

# JCC Connexions

Quarterly Newsletter About the *Journal of College and Character*

Vol. 2, No. 3, August 2016

# Character

## Special Issue on Spirituality, Religion, & Higher Education

### **Religion & Education Editor Michael Waggoner is JCC Focus Author**

JCC Focus Author **Michael Waggoner**, whose [article](#) "Spirituality and Contemporary Higher Education" is published in the August 2016 *Journal of College and Character*, has an extensive background in the exploration and research of the intersection of religion and education.

Serving in his sixteenth year as editor of the peer-reviewed journal, *Religion & Education*, Mike is a leading presence in promoting research and discussion in the field. For example, he also serves as editor of the book series, *Research in Religion and Education* for Routledge Books, and is currently co-editor of *The Oxford Handbook on Religion and American Education* to be published by Oxford University Press in 2016. In addition, he is past chair of the Religion and Education Special Interest Group of the American Educational Research Association and the current co-chair of the Religion in the Public Schools: International Perspectives Group of the American Academy of Religion.

Mike's extensive involvement in this area also includes engagement with other professionals internationally as an invited member of the International Seminar on Religious Education and Values, an association of 240 scholars from 36 coun-

tries who study religion and education. Among his most recent books are *Sacred and Secular Tensions in Higher Education*, published by Routledge, and *Religion in the Public Schools: Negotiating the New Commons*, published by Rowman & Littlefield.

In the JCC [article](#), "Spirituality and Contemporary Higher Education," Mike provides an overview of the phenomenon of spirituality in contemporary higher education. He discusses the recent appearance of spirituality on campus, relates what research says about the potential benefits of and challenges in addressing spirituality in higher education, and examines some of the ways in which it is being addressed on U.S. college campuses. As a means to interact with readers relating to his JCC article, he has published a [blog post](#) to share his thoughts on college students and spirituality.

The post is open access for all readers, and NASPA members are welcome to post replies.



[Focus Authors](#)

[Current JCC Issue](#)

[Newsletters](#)

[Waggoner Blog Post](#)

[Waggoner Article](#)



## Jenny Small Brings Expertise and Experience in Areas of Religion & Spirituality to JCC as Associate Editor

Jenny Small, JCC's associate editor, is a scholar, teacher, and facilitator on matters of college student worldview and interfaith relations. These days, she is involved in a number of ongoing projects relating to religion and spirituality.

One of her projects involves serving on the expert panel revising the CAS Standards and Guidelines on Campus Religious, Secular, and Spiritual Programs (formerly the Campus Religious and Spiritual Programs standards).

In addition, she is a member of the Curriculum Working Group for the Interfaith Youth Core, which is focused on developing an interfaith training curriculum for student affairs practitioners, as well as a member of the Board of Advisors for the Interfaith Diversity Experiences and Attitudes Longitudinal Survey (IDEALS). She was also a keynote speaker at the National Campus Ministry Association annual conference in Boston, which was August 2-5, 2016.

Jenny is the author of *Understanding College Students' Spiritual Identities: Different Faiths, Varied Worldviews* and the editor of *Making Meaning: Embracing Spirituality,*

*Faith, Religion, and Life Purpose in Student Affairs*. She has authored articles published in *Research in Higher Education, Journal of College Student Development, Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion, About Campus, and Religion & Education*, and in chapters in edited volumes.

Her educational background includes a PhD from the Center for the Study of Higher and Postsecondary Education at the University of Michigan, an MA from Teachers College, Columbia University, and a BA from Brandeis University.

A founding directorate member of the ACPA Commission on Spirituality, Faith, Religion, and Meaning (CSFRM) and its chair from 2013-2015, Jenny currently serves as an adjunct faculty member in the Boston College Lynch School of Education.



### "Cultivating Practical Wisdom: Senior Student Affairs and Higher Education Leaders Reflect on Journeys in College Leadership A Special Collection in the *Journal of College & Character*

[Access Free Here](#)

There is an important dimension of leadership that is difficult to define or measure and so is often neglected. This facet of leadership can be called "practical wisdom" or "life learning." Practical wisdom is the expertise gained through accumulated life experiences and the knowledge and insights derived from personal reflection on these experiences. Practical wisdom is important in leadership roles because it combines both dimensions of sound knowledge and good judgment.

