



## Religious and Spiritual Services for Students

March 2004

### Purpose

This survey, requested by the Center for Ethics and Religious Affairs, focuses on the religious and spiritual needs of students. Topics include the spiritual/religious influence in students' lives, their attendance of religious services and events, and their use of the Pasquerilla Spiritual Center-Eisenhower Chapel. A similar survey was conducted in 2003 prior to the expansion of the Pasquerilla Spiritual Center-Eisenhower Chapel to provide baseline data. Hence, the results of the 2004 survey are compared to the 2003 survey to determine how the new facility has altered students' use, experience, and perceptions.

### Participation Rate

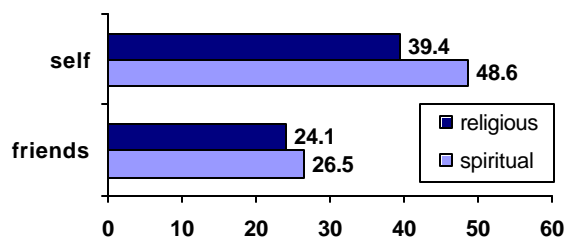
Total: n = 889  
 Phone: n = 632; 50.3% response rate  
 Web: n = 257; 12.9% response rate<sup>1</sup>  
 Margin of Error: +/-3.25%

### Findings

#### Role of Religion/Spirituality in the Lives of Students

Students were more likely to consider themselves religious (39.4%) and spiritual (48.6%) when compared to their perceptions of their close friends (24.1% and 26.5% respectively).<sup>2</sup> (See Figure 1.)

Figure 1. Percent who strongly consider Self and Friends to be Religious and/or Spiritual (2004)



In 2004, students were significantly more likely to report that they were religious persons and that their close friends were either religious or spiritual than in 2003.

<sup>1</sup> The Web survey administration is utilized in order to account for students for whom local phone information was unavailable.

<sup>2</sup> Percent who responded either "substantially" or "to a great extent."

When asked about the influence of religion and/or spirituality, 46.2% indicated that their personal behaviors were strongly influenced by their religion/spirituality. Approximately a third of students responded that their daily decisions, choice of significant other, and their choice regarding use of drugs and/or alcohol are influenced by their religion/spirituality.<sup>3</sup> (See Table 1.)

Table 1. Influence of Religion/Spirituality

by percent <sup>3</sup>	2004	2003
Personal behaviors*	46.2	40.1
Daily decisions*	35.2	31.9
Choice of significant other/partner <sup>4</sup>	32.9	39.4
Use of drugs and/or alcohol	32.3	na
Choice of activities	26.9	24.8
Choice of friends	12.5	13.4

\*Significantly different at the .05 level

Even though the presence of one's religious/spiritual group at University Park was not influential in most students' decision to attend Penn State (91.7%) or to remain enrolled at Penn State (87.5%),<sup>5</sup> students in 2004 were significantly more likely to respond that their matriculation was influenced by the presence of their religious group than were students in 2003. (In 2003, 94.5% and 92.9% respectively indicated that the presence of their group was not influential.)

#### Perceptions of a Supportive Climate

In 2004, 60.2% strongly believed that PSU is supportive of religious and spiritual groups, a significant increase from the 54.4% who responded similarly in 2003. Furthermore, in 2004, 41.6% responded that the student climate is supportive of religious and spiritual groups, up from 36.0% in 2003. (See Table 2.)

<sup>3</sup> Percent who responded either "substantially" or "to a great extent."

<sup>4</sup> In 2003, the question was worded "choice of future significant other."

<sup>5</sup> Percent who responded either "not at all" or "slightly."

Penn State Pulse is a project of Student Affairs Research and Assessment.

