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### By the Book: Spiritual Formation and Conduct Codes at Selected Christian Universities

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BY THE BOOK: SPIRITUAL FORMATION AND  
CONDUCT CODES AT SELECTED  
CHRISTIAN UNIVERSITIES

by

Gerald A. Longjohn, Jr.

Dissertation

Submitted to the Faculty of

Olivet Nazarene University

School of Graduate and Continuing Studies

in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for

the Degree of

Doctor of Education

in

Ethical Leadership

May 2013

BY THE BOOK: SPIRITUAL FORMATION AND  
CONDUCT CODES AT SELECTED  
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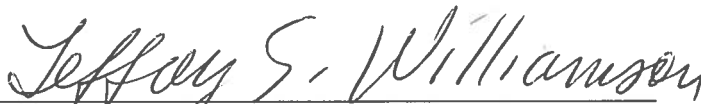
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## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

At approximately the halfway point of my doctoral studies my family and I spent a weekend along the Michigan lakeshore. My sons and I decided to venture down a large dune to the lake. The trip down the dune took only seven minutes, but the trip back up was a hot, grueling hour and half. At many points throughout those 90 minutes I would have happily quit, but I eventually made it to the top, spurred on by the gentle, persistent encouragement of my sons.

That trip up the dune has been a powerful picture for me of the process of completing this research project. At many points in the journey the temptation to give up was almost overwhelming, but I was encouraged, bolstered, and strengthened by so many. At Olivet I was challenged and sharpened by Dr. David Van Heemst (my adviser), Dr. Jeff Williamson (my reader), Dr. Houston Thompson, Dr. Melvin Welch, and friends from three different cohorts. Study participants at four different universities shared their time and their insights with me. Colleagues and students at Cornerstone University have extended their grace and support repeatedly in this learning endeavor. My research assistant, Susan Whaley, provided invaluable logistical support and insight.

Most importantly, just as they were when I was struggling my way up the physical dune, my family has been right at my side during this journey, sticking with me through the process and cheering me on to completion. I am deeply grateful and am pretty sure I owe you some ice cream.

## DEDICATION

I dedicate this dissertation to my wife and to my sons. Beth, you have so faithfully and graciously been my companion for more than two decades and I love serving the Lord with you. Thank you for believing in me and continually reminding me of God's goodness. Owen and Micah, it is a privilege and a delight to see God at work in you. Studying college students makes me all the more excited to see what the next chapter holds for each of you!

## ABSTRACT

This study investigated the integration of spiritually formative goals with student conduct codes at selected Christian universities. Utilizing a case study methodology, this study incorporated content analysis of university documents and focus group interviews with campus stakeholders to assess the formulation, revision, communication and enforcement of the campus policies. Qualitative data analysis software, NVivo, was used as a means of coding and tracking themes from a wide range of data sources. Campus results from the Student Satisfaction Inventory were incorporated as a means of triangulating the data. This study concluded that the participating universities were extensively integrating previously researched spiritually formative goals into the way their campus conduct codes were formulated, communicated, and enforced. Additionally, this study identified an additional spiritually formative goal for student conduct codes at Christian colleges. Data collected suggests that codes also exist to provide an opportunity for university personnel to reflect the character of God by pursuing restoration and relationship in the lives of students. This research also indicates that while many students may appreciate the somewhat protective atmosphere afforded by a Christian college, additional attention needs to be focused on cultivating positive spiritual disciplines and fostering wisdom in students' lives as means of preparing them for life after college.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapter	Page
I. INTRODUCTION .....	1
Statement of the Problem.....	2
Background .....	4
Research Questions .....	14
Description of Terms .....	14
Significance of the Study .....	16
Process to Accomplish.....	17
Summary .....	25
II. REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE .....	27
Introduction.....	27
Spirituality and the University .....	27
Spirituality and the Student.....	33
Spirituality and University Personnel .....	39
Student Conduct Codes and the University .....	43
Student Conduct Codes and the Student.....	54
Student Conduct Codes and University Personnel .....	59
Conclusion .....	66
III. METHODOLOGY .....	68
Introduction.....	68



Chapter	Page
Research Design.....	69
Population .....	71
Data Collection .....	81
Analytical Methods .....	90
Limitations .....	97
Summary .....	102
IV. FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS .....	103
Introduction.....	103
Findings.....	104
Conclusions.....	178
Implications and Recommendations .....	188
REFERENCES .....	196
APPENDIXES	
A. SSI Scale Items .....	208
B. Site Selection Criteria.....	210
C. Random Invitation Student Participant Data.....	215
D. Documents Submitted for Content Analysis.....	218
E. Campus Interview Schedules .....	221
F. Focus Group Questions.....	224
G. NVivo Coding Comparison Data.....	227

## LIST OF TABLES

Table	Page
1. University Admissions Policies .....	211
2. University Handbook Policies (Part 1) .....	212
3. University Handbook Policies (Part 2) .....	213
4. University Handbook Policies (Part 3) .....	214
5. Random Invitation Student Participant Information (Galatia College) .....	216
6. Random Invitation Student Participant Information (Ephesus College) .....	216
7. Random Invitation Student Participant Information (Philippi College) .....	217
8. Random Invitation Student Participant Information (Colosse College) .....	217
9. NVivo Coding Comparison Data for Selected Nodes .....	228

## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

The rumor circulating around Cornerstone University's campus was that Spiritual Formation was the place you had to go if you got in trouble.

