

Spirituality, Ethics, & Religious Services Spring 2007

INTRODUCTION

The focus of this survey is on students' views of religion, spirituality, and ethics and their needs related to these three areas. Included in the survey are questions concerning the level of influence religion, spirituality, and ethics have on students' lives and their awareness of programs and services currently being offered by the Center for Ethics and Religious Affairs. This survey, conducted by Student Affairs Research and Assessment, was administered at the request of Penn State's Center for Ethics and Religious Affairs. A similar survey was conducted in 2004; when applicable, comparisons are provided.

In total, 1,091 students responded to the survey for a 25.4% response rate. By phone, 403 responded and 688 participated by Web. The confidence interval for the total sample is +/-2.92%.

Of the respondents, 67.7% are between 18 and 21 years of age, 51.2% are female, 79.3% are White/Caucasian, and 83.9% are undergraduates. For additional information on the Pulse methodology, please visit <http://www.sa.psu.edu/sara/qa.shtml>.

FINDINGS

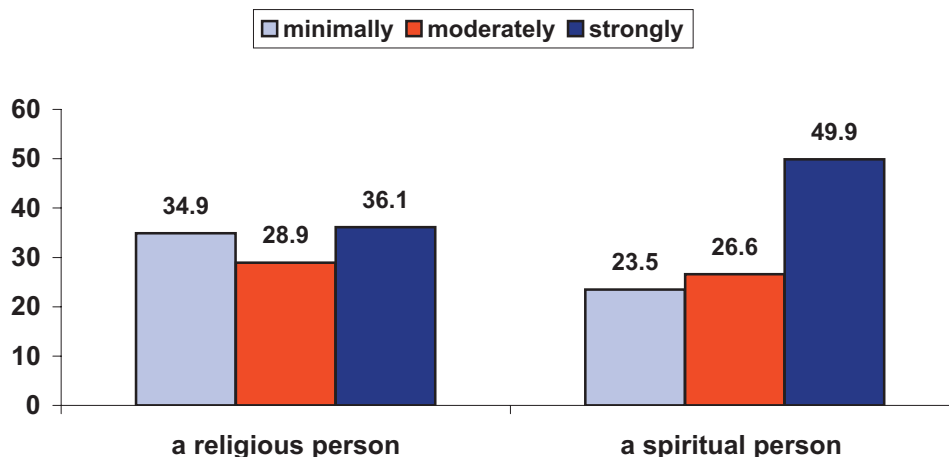
The Role and Influence of Religion, Spirituality, and Ethics

Students were asked the extent to which they considered themselves to be religious, spiritual, or ethical.

- While 49.9% of students consider themselves to be "strongly" spiritual, 36.1% consider themselves to be "strongly" religious (see Chart 1). These results are similar to the responses in 2004 (data not shown).
- In addition, 87.9% reported that they consider themselves to be "strongly" ethical (data not shown).

Students' views of religion, spirituality, and ethics and their needs related to these three areas

Chart 1. Percent who Consider Themselves to be a Religious and/or Spiritual Person



For more information please visit Student Affairs Research and Assessment at <http://www.sa.psu.edu/sara>

- Similarly, 81.2% reported that it is important that others view them as being ethical, compared to 35.9% and 29.6% who reported it is important to be viewed by others as being spiritual and religious, respectively (see Table 1).

Table 1: Importance of Being Viewed by Others

Important to you to be viewed by others as:	percent ¹
An ethical person	81.2
A spiritual person	35.9
A religious person	29.6

Students were also asked about the level to which their religion/ spirituality and their ethical principles influence aspects of their lives.

- When asked about the influence on their personal behaviors, 79.1% reported their ethical principles have a strong influence compared to 43.7% who reported the same for their religion and/or spirituality (see Table 2).
- In 2004, the percentages of students who indicated their religion and/or spirituality strongly influences their personal behaviors (46.2%), daily decisions (35.2%), and use of drugs and/or alcohol (32.3%) were similar to what was found in 2007.

