



**For Immediate Release**  
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## **NEW RESEARCH TO EXAMINE IMPACT OF SPIRITUALITY AND ATTITUDES ABOUT SOCIAL JUSTICE**

Is there a link between a sense of spirituality and/or religiosity and attitudes concerning social justice among young adults? Do spirituality and/or religion have a positive, negative, or mixed effect on attitudes toward those who are underrepresented or oppressed in society?

These are just two of the questions that will be answered through new research to be conducted by David Chenot and Hansung Kim from the California State University Fullerton Master of Social Work Program. Chenot and Kim will undertake this research through further investigation of data from the first longitudinal study documenting changes in student attitudes about spirituality during the first three years of college. That research, conducted by The Higher Education Research Institute at UCLA, surveyed 14,527 students attending 136 colleges in the fall of 2004 and again in the late spring of 2007, at the end of the students' junior year.

The original findings from this longitudinal study revealed that, while attendance at religious services declines, college students nationwide show significant growth in a wide spectrum of spiritual and ethical considerations during their first three years of college. To view full results of the data, and learn more about the project, please visit [www.gseis.ucla.edu/heri/spirituality.html](http://www.gseis.ucla.edu/heri/spirituality.html).

Recognizing that social workers, from the inception of the profession, have considered spirituality and religion as essential elements of the human experience, the researchers will conduct further analysis of the data to investigate possible connections between students' levels of spirituality and their attitudes toward the populations who are most often supported by social workers. They will also ascertain whether these connections vary based on the differing religious affiliations of students participating in the study.

Chenot notes, "The relationships between spirituality, religion and social justice in the lives of young adults are particularly important when one considers the influence university students have in society, not only while they are students, but once they graduate and develop into professionals or pursue other vocations. Their views on spirituality, social justice, and related behaviors, are likely to have a lasting impact on society."

The research will be conducted between May and December of 2009. Findings from the research will be presented at conferences and to journals focusing on higher education, religion and social work.

The Higher Education Research Institute (HERI) at UCLA is widely regarded as one of the premiere research and policy organizations on postsecondary education in the country. Along with the Cooperative Institutional Research Program (CIRP), HERI was co-founded by Alexander W. Astin and Helen S. Astin, and is housed at UCLA's Graduate School of Education & Information Studies. The Institute serves as an interdisciplinary center for research, evaluation, policy studies, and research training in post-secondary education.

For more details about the project, "Spirituality in Higher Education: Students' Search for Meaning and Purpose," visit: [www.spirituality.ucla.edu](http://www.spirituality.ucla.edu). To learn more about the CSU Fullerton research study, contact Dr. Chenot ([dchenot@fullerton.edu](mailto:dchenot@fullerton.edu)/657 278-8610).

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