For many, the rumor was fostered somewhat playfully. However, it contributed to an underlying suspicion that many students – and even a number of faculty members – viewed the department responsible for the development and spiritual formation of students as merely being the police of the campus. In Cornerstone's context, Spiritual Formation is the larger umbrella term for the functions of a student affairs department, so judicial affairs and student discipline are, in fact, under the purview of the Department of Spiritual Formation. The personnel serving in the department do not shy away from their legal and ethical responsibility to communicate and enforce the policies established by the university. However, the idea that their entire function was viewed through a singular lens which seemed disconnected from the broader purpose of encouraging students toward maturity in Christ was deeply disconcerting to them.

While the tension is faced in a unique way in a context where the entire division is named Spiritual Formation, Cornerstone is not the only university context that requires administrators to consider the relationship between judicial affairs, student handbooks, and spiritually or morally formative goals. In fact, as student affairs personnel consider their educational role in students' lives and their contribution to the educational mission

of the university, discussions are surfacing regarding the nature of the student handbook and the responsibilities of the judicial code (Hoekema, 1994; Lau, 2005).

### Statement of the Problem

Christian colleges and universities need to assess whether the student conduct codes they are formulating, communicating, and enforcing are effectively integrated with spiritually formative goals. A survey of the literature yielded neither studies of this nature nor an established means of undertaking this specific type of assessment. A survey of research related to student conduct codes and the integration of spiritually formative goals, even in the Christian college and university setting revealed a sizable gap. Even the Council for Christian Colleges and Universities' recent call for research on the assessment and practice of spiritual formation focused primarily on campus programming and practices without mentioning the possibility that research on campus conduct codes might be warranted (Council for Christian Colleges and Universities, 2011b).

Research on student spiritual formation in the Christian campus setting has explored the impact of both co-curricular and curricular programming (Ma, 2003) and campus stakeholder perception of the reasons for campus conduct codes (Lau, 2005). Calls for greater intentionality in the spiritual development of students highlighted the need for students to be held accountable for their conduct and educated toward ethical integrity (Dalton, Eberhardt, Bracken, & Echols, 2006) but no study specifically investigated the relationship of student spiritual development and the campus conduct codes.

Assessing the educational effectiveness of campus conduct codes and student discipline is challenging. Hoekema (1994) succinctly stated, "To assess the actual

functioning of disciplinary rules on campus is an undertaking fraught with traps for the unwary and the naïve” (p. 116). However, cultivation of an effective campus community calls for the ongoing assessment and evaluation of this aspect of campus culture as a means of enhancing the educational experience (Dannells, 1997; Lau, 2005).

It is an appropriate time for such a study because the role of the student affairs profession is in transition. What began as a primarily spiritual endeavor early in the history of American universities progressed through successive emphases on humanitarian guidance, service provision, and developmental science (Loy & Painter, 1997). An earlier framework that considered student affairs personnel to be substitutes for parental authority (commonly known as *in loco parentis*) is no longer considered relevant or appropriate (Baldizan, 1998; Hoekema, 1994; Lowery, 1998; Paterson, 1998). That model’s demise provided an opening for the consideration of new paradigms for campus conduct and student discipline (Hoekema; Paterson). Hoekema elaborated:

...another sort of revolution actually has occurred on the campuses in the past thirty years, one that has dramatically changed the lives of students and will shape the future course of American society. It is a revolution in modes of student life and in the relationship between students and the institution. It is a revolution not of political or economic upheaval but of altered roles and expectations, and it has created a new social and moral order on campus. (p. 12)

The purpose of this study was to investigate the relationship, if any, between spiritually formative goals and the formulation, communication, and enforcement of campus conduct codes at selected Christian colleges and universities.

## Background

The key literature forming the background to this study was drawn from the theorists, practitioners, and researchers in the field of student affairs. It highlighted the nature and role of the institution in fostering moral education, discussed the nature and purpose of student conduct codes, and considered the unique role of the student affairs professional. Before considering these topics, however, it was important to spend some time considering the characteristics of typical students served by Christian colleges and universities, particularly relating to their posture toward spirituality and moral formation.

A research team commissioned by the Higher Education Research Institute and led by Alexander Astin and Helen Astin coordinated a large-scale survey to assess the spiritual development of college students (Higher Education Research Institute, 2004). After analyzing the survey results from 112,232 respondents from 236 institutions the conclusions overwhelmingly pointed to significant spiritual interest, religious involvement and a willingness to put spiritual ideals into action through service (Higher Education Research Institute). Further analysis of the survey data pointed to the psychological and physical benefits of high spiritual interest and involvement on the part of students (Higher Education Research Institute). This study was particularly fascinating because it surfaced from researchers at UCLA, well outside the boundaries of the Christian college and university community.

However, Smith (2009), whose extensive longitudinal study of the spiritual formation and religious practices of adolescents and emerging adults has yielded significant data on this generation of students, reminded us that “Emerging adults are, on most sociological measures, the least religious adults in the United States today” (p. 102).

They may demonstrate a growing in spirituality, but it is a broad, highly pluralistic view of religion and spirituality that often views faith as a non-essential, but potentially helpful and somewhat beneficial component of life (Higher Education Research Institute, 2004; Smith, 2005). Smith elaborated:

The religion that many U.S. teens acclaim today is not commendable for youth because, for example, it is revealed in truth by a holy and almighty God who calls all to a turning from self and a serving of God in gratitude, humility, and righteousness. Nor is it commendable, alternatively, because it inducts them into a community of people embodying a historically rooted tradition of identity, practices, and ethics that define their selfhood, loyalties, and commitments. Rather, the religion that many U.S. teenagers acclaim today is for them commendable because it helps people make good life choices and helps them feel happy. (p. 154)

It is also important to note that much of what shapes students spiritually has already happened by the time they arrive at their chosen college or university. The typical emerging adult entering a U.S. college or university has already had their faith and religious practices shaped significantly by their parents (Smith, 2005). If religious or actively practicing a faith tradition, they very likely have been somewhat socialized into that religious practice by parents or other significant adults with whom they have formed a strong relational bond (Smith, 2009). Smith's (2009) research indicated that "Most people simply continue being essentially the same people that their lives growing up have shaped them to be, including their way of relating to religion" (pp. 180-181).

