness as below average.
- Almost half (46%) of new CSB and SJU students also described their "spirituality" as above average in relation to their peers. On average, new CSB/SJU students consider themselves both more religious and more spiritual than their peers attending Catholic colleges nationally.
- Nearly 40% of all new students said that "engaging in self-reflection" and "believing in the sacredness of life" described them to a great extent. CSB/SJU students were significantly more likely than their Catholic college peers nationally – as well as their peers at other religiously affiliated colleges – to describe themselves as self-reflective or believing in the sacredness of life.

Religion and Spirituality in the College Experience

- The vast majority of new Saint Benedict and Saint John's students enter college expecting their experience here to contribute to their spiritual development. Last fall, nearly 80% of all new students said there was at least some chance they would strengthen their religious beliefs and convictions while in college. More than 40% said it was very likely they would strengthen their beliefs, compared to just 28% of all Catholic college students nationally.
- Spirituality is a key life objective, as well. More than half of all new CSB/SJU students (54%) said that integrating spirituality into their lives was a very important or essential life objective. Only 1 in 10 said their spirituality was not at all important. Spirituality is a comparatively more important life objective for Saint Benedict and Saint John's students than for Catholic college students nationally.
- Unfortunately, we know less about how much or how effectively the CSB/SJU experience contributes to our students' spiritual development. Over the course of the next year, with the assistance and leadership of the Vocation Projects on each campus, we will undertake research to evaluate those important questions. In the meantime, data from the *2003 CSB/SJU Senior Survey*, in combination with data collected by the Vocation Projects, provide some insights:
 - Four in ten seniors reported that their experience at Saint Benedict and Saint John's contributed significantly to their understanding of their own spirituality. On the other hand, nearly 1 in 5 said their undergraduate experience contributed little or nothing to their spiritual self-understanding.
 - Almost two-thirds (63%) of all seniors said they at least occasionally reflected on their own personal vocation, though only one-third said they understood the concept of vocation very well.
 - Four in ten indicated that they frequently reflected on their life through the lens of their faith, and an additional 30% said they did so at least occasionally.
 - Consistent with their responses as new entering students, 57% said that integrating spirituality into their lives was an important or essential life objective.

For additional information, please contact Jon McGee at 5287 or at jmcgee@csbsju.edu. If you would like to read past issues of *Trends*, please visit our website at <http://www.csbsju.edu/institutionalresearch/Trends/trends.htm>