This special collection of the *Journal of College and Character* focuses on the practical wisdom of eleven senior student affairs and higher education leaders. In these articles the authors reflect on their leadership journeys and share their practical wisdom gleaned from the values, experiences, and insights of a lifetime of work in higher education.

- "Reflections on a Life and a Career in Student Affairs," Michael Jackson
- "Trustworthy Leadership," Diana C. Walsh
- "Spirituality and Leadership," Susan Komives
- "From Here to Clare: Yearnings of a Scholar-Turned-Dad," Carney Strange
- "Learning to Lead, Learning to Love: A Personal Journey Toward Wholeness," Shirley H. Showalter
- "Authenticity and Spirituality in Higher Education: My Orientation," Arthur W. Chickering
- "Pilgrimage to My Roots: Exploring Student Affairs and Spirituality in Ireland," Margaret Jablonski
- "Some Personal Reflections After 42 Years in Student Affairs," Arthur Sandeen
- "You Can't Rock the Boat if You're Rowing It: And Other Observations About Life as a Student Affairs Administrator," Gregory S. Blimling
- "An Excerpt from *Cool Passion: Challenging Higher Education*," Arthur W. Chickering
- "Expatriate Workers in International Higher Education," Dennis C. Roberts
- "A Daufuskie Island Lad in an Academic Community: An Extraordinary Journey of Personal Transformation," J. Herman Blake & Ervin R. Simmons

## Eboo Patel and Cassie Meyer Connect With *JCC* Readers on Interfaith Cooperation



Our August 2016 issue features the [article](#), “Navigating Conflicts Related to Religious and Non-Religious Identity on Campus,” authored by leaders in the field of higher education and the interfaith movement who participated in a panel discussion at the **Fifth Annual National Gathering of the President’s Interfaith and Community Service Campus Challenge** in September 2015.

The **President’s Challenge National Gathering** is a community of practitioners deeply committed to interfaith engagement on their campuses. Panelists offered their thoughts on ways to navigate conflicts related to religious identity within campus communities as well as suggestions for ways to uphold the value of religious pluralism in the midst of tension.

Authors of the article who participated in the forum—**Eboo Patel**, Interfaith Youth Core, **Janina Montero**, University of California, Los Angeles, **and Cindi Love**, ACPA – College Student Educators International, offer *JCC* readers their individual reflections on some of the key themes of the panel conversation. **Mary Ellen Giess**, Interfaith Youth Core senior director of co-curricular partnerships, introduced and edited the article.

In this issue of *Connexions*, we highlight this article as well as the ongoing contributions of **Eboo Patel and Cassie Meyer** as *JCC*’s Interfaith Cooperation section editors. Over the years they have authored articles and recruited others to write articles for the journal in the field of interfaith practice and theory.

Eboo is the founder and president of Interfaith Youth Core (IFYC), a Chicago-based organization building the interfaith movement on college campuses. He served on President Barack Obama’s inaugural advisory council of the White House Office of Faith-Based and Neighborhood Partnerships. Eboo is a well-known author and speaker. His book *Acts of Faith: The Story of an Ameri-*

*can Muslim, the Struggle for the Soul of a Generation*, won the Louisville Grawemeyer Award in Religion. Other books include *Sacred Ground: Pluralism, Prejudice, and the Promise of America* and *Interfaith Leadership: A Primer*, which just came out in July 2016.

In *Interfaith Leadership*, Patel explores the core competencies of interfaith leadership before turning to the issues interfaith leaders face and how they can prepare to solve them.

Cassie is the faculty partnerships consultant at IFYC. In this role, she works with faculty engaging interfaith in the classroom. Cassie’s responsibilities include developing online resources for the classroom, managing IFYC’s Teaching Interfaith Understanding Seminars (in partnership with the Council of Independent Colleges), supporting faculty developing courses and curricula in interfaith studies, and overseeing IFYC’s work with the American Academy of Religion.

One of Cassie’s passions is helping IFYC to provide online professional development opportunities for campus staff. For example, her colleague Megan Lane hosted a four-part introductory webinar series for campus professionals.