Table 2: Influence of Religion / Spirituality and Ethics

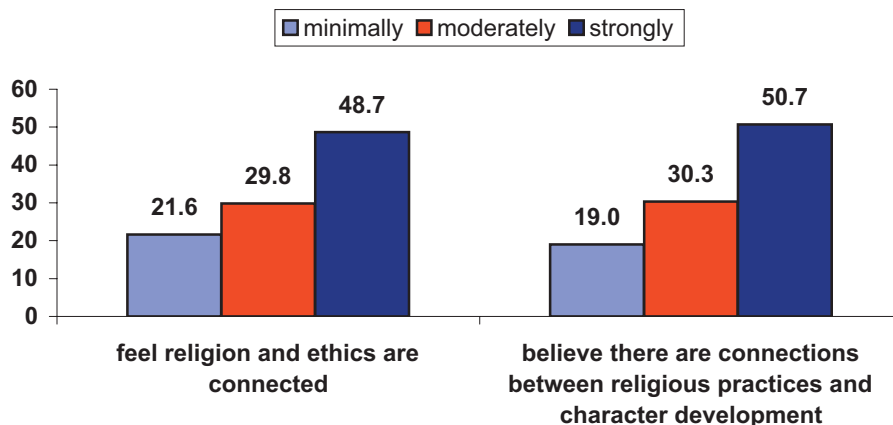
percent ²	Ethical Principles	Religion / Spirituality
Personal behaviors	79.1	43.7
Daily decisions	77.8	35.1
Use of drugs and/or alcohol	54.8	31.7

Views on Religion, Spirituality, and Ethics

When asked about their views regarding several religious issues:

- 19.4% of students reported believing there is only one true religion (with 8% being unsure) (data not shown);
- 71.9% indicated they believe they are being true to their religion while accepting other religions (with 19.4% responding the question is not applicable to them or they are unsure) (data not shown);
- 84.0% responded they think there is a difference between being religious and being spiritual; the majority defined being religious as being affiliated with a specific religious group or faith system and following traditional or established religious practices whereas the majority defined being spiritual as holding personal beliefs or having faith in a higher power (data not shown);
- 48.7% indicated they feel there is a strong connection between religion and ethics (see Chart 2);
- 50.7% reported they believe there are strong connections between religious practices and character development (see Chart 2); and
- A larger percentage of students strongly support groups of different faiths working together to provide programs (50.2%) compared to groups of different faiths remaining separate or independent to provide programs (9.8%) (data not shown).

Chart 2. Students' Views of Religion (by percent)



Religious / Spiritual Behavior

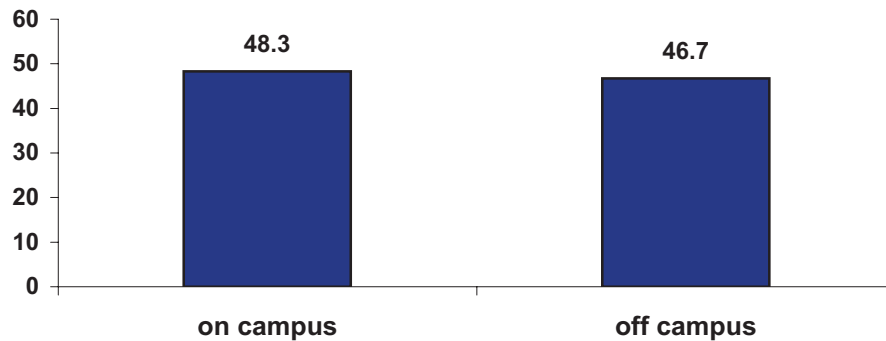
The survey included questions regarding students' current involvement in religious/spiritual services and organizations.

- Approximately 48% of students indicated they had attended religious services or events on campus since coming to college, and 46.7% had attended events or services off campus (see Chart 3).
- In total, 65.8% had attended religious services or events either on or off campus since coming to college (data not shown).

¹Percents indicate those who responded "somewhat important" or "very important."

²Percents indicate those who responded "substantially" or "to a great extent."

Chart 3: Percent who had Attended Religious Services or Events Since Coming to College



- When asked about the frequency in which they pray, 64.7% of students indicated they pray at least sometimes (data not shown).
- In addition, 29.5% indicated at least minimal involvement in a religious or spiritual organization on campus (data not shown).
- Furthermore, 24.3% responded they would like to become more involved with a religious/spiritual group (data not shown).