These students may not be particularly open to significant input from others with regard to morality. While the spiritual and religious practices of adolescents and emerging adults are significantly shaped by their parents and other key adults, their view of faith and morality is highly individualistic (Smith, 2005; 2009). Most do not consider it necessary to find a source of objective morality outside of themselves but instead choose to base their concept of right and wrong off of personal intuition and a vague concept of Karma as a means of moral justice (Smith, 2009). In fact, with only a few exceptions in Smith's (2005) survey population (conservative Evangelical and Mormon teens), many do not even seem to have the capacity to move outside of their individualism when moral issues are considered. Smith (2005) elaborated:

What almost all U.S. teenagers – and adults – lack, however, are any tools or concepts or rationales by which to connect and integrate their radical relativistic individualistic selves, on the one hand, with their commonsensical, evaluative, moralist selves, on the other. (p. 144)

Even stepping outside the focus on student spirituality revealed that the current generation of students brings serious challenges to the process of crafting and enforcing morally formative codes of conduct. Students arrive “with baggage far heavier than we have the skills, patience, or desire to handle” (Healy & Liddell, 1998, p. 46). The students may not even be equipped to consider their moral and social responsibilities (Ardaiolo, Neilson, & Daugherty, 2011). Millennial students, having grown up in an environment that frequently offered reward instead of punishment, pose a unique challenge to the university in discipline contexts (Lake, 2009a). Many of the emerging adults entering the university today, “simply carry on as best as they can, as sovereign, autonomous,



empowered individuals who lack a reliable basis for any particular conviction or direction by which to guide their lives” (Smith, 2009, p. 294).

Thankfully, however, higher education still has hope for these students. Rather than being discouraged by the traits of these emerging adults, many student affairs researchers and theorists are optimistic about the prospect of fostering morality and character in the lives of students. Dalton and Crosby (2011) wrote:

Over the past 20 years, a very interesting and unexpected thing has happened in higher education. Instead of becoming more secular and irreligious, colleges and universities have become increasingly engaged with the moral values and character development of their students. (p. 1)

University leaders pursue this type of development in students by working toward a moral and caring sense of campus community (Dalton & Crosby, 2011; Dannells, 1997; Healy & Liddell, 1998; Hoekema, 1994; Lau, 2005). Passionate voices in the field have advocated for wisdom as a key goal of student development, calling on student affairs professionals to contribute to an integrated learning environment (Guthrie, 1997b).

Each aspect of the student learning experience—whether cognitive, psychosocial, vocational, or more—not only must find proper expression in the Christian college but also must be accepted and honored as a legitimate component of student learning by the institution’s learning leadership. (Guthrie, 1997a, p. 67)

Within the non-Christian university community, the battle is sometimes uphill, hampered by the encroachment of postmodern thought, which offers:

...a nonjudgmental, ‘do your own thing’ philosophy that substitutes for the values that bind communities and societies together. This philosophy promotes an

increased sense of victimization, entitlement, and cynicism, punctuated by pessimism and a general lack of civility, that is evident among many of today's college students. (Blimling, 1998, p. 69)

The Christian college, however, is able to draw from an objective standard and a cohesive worldview from which goals, assessment, and community standards can be formed (Thomas & Guthrie, 1997). The students served and educated in the Christian university will undoubtedly still struggle with what Christians see as catastrophic damage inflicted by the lingering effects of sin, but as Thomas and Guthrie wrote, "What may distinguish Christians, however, is the freedom that comes from knowing that the Fall is not the final word personally or cosmologically" (p. 9). The options available for Christian student affairs professionals also allow for a more comprehensive approach that "suggests the integrality of the college learning experience rather than the sum-of-the-parts approach typified by the student development movement" (Loy & Painter, 1997, p. 28).

The Council for Christian Colleges and Universities (2011b) commissioned a study that sought to define, facilitate, and assess student spiritual formation in the college context. The participants in the initial discussions for the study outlined sixteen key elements of spiritual formation that proved helpful for the background of this study. Their definition stated that in the Christian college and university context, spiritual formation:

1. [is] God-initiated, Christ-centered, Holy Spirit-led
2. [is] Rooted in and guided by Holy Scripture
3. [is] Informed by historic Christian tradition

4. Fosters an ongoing awareness of the human condition, personally and universally
5. Affirms repentance as evidenced by change of behavior
6. Aims at love of God and others
7. Motivates to self-less service
8. [is] A holistic development process which involves mind, body, and soul
9. [is] Communal and relational in nature
10. Embraces practice of various spiritual disciplines
11. Involves a spiritual/social ecology
12. [provides] Increasing evidence of appropriating the character of Christ and the fruit of the Spirit
13. Supports the local and global church
14. Advances gospel witness, biblical justice and reconciliation
15. Renews and transforms the mind
16. Expresses itself in positive character qualities and behavior. (p. 26)

The numerous ways in which Christian colleges and universities seek to foster moral and spiritual growth were beyond the scope of this study. However, the research problem under consideration merited a closer look at a key element of the student affairs profession – the student conduct code.

Most universities publish a student conduct code which is “higher education institutions’ way of informing students about the values of the academy as they affect the limits of student behavior and about the consequences of violating those limits” (Dannells, 1997, p. 49). Hoekema (1994) noted that a good conduct code contains rules

that serve three primary functions: keeping students from harm, promoting an atmosphere of free discussion, and fostering a sense of community within the campus. Student codes of conduct should be accompanied by a clear rationale for each policy (Hoekema; Lake, 2009b).