Spanning the spring semester from February to May, this series focused on the shifts in religious demographics in the United States, strategies for building interfaith relationships, approaches to designing interfaith programs, and responses to conflict on campus. This webinar series was the first step toward a robust offering of digital learning opportunities for professionals with busy schedules and limited resources. IFYC’s intention going forward is to continue to highlight the work of campus professionals, amplifying their voices and pointing to the educators who are addressing religious and worldview diversity in their work with students.

### Articles About Interfaith Cooperation in the *JCC*

- [Introduction to "Interfaith Cooperation on Campus": Interfaith Cooperation as an Institution-Wide Priority](#)
- [Interfaith Cooperation on Campus: Teaching Interfaith Literacy](#)
- [Creating and Sustaining Interfaith Cooperation](#)
- [Youth Voices: Why Interfaith Work Must Happen on College Campuses](#)
- [The Civic Relevance for Interfaith Cooperation for Colleges and Universities](#)

## Updates From NASPA's Expert in Residence for Religious, Secular, and Spiritual Initiatives



Religious, secular, and spiritual identities on our campuses have never been so important when it comes to diversity. With the observance of Ramadan becoming an increasing presence on our campuses and with so much religious intolerance and

violence playing out on the global stage, the opportunity to engage students to find more compassionate narratives is of utmost importance.

This fall, **Cody Nielsen**, expert in residence for religious, secular, and spirituality initiatives at NASPA, continues this work with a line-up of live briefings, including work on leadership, the law and higher education, wellbeing, along with specific blogs focused on mental health, civic engagement, housing and religious identities, LGBTQIA identities, and the intersections between religious, secular, and spiritual identities among other things.

Perhaps most exciting news is the creation of a NASPA

conference to be held **June 22-24, 2017**, at UCLA, which will bring together religious as well as higher education professionals for the purpose of working together on policies and practices needed in higher education to transform the campus climate into one of accommodation for students of all religious, secular, and spiritual identities. More information will follow about the conference.

### Recent Blog Posts by Cody:

- [Reshaping Campus Calendars](#)
- [Why Higher Education Must Pay Attention to Ramadan](#)
- [One Center to set the Bar: The Pasquerilla Spiritual Center](#)

### Live Briefing With Cody:

- [First Year Students & Religious, Secular, & Spiritual Identities](#)

The [Character Clearinghouse](#) has two new editorial team members this year. Estee Hernández is the new editor. She is earning her Ph.D. in higher education at Florida State University, where she also serves as a program coordinator at the Center for Leadership & Social Change. Jason Montalvo is associate editor. He most recently earned his M.Ed. in educational leadership & policy studies from the University of Texas at San Antonio. He will enter Florida State University this fall as a Ph.D. student in higher education.



Readers of the publication are invited to recognize a program or a colleague via the #DaltonSpotlight! Please [click here](#) for more information.

## Index of Blog Posts in *JCC Connexions*

- H Chen & C Yarnal & others: "Should Students' Use of Leisure Time Matter to College Educators?"
- J. Dalton: "Do Colleges and Universities Perpetuate Income Inequality by Favoring The Wealthiest Students?"
- K. Guthrie: "Undergraduate Certificate In Leadership Studies: An Opportunity For Seamless Learning"
- M. Jackson: "What Are the Challenges & Rewards of Being Student Affairs Professionals?"
- F. Lane & J. Schutts: "Predicting the Presence of Purpose Through the Self-Efficacy Beliefs of One's Talents"
- P. Mather with replies from C. Broadhurst, G. Martin, & L. Harrison: "Student Activism and Advocacy"
- P. Mather, C. Bridges, & M. Johnson: "Research on Social Change and Social Justice"
- D. Morgan with co-authors, H. Zimmerman, T. Terrell, & B. Marcotte: "Should Fraternities Be Banned From College Campuses?"
- G. Paine: "Caring About Students – The Work of Student Affairs"
- M. Swanbrow Becker & D. Drum: "When and How Should We Intervene in Students' Lives?"
- S. Watt with replies from L. Roper and C. King: "Racial Conflicts as Learning Opportunities"
- M. Waggoner: "Should Colleges & Universities Care About Spiritual Beliefs of Students?"