Ethical Development

With regard to students’ ethical development, the survey revealed the following:

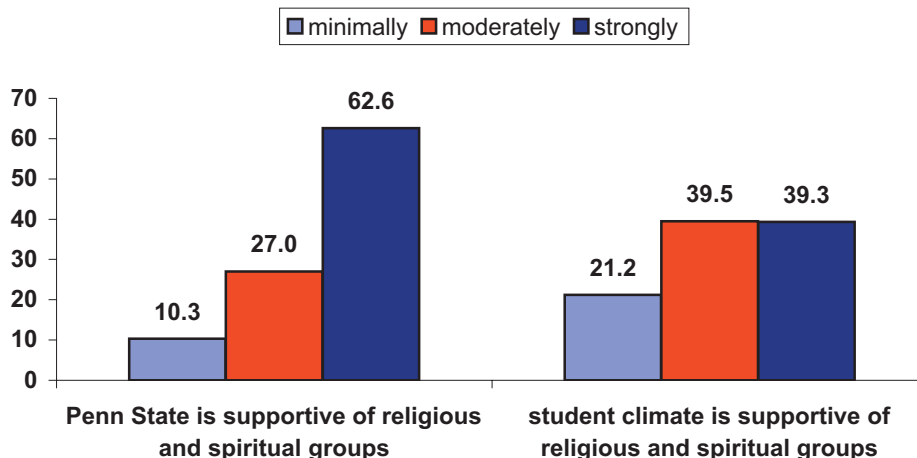
- 63.6% indicated they had at least “somewhat” increased their understanding of ethical behavior since coming to Penn State (data not shown);
- 45.6% reported being at least “somewhat” interested in having the University help them develop their ethics (data not shown); and
- 64.4% indicated they were likely to attend programs that challenged them to think about their own ethics by presenting differing opinions (data not shown).

Campus Support for Religious and Spiritual Groups and Programs

Several questions on the survey focused on the level of campus support for religious and spiritual groups and programs.

- When asked about Penn State’s support for religious and spiritual groups, 62.6% responded that the University is strongly supportive compared to 39.3% who responded the student climate is strongly supportive (see Chart 4).
- Approximately 20% indicated they had been made to feel uncomfortable about their religion while at Penn State. Students talked about experiencing criticism or intolerance from others, feeling affronted by the street preachers, and having negative in-class experiences (data not shown).
- Regarding educational programs, 53.4% indicated it is important for Penn State to present programs on religion and spirituality while 68.1% felt it is important for the University to present multi-faith social and cultural programs (data not shown).
- Lastly, 32.3% responded that they believe religious groups should actively recruit students on campus (data not shown).

Chart 4. Campus Climate (by percent)



Awareness of the Center for Ethics and Religious Affairs

Students were asked a series of questions regarding their knowledge of services and programs offered by the Center for Ethics and Religious Affairs (CERA). These questions were asked not only to gauge students' awareness but also to educate students about Penn State offerings.

- Close to 60% of students were aware that several religious groups offer community service opportunities during Spring Break (see Table 3).
- Approximately 26% were aware that the Pasquerilla Spiritual Center/Eisenhower Chapel is the largest multi-faith center on a public university campus in the United States (see Table 3).

Table 3: Awareness of CERA Programs and Services

Percent who are aware that/know...	percent
Several religious groups offer community service opportunities during Spring Break	58.6
You can get married at the PSC or Eisenhower Chapel	46.5
Where to find the worship service schedule	34.8
There are more than 60 religious/spiritual groups at Penn State	29.3
The Pasquerilla Spiritual Center (PSC)/Eisenhower Chapel is the largest multi-faith center on a public university campus in the U.S.	25.9
There is a Memorial Service each April at the PSC to remember the PSU students who have died during the previous year	24.1
Where the Center for Ethics and Religious Affairs is housed	16.1
You can call the Center for Ethics and Religious Affairs to request that someone from a particular religious/spiritual group contact you	15.6