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**Table 2. Perception of a Supportive Climate**

by percent <sup>6</sup>	2004	2003
PSU is supportive of religious and spiritual groups.*	60.2	54.4
The student climate is supportive of religious and spiritual groups.*	41.6	36.0
Staff, faculty, and administration are supportive of religious practices.	41.3	na
There is discrimination in the classroom based on religious beliefs.	6.9	na

\*Significantly different at the .05 level

### **Religious Involvement** <sup>7</sup>

Students were asked a series of questions regarding their religious involvement.

- 65.2% had attended religious services or events since coming to college;
- 45.6% had attended religious services or events on campus at least once a semester during this academic year;
- 58.3% had attended religious services or events off campus or at home at least once a semester during this academic year;
- 24.6% were at least “slightly” involved in a religious or spiritual organization on campus; and
- 91.2% indicated that their religious affiliation had not changed since coming to college.

Furthermore, 49.8% indicated that they were at least somewhat more knowledgeable about their own religious/spiritual affiliation, and 65.2% were at least somewhat more knowledgeable about other religious/spiritual affiliations since coming to college.

### **Importance of University Support of Religion and/or Spirituality**

Students were asked how important they felt it was for the University to offer a variety of programs and services in support of students’ religious and spiritual needs. Approximately three-quarters strongly supported the University having a spiritual center, providing space for religious services, and presenting social and cultural programs. (See Table 3.)

Despite differences in the response options in 2004, evidence suggests a significant increase in the level of importance students place on religious services being offered by the University from 2003 to 2004.

<sup>6</sup> Percent who responded either “substantially” or “to a great extent.”

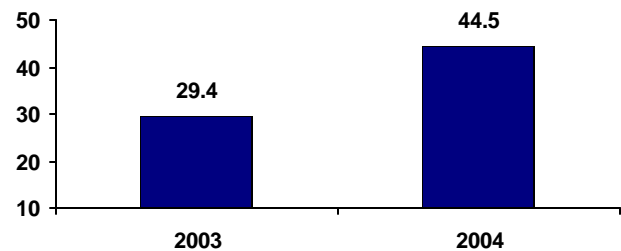
<sup>7</sup> Changes in the 2004 survey prohibit direct comparisons to 2003.

**Table 3. Importance of the University to...**

by percent <sup>8</sup>	2004
Provide space for religious services	75.9
Present social and cultural programs	74.3
Have a spiritual center	72.4
Present educational programs on religion and spirituality	63.4
Provide space for individual meditation	61.6
Lead discussions on personal decision making and ethical values	48.6
Provide the opportunity for religious mentors for students	48.2

### **The Pasquerilla Spiritual Center-Eisenhower Chapel**

In total, 44.5% responded that they had been to the Pasquerilla Spiritual Center-Eisenhower Chapel, an increase from 2003 when 29.4% had been to the Chapel.<sup>9</sup> (See Figure 2.) Furthermore, in 2004, 86.7% responded that their religious and spiritual needs had been met since coming to college compared to 81.9% in 2003.<sup>10</sup>

**Figure 2. Percent who had been to the Pasquerilla Spiritual Center-Eisenhower Chapel**

Of those who had been to the Center in 2004, 83.8% were satisfied with their experiences. Of students who attended religious services or events since coming to college, 54.0% strongly felt<sup>8</sup> that religious leaders were approachable.

Of those who had been to the Center in 2004, 70.0% had attended religious services, and 34.7% had attended programs. (See Table 4.)

**Table 4. Percent Who Attended/Utilized the Center for the Following:**

by percent <sup>11</sup>	2004	2003
Religious services	70.0	53.4
Programs	34.7	44.8
Quiet prayer/Individual meditation	16.0	26.5
Personal discussions	13.6	16.9
Weddings	1.8	na
Memorial services	7.6	na

<sup>8</sup> Percent who responded either “substantially” or “to a great extent.”

<sup>9</sup> Significantly different at the .001 level.

<sup>10</sup> Significantly different at the .05 level.

<sup>11</sup> These percentages are of students who had been to the Pasquerilla Spiritual Center-Eisenhower Chapel.