## Sean Gehrke Presents Results on STEM Reform Study



Much of **Sean Gehrke's** current work focuses on organizational issues in higher education and student affairs. Most recently, he concluded his role as co-investigator on an NSF-funded study examining the work of four faculty communities focused on STEM reform. Along with **Adrianna Kezar**, the project's principal investigator, he is working actively on disseminating their findings to a variety of research journals in higher education, as well as to audiences interested in this work. The project's [final report](#) can be downloaded from the Pullias Center for Higher Education at the University of Southern California. At the end of July, Sean presented the opening plenary session for the Science Education for New Civic Engagements and Responsibilities (SENCER) Summer Institute, "Creating Communities of Transformation in STEM Education: Lessons from Research" in Chicago, IL.

As director of Institutional Planning, Research, and Assessment at Lewis-Clark State College in Lewiston, ID, Sean draws upon his research training and experience to actively inform institutional decision-making and strategic planning. Prior to joining the community at Lewis-Clark State, he earned his PhD in urban education policy and higher education from the University of Southern California. College students' spiritual development was his first research passion, leading him to explore the relationship between spirituality and leadership, as well as the differential influence of college experiences on spiritual development for students from different racial and ethnic backgrounds. His work on his dissertation involved utilizing social network analysis to explore the outcomes and strategies associated with cross-institutional collaboration and partnerships among student affairs professionals.

### *Journal of College & Character* Editors

**Jon C. Dalton, Co-Editor, The Florida State University**  
**Pamela C. Crosby, Co-Editor, NASPA – Student Affairs Administrators in Higher Education**  
**Peter Mather, Senior Associate Editor, Ohio University**  
**Nicholas A. Bowman, Associate Editor, Bowling Green State University**  
**Pu-Shih Daniel Chen, Associate Editor, University of North Texas**  
**Mathew Johnson, Associate Editor, Central Michigan University**  
**Jenny Small, Associate Editor, Independent Scholar**  
**Janett C. Ramos, Associate Editor for Social Media, Northeastern Illinois University**

### Contributing Editors

**Michael Cuyjet, Opinions and Perspectives, University of Louisville**  
**David M. Eberhardt, What They're Reading, Birmingham-Southern College**  
**Cassie Meyer, Interfaith Cooperation, The Interfaith Youth Core**  
**Eboo Patel, Interfaith Cooperation, The Interfaith Youth Core**  
**Tiffani Riggers-Piehl, Spirituality on Campus, Baylor University**  
**Larry D. Roper, Ethical Issues on Campus, Oregon State University**  
**Darbi L. Roberts, International Perspectives, Columbia University**  
**Dennis C. Roberts, International Perspectives, Independent Consultant**  
**Sue Saunders, Best Practices, University of Connecticut**  
**Scott Seider, Civic Engagement on Campus, Boston University**  
For more information about these publications, email Pam Crosby, co-editor, at [jcc@naspa.org](mailto:jcc@naspa.org)

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NASPA – Student Affairs Administrators in Higher Education

# From the JCC

## *Selected Articles Relating to Spirituality, Religion, & Higher Education*

- Exploring and Nurturing the Spiritual Life of College Students
- From Religion to Praxis: Incorporating Personal Understandings of Religion, Spirituality, and Faith into Teaching
- Methods for Assessing Inner Development: Spirituality and Beyond
- Developing an Assessment of College Students' Spiritual Experiences: The Collegiate Religious and Spiritual Climate Survey
- The Effects of Involvement in Campus Religious Communities on College Student Adjustment and Development
- Assessing Contexts and Practices for Engaging Students' Spirituality
- "Keep Pressing On": Spiritual Epistemology and Its Role in the Collegiate Lives of Black Gay and Bisexual Men
- Secularization or Socialization? A Study of Student Religiosity at an Elite University
- Discrepancies Between Student and Institutional Religious Worldviews
- Stuck in the Middle With Jews: Religious Privilege and Jewish Campus Life
- Assessing the Spiritual Leadership of Students: An Equanimity Study
- "Religion is not a Monolith": Religious Experience at a Midwestern Liberal Arts College
- Measuring Student Learning for Interfaith Cooperation: The Pluralism and Worldview Engagement Rubric
- Spiritual Practices on College and University Campuses: Understanding the Concepts - Broadening the Context
- A Room With a View: Accommodating Hindu Religious Practice on a College Campus
- A Great and Towering Compromise: Religious Practice and Space at Duke University
- Bringing Faith to Campus: Religious and Spiritual Space, Time, and Practice at Stanford University
- Fostering Faithful Engagement With Postmodernity: Practical Suggestions for Christian College Faculty and Administrators
- Creating and Sustaining Interfaith Cooperation on Christian Campuses: Tools and Challenges
- Development and Validation of the Collegiate Religious Dissonance Scale
- Spiritual and Moral Friendships: How Campuses Can Encourage a Search for Meaning and Purpose
- Interfaith Cooperation on Campus: Teaching Interfaith Literacy
- The Intersection of Gay and Christian Identities on Christian College Campuses
- Introduction to "Interfaith Cooperation on Campus": Interfaith Cooperation as an Institution-Wide Priority
- The Role of Student Affairs in Promoting Religious and Secular Pluralism and Interfaith Cooperation
- Youth Voices: Why Interfaith Work Must Happen on College Campuses
- The Civic Relevance for Interfaith Cooperation for Colleges and Universities
- Essential Responsibilities of Student Affairs Administrators: Identifying a Purpose in Life and Helping Students Do the Same
- An Unholy Alliance: Rethinking Collaboration Involving Student Affairs and Faith-Based Student Organizations
- When Faith Fails: Why Nurturing Purpose and Meaning are So Critical to Student Learning and Development in College