At the most basic level this conduct code can function as the contract between a student and a university (Dannells, 1997), particularly in a private institution such as a Christian college. As long as the contract is clearly communicated to participants and is fairly applied and enforced, its policies are not under significant outside scrutiny. But Lowery (1998) pointed out that “rules alone are not enough to change student attitudes. Colleges and universities must seek to develop educational programs that support the underlying values of these policies and the development of individual responsibility” (p. 18).

Lau’s (2005) qualitative study at two Christian liberal-arts institutions yielded valuable insight into the reasons for behavior codes in the Christian college context. While some of the reasons perceived by students, staff, and administrators for the behavior codes were not explicitly or exclusively spiritually formative in nature, many of the reasons discovered in his research were rooted in a Christian worldview and seemed predicated on a desire for students to grow spiritually. The behavior code is intended to foster Christian values and enhance a sense of Christian community, to protect students from “worldly” influences, to enhance an educational environment that fosters the integration of faith and learning, and to effectively prepare students to live as Christians after college. Christian schools are further marked by retaining, Lau indicated, some semblance of *in loco parentis*, often seeing their role as a continuation of the work begun

by parents in the lives of their children, who, as emerging adults, are still in need of considerable guidance.

At the front lines of responsibility for the communication and enforcement of the campus conduct code are student affairs personnel (Baldizan, 1998). It is a challenging job that necessitates careful balance and “the ability to maintain good order through admonition, example, and personal reprimand for minor infractions” (Hoekema, 1994, p. 69). The challenge faced by these professionals is to ensure that their approach is not merely a legalistic enforcement of the rules, but a commitment to “actively and positively embrace their responsibility to encouraging the building of moral, ethical, communities on campus” (Dannells, 1997, p. 97). This requires careful navigation of the tension between developmental goals and legal responsibilities when working with students (Healy & Liddell, 1998). The process of educating students necessitates mentoring them and modeling ethical and moral behavior (Blimling, 1998). The role of student affairs professionals in facilitating moral, ethical, and spiritual development in students can be enhanced when it involves collaboration with faculty members (Baldizan; Capeheart-Meningall, 2005; Hoekema) and when it fosters a climate of integration and dialogue among faculty, staff, and students on the campus (Dannells; Hoekema; Lau, 2005; Lowery, 1998).

Invariably, the student affairs professional is required not only to formulate and communicate a code of conduct for students, but to address violations of the conduct code through disciplinary measures. Sadly, however, Ma’s (2003) research on the spiritual impact of various curricular and co-curricular components of a Christian college

student's experience indicated that students rank contact with administrators as one of the least spiritually formative factors. But, as Lau (2005) pointed out:

Further, discipline often represents a point of crisis in the lives of students. Such life "crises" are common in the higher education environment and often are transition points for students in their own personal development. Part of the task of education is to create meaning and a cognitive dissonance that allows development and learning to occur. (p. 562)

These moments of crisis featured prominently in Smith's (2009) description of the factors influencing religious growth and practice in emerging adults. For example, a student's sexual experimentation may create a sense of cognitive dissonance between their previously held beliefs and their current lifestyle choices (Smith). If this dissonance is addressed carefully through a discipline context, the potential exists for morally and spiritually formative results. "Particular confluences of challenges, problems, alternatives, opportunities, and solutions can give rise to new identities, new commitments, new life strategies, new beliefs, new relationships, and new practices" (p. 209). Interestingly, Christian college students ranked working through moments of crisis as one of the most spiritually formative components of their college experience (Ma, 2003).

Navigating these difficult moments can provide valuable opportunities for student learning, provided that student affairs professionals "...recognize the tendency for the purpose of discipline to become simply a means to uphold the norms of the community by punishment" (Gehring, 1998, p. 264) and choose to use them, instead, as an

educational opportunity designed to address student needs (Baldizan, 1998; Dannells, 1997; Gregory, 1998; Guthrie, 1997a; Zdziarski, 1998).

Christian student affairs professionals can draw on the model of Scripture which views discipline as a necessary and even welcomed part of the spiritual growth process (Hebrews 12). Guthrie (1997a) put this in a theological framework by stating that student learning could be viewed “as part of the process of sanctification” (p. 68).

But the responsibility does not exclusively rest on the professional staff. Students can also play a particular role in developing and facilitating moral and ethical development on the college campus, particularly at universities that explicitly utilize honor codes, or student-formulated commitments to academic integrity (Dannells, 1997; Hoekema, 1994; Kibler, 1998). These are effective, Hoekema wrote, “because they appeal to students’ desire to live up to a higher standard than that expected of them in ordinary contexts” (p. 79). While the term is usually restricted to codes intended to promote academic integrity and reduce cheating and plagiarism, the concept illustrates a valuable point. Student investment in formulating and enforcing honor codes can contribute powerfully to campus culture that values integrity (Kibler) and can much more effectively shape student behavior (Hoekema).

The background topics discussed pointed repeatedly to the necessity of additional research. Given the amount of time, attention, and resources invested in formulating, explaining, and enforcing student conduct codes, research into the integration of spiritually formative goals in the formulation, communication, and enforcement of student conduct codes in the Christian college context is warranted and essential.

## Research Questions

The major research questions for this dissertation were:

1. To what extent, if any, are spiritually formative goals integrated into the formulation and revision of student conduct codes at selected Christian colleges and universities?
2. To what extent, if any, are spiritually formative goals integrated into the communication and enforcement of student conduct codes at selected Christian colleges and universities?
3. To what extent, if any, do students perceive the integration of spiritually formative goals in the formulation, communication, and enforcement of student conduct codes at selected Christian colleges and universities?
4. What interventions or actions, if any, by student affairs personnel affect (positively or negatively) student perception of the integration of spiritually formative goals into the formulation, communication, and enforcement of student conduct codes?

## Description of Terms

*Christian College.* For the purposes of this study, this term referred to any member institution (whether designated a college or university) within the Council for Christian Colleges and Universities (CCCCU), a non-profit coalition of Christian colleges and universities with 111 member institutions (Council for Christian Colleges & Universities, 2011a).



*Honor code.* This has specific definition as “a statement that establishes the expectations of the academic community regarding honor and integrity from all members” (Melendez, as cited in Kibler, 1998, p. 164).

*Spiritual Formation.* This study adopted the definition of this term by the Council for Christian Colleges and Universities: “Spiritual formation is integral to Christian higher education – it is the biblically guided process in which people are being transformed into the likeness of Christ by the power of the Holy Spirit within the faith community in order to love and serve God and others” (Council for Christian Colleges & Universities, 2011b, p. 26).

*Spiritually formative goals.* The spiritually formative goals identified were drawn from the review of the literature, particularly the work of Lau (2005), Guthrie (1997a), and Hoekema (1994). These were specifically recognized as spiritually formative goals directly related to the formulation and communication of student conduct codes.

Abridged and reorganized below, these goals are:

1. To maintain an atmosphere that is protected against spiritually detrimental influences.
2. To contribute to an environment that is conducive to the integration of faith and learning.
3. To cultivate a community that is conducive to spiritually beneficial influences.
4. To provide moral guidance in students’ lives as they progress to maturity.
5. To promote discipline in students’ lives as a reflection of Christian values (Lau, 2005).

6. To foster a sense of mutual moral responsibility in the lives of students (Hoekema, 1994).

7. To encourage the lifelong practice of wisdom in students' lives (Guthrie, 1997a).

*Student Conduct Code.* Student conduct codes “are higher education institutions’ way of informing students about the values of the academy as they affect the limits of student behavior and about the consequences of violating those limits” (Dannells, 1997, p. 49).

### Significance of the Study

It is anticipated that the community of Christian student affairs professionals will benefit greatly from this research into the possible integration of spiritually formative goals and student conduct codes. In addition to addressing a gap in the research literature the study could yield a number of benefits to individual Christian universities.

This study should stimulate discussion and reflection on the campuses studied, as well as in the Association for Christians in Student Development (ACSD) and CCCU. The research might assist student affairs professionals as they train student leaders who are often at the front lines of disciplinary enforcement. At the macro level, it could benefit organizations such as ACSD and the CCCU as they seek to sharpen higher education professionals while retaining a focus on the spiritual formation of students.

It is hoped that the study will provide encouragement and insight for the student affairs professional who is seeking to reconcile the sometimes overwhelming responsibility of explaining and enforcing university policies with a passion to see

students maturing in Christ. This, in turn, will ultimately benefit the students served on these campuses.

### Process to Accomplish

The research questions and associated topics with this study were best addressed with a qualitative study, “promoting a deep and holistic or complex understanding of a particular phenomenon, such as an environment, a process, or even a belief” (Gay, Mills & Airasian, 2006, p. 399). The flexible nature of this type of study and the time spent within the campus settings allowed for deeper observation, exploration, and understanding of the topic with a goal of providing “an understanding of a social setting or activity as viewed from the perspective of the research participants” (p. 402).

This investigation that took place on a number of university campuses featured elements of a comparative case study. Case studies are not only applicable to individuals, “they can be done on a group, on an institution, on a neighborhood, on an innovation, on a decision, on a service, on a programme, and on many other things” (Robson, 2002, p. 181). Case studies utilize observations, interviews, documents, and information about a specific context to identify patterns and themes (Leedy & Ormrod, 2005). In particular, they “may be useful for investigating how an individual or program changes over time, perhaps as a result of certain circumstances or interventions” (p. 135).

Selection of universities invited to participate in this study necessitated initially narrowing the pool to institutions within the CCCU. Membership criteria for the CCCU include regional accreditation, Christ-centered mission statements, hiring practices that limit faculty and administrative appointments to professing Christians, and high standards of financial accountability (Council for Christian Colleges & Universities, 2011c).

Limiting the study population to CCCU member institutions provided an initial filter to identify like-minded, similar institutions.

To appropriately delimit the scope of the study, the potential sample size was restricted to CCCU colleges and universities located in the Great Lakes region of the Midwest. This represented a purposive sample (Leedy & Ormrod, 2005; Robson, 2002), offering proximity to the researcher without compromising the characteristics of good informants, which according to Gay et al. (2006), “include the ability to be reflective and thoughtful, to communicate (orally, in writing, or both) effectively with the researcher, and to be comfortable with the researcher’s presence at the research site” (p. 113).

To narrow the sample further, an analysis of the admissions criteria (specifically relating to a student’s faith commitment) and selected policies in the student conduct codes or student handbooks of CCCU universities and colleges in a four state region (any CCCU universities or colleges in Michigan, Illinois, Indiana, and Ohio) was undertaken to select universities that showed general congruence of the selected policies and the rationale for those policies.

The specific conduct code policies selected for comparison in the sample selection process were drawn from Lau’s (2002) dissertation on the reasons for behavior codes at two selected Christian universities. One of the study questions asked campus stakeholders to identify whether or not policies enhanced or detracted from the institution’s Christian mission. The policies most clearly identified as contributing to an institution’s Christian mission related to: smoking, alcohol, chapel, academic dishonesty, relationship with the opposite sex, theft, sexual harassment, weapons, discrimination, sexual assault, altercations, and Sunday observance (Lau). The conduct codes for CCCU

schools in the Midwest region were accessed online and the specific policies in each of these areas were charted and examined for congruence by two researchers. The potential sample size of universities and colleges to be studied was narrowed to those demonstrating congruence in the selected policies.