## Journal of College and Character

Volume 17, Number 3, August 2016

Spirituality and Contemporary Higher Education, Michael D. Waggoner

An Experimental Approach to Assessing the Perceived Value of Personal and Social Responsibility

Timothy K. Daugherty

Nurturing Compassion Development Among College Students: A Longitudinal Study

Thomas Plante and Katherine Halman

The Invisible Thread: The Influence of Liberal Faculty on Student Political Views at Evangelical Colleges

Emily Hunt and Phil Davignon

Navigating Conflicts Related to Religious and Non-Religious Identity on Campus

Eboo Patel, Janina Montero, Cindi Love, and Mary Ellen Giess

The Rhodes Scholarship in the Current Era of Student Activism: What Do We Consider “Prestigious” and Who Benefits?

LeAnn Adam

Contextual Development: Situating the Social Change Model of Leadership Development Within a Broader Reality of Comprehensive Support

Jeanie Whitten-Andrews

Review of *Closing the Opportunity Gap: Identity-Conscious Strategies for Retention and Student Success*

Reviewed by David Eberhardt

### “Inclusion & Isolation: Restoring Trust and (Re)Building Community on Campus”

#### ***Dalton Institute Looks to 2017 Conference With Hope & Concern for Higher Education Landscape***

The Jon C. Dalton Institute on College Student Values approaches its 27<sup>th</sup> annual conference with a sense of both hope and concern. A scan of the current landscape of higher education in the U.S. reveals broad efforts to drive innovation, expand access to postsecondary education in all its forms, and to make campuses more inviting to an increasingly diverse population.

Yet, we also see continuing uncertainty over higher education funding and increasing student debt, public battles over race, religion, gender, and sexual orientation, and the institution’s role in supporting students, faculty, and staff from across those identity spectrums. Immigration policy, religious affiliation, bathroom access, and shootings of unarmed Black citizens by police all have a place in a tumultuous national conversation that is playing out on our campuses every day, complicating many students’ lives in ways that, in many cases, we never know.

As higher education faculty and administrators, we have a responsibility to listen and to seek understanding of the experiences of students on our campuses, to work actively to promote safe and just campuses as a foundation for providing the education to which our missions

call us.

**The Dalton Institute, which will explore these concerns, takes place February 2-4, 2017, in Tallahassee, Florida. Program proposals and award nominations are now being accepted. Institute registration is now open.**

In addition to keynote addresses from nationally-recognized higher education experts, professionals, and researchers, participants will participate in breakout sessions and networking. New for 2017, the Dalton Institute is introducing a research track offering paper sessions and a research roundtable that will bring together new and experienced researchers to support each other’s work.

Please visit <https://studentvalues.fsu.edu/> to learn more about the Dalton Institute, including how you can join us this year.