The admissions processes of each college and university in the Midwest region were also researched, again using data available on each university or college's website. The study was delimited to universities that required students to discuss or reference their personal faith during the admissions process, which allowed for an assumption that students at least marginally acknowledged the Christian faith (and spiritually formative goals) as a valid basis for authority.

Invitations to CCCU institutions selected for participation in the survey were emailed to each institution's chief student development officer (CDSO), accompanied by follow-up phone calls within two weeks. Applications were made to each institution's institutional review board, accompanied by documentation of the approval of the home university's IRB.

A content analysis of key university documents (student handbooks, internal memos, and trustee documents related to major policy changes) began the process of answering the first research question: To what extent, if any, are spiritually formative goals integrated into the formulation and revision of student conduct codes at selected Christian colleges and universities? A content analysis, defined as, "a detailed and systematic examination of the contents of a particular body of material for the purpose of identifying patterns, themes, or biases" (Leedy & Ormrod, 2005, p. 142), allowed for an unobtrusive, indirect means of research (Robson, 2002).

Once the materials for study were identified, the specific characteristics to be studied were selected (Leedy & Ormrod, 2005). This necessitated clarifying spiritually formative goals and operationalizing them in a way that allowed for exhaustive and mutually exclusive categorization of the content in the documents (Robson, 2002). The categories utilized comprised the spiritually formative goals outlined in the Description of Terms earlier in this chapter. The research entailed scrutinizing the document for these themes (Leedy & Ormrod), paying attention to both manifest content, which was physically present, and latent content, which was inferred or interpreted by the reader (Robson). Each sentence or paragraph relating to one of the seven spiritually formative goals was marked, noting the specific policy or issue related to the goal, as well as whether or not specific Bible verses were referenced. As the content analysis progressed, the researcher gained familiarity with the data and took note of any additional themes that surfaced during the analysis (Gay et al., 2006).

In order to ensure content reliability through the content analysis of this subjective material, a research assistant was employed to serve as an additional rater (Leedy & Ormrod, 2005; Robson, 2002). After the documents were reviewed, a composite of the resulting coding from the two raters was entered into a spreadsheet for later analysis (Leedy & Ormrod).

A secondary means of answering the first research question was interviews with university administrators responsible for policy formation. These interviews were scheduled during visits to each of the selected campuses during the fall semester of 2012 with follow-up visits for clarification a few weeks later. These were semi-structured interviews, allowing for consistency of questions (provided through questionnaires in

advance) and information solicited at each campus (Gay et al., 2006). To maximize the time available and to benefit from the interaction of interviewees with each other, the interviews were conducted as focus group discussions (Leedy & Ormrod, 2005). The interviews were audiotaped for later transcription (Gay et al.).

Content analysis of key documents from the selected campus helped to answer the second research question: To what extent, if any, are spiritually formative goals integrated into the communication and enforcement of student conduct codes at selected Christian colleges and universities? In addition to student handbooks, internal policy and sanction guides, training materials, internal memos, and sanction letters (with individual identifiers removed) were studied. Manifest or latent references to the previously identified spiritually formative goals were logged, along with notations regarding related policies and sanctions.

During the campus site visits, semi-structured interviews with focus groups comprising staff members and student leaders responsible for student conduct enforcement provided additional depth of information and allowed for clarification and verification of the themes discovered during the content analysis. Staff members and students were interviewed separately, allowing student leaders to speak confidentially. Questionnaires were distributed in advance and each interview was audiotaped for later transcription.

The third research question was: To what extent, if any, do students perceive the integration of spiritually formative goals in the formulation, communication, and enforcement of student conduct codes at selected Christian colleges and universities? Addressing this question required semi-structured focus group interviews with a

representative sample of the traditional undergraduate population. The selection process utilized proportional stratified sampling, recommended for studies in which the “population contains different strata that appear in different proportions within the population” (Leedy & Ormrod, 2005, p. 205). This sampling process pursued the goal of representation from each class at the universities and colleges selected. Basic demographic information was collected from study participants (gender, age, school year, major, and residential status). Students’ names were logged by the researcher for follow-up interviews, but their identities were kept confidential. Questionnaires were distributed electronically in advance and the interviews were audiotaped for transcription.

As a means of triangulating the data collected for research question three, responses for specific questions from the Student Satisfaction Inventory (SSI) were submitted by each participating institution. The SSI, developed by Noel-Levitz (2011), is regularly administered to numerous campuses each year. In addition to providing longitudinal data for individual institutions that use it in a regular assessment cycle, it allows for comparison to other universities. The assessment requires students to respond to a series of statements paired with two Likert scales. Students use the first Likert scale to indicate how important the issue identified in the statement is to them and then use the second Likert scale to indicate their satisfaction with that issue at their institution.

The SSI provides institutions the option of including additional statements for specific institutional assessment. A number of CCCU schools utilize a portion of these customized fields to assess spiritually formative goals. These questions, combined with standard SSI questions relating to student conduct codes provided a valuable set of



quantitative data that directly related to this study. The questions selected for analysis in the study are outlined in Appendix A.

Participating institutions were asked to provide the responses to the selected questions from the two most recently administered SSI's. Collecting two data sets provided the opportunity to observe whether or not there had been institutional change over time. The institutional results were also compared with CCCU norms or private four-year college norms, based on what was provided by the institution.

The submitted SSI results were also reviewed in relation to the fourth research question: What interventions or actions, if any, by student affairs personnel affect (positively or negatively) student perception of the integration of spiritually formative goals into the formulation, communication, and enforcement of student conduct codes? In particular, campus-specific results from two subsequent sets of SSI data, when submitted, were compared to see if there significant changes in student satisfaction related to the selected items.

Focus group discussions with administrators and student affairs personnel added qualitative data related to research question four, utilizing both convergent (or closed) answers relating to whether there had been major policy changes linked with the spiritually formative goals between administrations of the SSI at the specific campus, and divergent (or open-ended) questions allowing for elaboration and discussion (Gay et al., 2006). Questionnaires were distributed in advance and the interviews were audiotaped for later transcription.

Additional focus group discussions were conducted with the previously selected students at each university or college. These interviews centered on student perception of

changes in the campus conduct policies, the communication of those policies, and the enforcement of those policies. These were, again, semi-structured interviews with advance questionnaires provided to the students. Student names were compared by the researcher to previous focus group discussions with the sampled students and basic demographic information (gender, age, school year, and major) was collected, but student identities were kept confidential.

Analysis of the data collected was facilitated and organized by using qualitative data analysis software, specifically NVivo 9. This program allowed the researcher to organize various data elements from a variety of sources (such as documents, survey responses, demographic data, classification sets, interview transcripts, audio clips, video clips, pictures) into “nodes” or organizing categories. NVivo also provided a number of query, data-modeling, and reporting tools that allowed the researcher to explore relationships between nodes.

The features of NVivo opened up the possibility of integrating methodologies by linking quantitative data, such as demographic information or closed-end survey responses, with qualitative data, such as open-ended responses and material from a content analysis (Bazeley, 2006). NVivo also provided a systematic means of organizing large amounts of data of different types, leaving behind a clear audit trail of coding decisions made during the process of research analysis (Welsh, 2002). NVivo allowed the researcher to search through material more thoroughly and systematically (Welsh; Robson, 2002). Qualitative research specialists have pointed out that NVivo does not do the work of the researcher, but it does enhance the researcher’s capacity to ask good questions (Bazeley). “At this point it is useful to think of the qualitative research project

as a rich tapestry. The software is the loom that facilitates the knitting together of the tapestry, but the loom cannot determine the final picture on the tapestry” (Welsh, para. 9).

While generalizability is not a primary concern in qualitative research (Gay et al., 2006; Robson, 2002), validity and reliability are essential to the integrity of the study. Validity in this context was defined as “the degree to which the qualitative data we collect accurately gauge what we are trying to measure” (Gay et al., p. 403). It could be threatened by inaccuracy in the collection or reporting of data, by the imposition of a framework on the data rather than allowing a framework to emerge from the data, and by a failure to consider interpretations outside of the researcher’s hypothesis or theoretical framework (Robson).

### Summary

Several research strategies were employed to ensure validity in the study. Regular conversations about the study with colleagues in student affairs, or peer-debriefing allowed for discussions about the progress of the study with experts in the field. On return visits to the selected campuses, initial findings and themes from the study were shared with participants as member-checks. A clear description of the process, including transcripts, audiotapes, and details about data collected provided an audit-trail. The data was triangulated by collecting information through a variety of methods (Gay et al., 2006; Robson, 2002).

Careful consideration of the roles and responsibilities of the researcher contributed to the validity and reliability of the study. Every effort was made to ensure that ethical issues were considered (Gay et al., 2006), particularly relating to the study participants. The researcher’s role as a student affairs practitioner and position as a Chief

Student Development officer necessitated the acknowledgment of some researcher assumptions, specifically:

1. That the same office or campus division is responsible for student conduct code enforcement and spiritual formation at a Christian college or university.
2. That many policies in the student conduct codes of a Christian college or university are formulated, communicated, and enforced with spiritually formative goals in mind.

Triangulation of data, concerted efforts to look for contradictory evidence, and continued acknowledgement of biases and assumptions throughout the research study served to minimize the effect of researcher bias (Leedy & Ormrod, 2005). However, the primary method to address the issues of bias and assumptions on the part of the researcher was the practice of reflexivity. Gay et al. (2006) described the process:

Intentionally reveal underlying assumptions or biases that may cause you to formulate a set of questions or present findings in a particular way. One technique for doing this is to keep a journal in which you record your reflections and musings on a regular basis. (p. 405)

The researcher kept a journal throughout the research process, documenting ways in which the researcher's perspectives and thoughts were shaped and challenged throughout the course of the study. Themes identified in the research journal and researcher experiences as a practitioner were occasionally shared with colleagues in the field of student affairs and with the research advisor. At the conclusion of the study the results were shared and discussed with colleagues in the field, provided valuable depth and understanding into the study, as well as possible areas for further research.

## CHAPTER II

### REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

#### Introduction

The backdrop for a study on the interplay of spiritually formative goals and student conduct codes is necessarily knit together of strands from the research on spirituality in the university and conduct codes within the university. These strands may seem initially unrelated but as the literature and seminal theoretical works were reviewed, the threads proved to be complementary.

To adequately ground the research study these themes, spirituality and student conduct codes, needed to be considered through a wide-angle lens with the overall university in view, and through a telephoto lens focused on the individual student. The interplay between the two (the university as an institution and the student as a key member of the institution) usually finds its expression in the university personnel responsible for student affairs. Thus, the review of the literature traced both themes, spirituality and student conduct codes, from the perspective of the university, the student, and student affairs personnel.

#### Spirituality and the University

For the last several decades universities other than private religious schools have been assumed to be somewhat antithetical to the exploration of spirituality, given the segregation between academic and religious life (Dalton, 2006b). The church was considered to be “the sole guardian of faith, the college and university, the prime

champions of knowledge” (Stamm, 2006b, p. 80). Religious students attending secular universities, facing decreased parental influence and the loss of their usual relational network would, it was assumed, decline spiritually under increased pressure to succumb to altered behavioral standards and pressure to think critically (Smith, 2009).