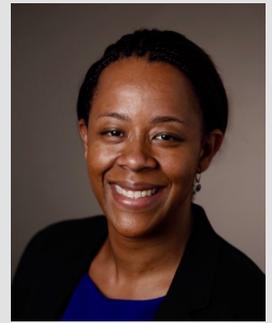
#### **Connect with the Dalton Institute**

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Facebook ([Dalton Institute](https://www.facebook.com/DaltonInstitute))

# JCC Connexions Guest Author

## Making Meaning and Experiencing Equanimity



**Sable Manson**

It is August again, and soon our students will be returning to our colleges and universities for another academic year. While I'm sure many are excited for another fall semester, other students may be coming back to campuses with heavy hearts. This summer has witnessed a number of tragedies here and abroad that have left us all reeling. In the wake of such turmoil we must ask ourselves: How do we, as educators, support our students as they process the myriad of feelings they may be experiencing? Those feelings may be fear, hurt, pain, sadness, grief, anger, or helplessness.

**"Suffering ceases to be suffering at the moment it finds meaning."**

**Viktor E. Frankl – *Man's Search for Meaning***

### Making Meaning

In Viktor E. Frankl's *Man's Search for Meaning* (1984), he recounts his time at a Nazi concentration camp during World War II and the lessons for spiritual survival he learned through his experiences. He argues that while we cannot avoid suffering, we can choose how to cope with it, find meaning in it, and move forward. Most of Frankl's work focused on supporting his patients in their search for what meaning they could find in their suffering. His therapy never sought to deny or mask the severity of the patients' pain; rather, it focused on helping them reframe the situation in a way that would allow them to persist with their lives.

The way students make meaning in the world is a crucial element to their total selves (Small, 2015). Thankfully higher education has taken steps to embrace the multiple paths students take towards personal meaning making. Educators should be encouraged to engage students at the places where they are and in the ways students find meaning. It is rarely about providing the answers; rather, it is about offering our supportive presence as they explore the depths of their experiences.

### Experiencing Equanimity

In *Cultivating the Spirit: How College Can Enhance Students' Inner Lives*, the authors identify equanimity as a spiritual quality that educators can cultivate and nurture in college students. One of the defining characteristics of equanimity is the ability "to find meaning in hardship" or the capacity to "see the silver lining" during difficult or trying times (Astin, Astin, & Lindholm, 2011). The quality of students' lives will ultimately be determined by their capacity to make meaning in the face of uncertainty and even in dislocating circumstances. Colleges and universities can promote the development of equanimity in their students by encouraging reflective, meditative, and contemplative practices both in and outside the classroom. This encouragement might include providing the space for students to process their feelings while also empowering students to channel their energy towards productive action and adequate self-care.

### References

- Astin, A. W., Astin, H. S., & Lindholm, J. A. (2011). *Cultivating the spirit: How college can enhance students inner life*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Frankl, V. E. (1984). *Man's search for meaning*. New York, NY: Washington Square Press.
- Small, J. L. (2015). Introduction. In J. Small (Ed.), *Making meaning: Embracing spirituality, faith, religion, and life purpose in student affairs*. Sterling, VA: Stylus.

**Sable Manson** serves as the program director of the Souljourners in the Office of Religious Life at the University of Southern California. She is a **Journal of College & Character** Ambassador.



**Shannon Nolan-Aranez**

## From JCC Readers...

### Painting a Picture of Spirituality through Leadership Development

**Shannon Nolan-Aranez** is coordinator of the Tukwut (Took-what) Leadership Circle (TLC) at California State University San Marcos. She designed the program's learning outcomes and curriculum using AAC&U's Liberal Education and America's Promise (LEAP) Initiative and the Council for the Advancement of Standards (CAS) general learning outcomes.

As a requirement in the program, students complete seven hours of civic engagement, seven hours of campus engagement, and seven leadership workshops. Students also write and refine their resume, create LinkedIn profile, write a reflection paper and panel exit interview.

In order to earn their leadership certificate signed by the university president as well as receive an engraved leadership medal, students must complete the leadership activities in two academic semesters. The program was recognized as the 2015-2016 campus organization of the year and was featured in a [cover story](#), "Art Helps Students See beyond Disabilities," in the campus magazine.

Spring 2015 was the first semester that the TLC initiated an ongoing community partnership to help TLC students meet their civic engagement hours, as well as support the mission of two local non-profits: Art Miles Mural Project and Mountain Shadows Outreach Programs.

Led by a muralist and United Nations Education Science Cultural Organization (UNESCO) commissioner, Joanne Tawfilis, students learned how to paint with Mountain Shadows clients who had a wide range of intellectual abilities. The collaboration became known as "Mountain Shadows: Painting Our World Radiantly (M:POWR) project" and has become an agent of social change and compassion. M:POWR creates murals as a way to build community and healing in the wake of natural and human disasters, including Umpua Community College last fall and most recently Orlando, FL. Noting that the M:POWR mural project's impact was felt by participants and community members alike, Shannon began to explore how deeply the project influenced students' spiritually.

Using self-authorship as a theoretical framework, her recent research suggests that the mural project cultivated students' sense of leadership and spirituality because it exercised students' ability to author their piece of the mural as well as their mentorship with the clients, thus calling on their ability to foster meaning-making and connections.

Overall, students shared that their actions and identity as student leaders influenced their sense of spirituality and that spirituality is expressed through making meaning and taking action. Students also reported that spirituality is the essence of authentic leadership and that both spirituality and leadership require empathy.

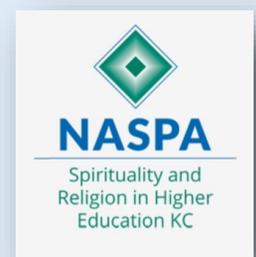
During the M:POWR mural project, Shannon realized that, perhaps, she was also authoring her own spiritual and educational journey by embracing a somewhat controversial topic (intentionally cultivating students' spiritual development through a public university's leadership development activities) and experienced that it added meaning to her life both on and off campus.

### NASPA's Spirituality & Religion in Higher Education Knowledge Community

NASPA's SRHE-KC strives to create, contribute, and enhance conversations, research and awareness about spirituality, secularism, and religion in higher education across all types of post-secondary institutions.

Each year the knowledge community aims to achieve this goal by engaging practitioners, students, and faculty members from higher education, as well as any other persons who are seeking resources and services targeted towards spiritual, secular, and religious personal growth and professional development.

To share just a few examples, they work to accomplish these priorities through preconference programming, webinar dialogues, a monthly newsletter, as well as promoting diverse stories from individuals who share their insights on topics germane to our mission.



Website: [SRHE-KC](#)  
Facebook [Page](#)  
Twitter [Page](#)

# From JCC Readers...

Marilee Bresciani Ludvik



## Compassion Training: A Necessity for Student Success Leaders?

Many student affairs and student success leaders complain about empathy burnout. As such, they may unknowingly begin to adopt behaviors and attitudes that make them appear “indifferent” to students who are experiencing frustrations, micro-aggressions, and other serious forms of significant challenges to their ability to succeed in college. While the adoption of indifference or an attitude that looks similar to skepticism is viewed as a survival necessity by some student affairs leaders, students who see this attitude experience feelings of invalidation, marginalization, and perhaps oppression. Recent research indicates there is now another option for student affairs leaders to be with daily pain and suffering while not experiencing emotional contagion.

Compassion training that begins with establishing a foundation of mindfulness practice has been shown to cultivate an ability for student affairs leaders to (a) feel for students, (b) express an understanding of why students would be in pain and suffering, (c) notice a desire to alleviate students from their pain and suffering, and (d) take action (or not) in order to alleviate students’ pain and suffering. These practices allow students to actually share their very real experiences with the leaders who may be able to respond to those experiences in a way that addresses the root causes of those experiences, if at all possible.

The compassion training program component of a curriculum called **Integrative Inquiry at San Diego State University** is reporting to provide leaders with a methodology that will assist them in avoiding empathy burn out, while increasing their capacity to be with students who are expressing emotional and physical pain. The methodology also allows leaders to maintain their ability to access cognitive problem-solving and analytical reasoning fostering positive and empowering action for the students. In addition, students who fully engage in the 16-week Integrative Inquiry course are noticing their own decreases in stress, and anxiety, their ability to differentiate their own pain and suffering from those whom they serve, and are reporting an ability to be with others’ expressions of faith and religion while maintaining their own identity, and spiritual and religious practices.

**Marilee Bresciani Ludvik**, professor of postsecondary educational leadership at San Diego State University, welcomes inquiries regarding more information on the compassion training component of Integrative Inquiry and the research supporting these claims. Her email address at SDEU is [mbrescia@mail.sdsu.edu](mailto:mbrescia@mail.sdsu.edu).