It is true that the process of relocating to a different community and being isolated from a network of community involvement is thought to cause a temporary decline in religious involvement (Hill, 2009). The pressure of a university’s secularism and academia’s capacity to belittle a student’s faith and spirituality can lead students to become more silent about their beliefs (Dalton, 2006b). However, the previous assumption that spiritual exploration is unsupported in a public university may no longer be valid.

Numerous studies actually appear to indicate that universities today, including secular schools, are more supportive of student spirituality and religious activity (Astin, Astin, & Lindholm, 2010; Hill, 2009; Smith, 2009; Uecker, Regnerus, & Vaaler, 2007). In his study of religious participation during the college years, Hill concluded, “these results suggest that college campuses do not engender any long-term secularization at the individual level, at least not as measured by religious participation” (p. 529). A study of the forces of religious decline by Uecker et al. actually found that the religious activity of emerging adults declined most significantly in the study participants who did not attend college. As Smith summed up in his longitudinal study of the spiritual lives of young adults, “Higher education no longer seems to diminish the religion of emerging adults” (p. 248).

One possible explanation raised by Uecker et al. (2007) for the diminished negative influence of higher education on students' spirituality may be the fact that students seem to be less socialized religiously and less aware of actual challenges to their faith. Even in the face of a challenge to their faith, "many young people do not consider religion something worth arguing over" (p. 1683), a perspective that reflects the growing postmodern climate that values religious tolerance. Additionally, trusting attitudes toward religious activity on campus may be growing with the proliferation of campus-based parachurch organizations (Uecker et al., 2007).

This change in climate may, scholars postulate, be due to the increasing commitment of universities to be involved in the moral and character development of their students (Dalton & Crosby, 2011). Leaders within higher education have consistently called on universities to consider spirituality as an essential component of a liberal arts education (Astin et al., 2010; Crosby, 2007; Stamm, 2006a). Crosby, for example, wrote:

A major task of the university, at least one that seeks to operate in the tradition of the liberal arts, is to help students find their moral and spiritual bearings and to assist them in the critical task of orienting themselves in the world. (p. 3)

Some educators have theorized that perhaps secular institutions may, in fact, "be the ideal place for students to explore their spiritual sides because, unlike many sectarian institutions, there is no official perspective or dogma when it comes to spiritual beliefs or values" (Astin et al., 2010 p. 6).

Scholars have also called universities to focus more attention on student spirituality as a matter of student welfare and holistic health and as a means of equipping

the next generation of leaders (Dalton, 2006b; Dalton et al., 2006; Holtschneider, 2006; Parks, 2008). Dalton et al. concluded:

It is also important to see the issue of spirituality as an issue of student welfare.

Students pay a price in psychological wholeness and wellness when they are required to have separate public and private personas in order to function successfully in the higher education setting. Providing a supportive environment in college for students to explore meaning, purpose, and wholeness will serve not only to enrich their lives but also to deepen learning and scholarship. (p. 18)

A clarification of what is encompassed by spirituality is important, however, because within the secular university context the term has a very diffused, broad meaning. Spirituality includes “all forms of reflection and introspection in which the primary goal is to explore one’s relationship to the transcendent” (Dalton et al., 2006, p. 5). It is “the meaning and purpose that we see in our work and our life – and our sense of connectedness to one another and the world around us” (Astin et al., 2010, p. 4).

Spirituality, in the broader university context, includes the process of making meaning of the events and circumstances around us to discover deeper purpose (Astin et al., 2010; Chickering, 2006a; Holcomb & Nonneman, 2004) that can be accomplished either through organized religion or outside of it using a secular approach (Dalton & Crosby, 2011). The ultimate goal of spirituality includes both self-attainment and contribution to society (Crosby, 2007), expressed in our character and values (Chickering).

The concept of spirituality in the broader university environment is usually considered to be distinct from religion or religious practice. Religion is a public practice, usually with prescribed ritual while spirituality is considered to be much more private and



personally practiced (Stamm, 2006a). Some scholars, in fact, have debated whether or not to use the term, spirituality, for fear of excluding agnostic or atheistic colleagues who, while searching for meaning and authenticity, are not doing so within a faith tradition (Chickering, 2006a).

Within the Christian college and university context, however, faith and spirituality have been defined with more precision. For example, Holcomb and Nonneman (2004) in their study of spiritual development within the member colleges of the Council for Christian Colleges and Universities (CCCCU), stated that faith and spirituality included:

1. Foundational doctrinal understandings and assent,
2. An ever-developing relational trust in one's Creator,
3. Living a life of integrity where one's moral actions flow from one's innermost convictions,
4. Achievement of one's own personal identity and genuine ownership of one's values and faith,
5. Cognitive complexity as evidenced by critical thinking skills. (p. 94)

Evangelical Christian colleges and universities are marked by a number of unique factors in relation to student spirituality. This is, perhaps, not surprising, given their commitment to operate from a Christian worldview (Thomas & Guthrie, 1997) with an intentional focus on student spiritual formation that is rooted in the Christian Scriptures (Council for Christian Colleges & Universities, 2011b). Students at these schools are more religiously engaged and are more involved in charitable activities, (Astin et al., 2010). A. N. Bryant, Choi, and Yasuno (2003) found that “attending a Protestant four-year college or selective institution may serve to curb the trend toward religious decline”

(p. 736). Students within the CCCU decline in religious activity and commitment at a significantly slower rate than students attending Catholic and mainline Protestant schools (Hill, 2009). The higher growth in some aspects of spirituality of students at evangelical schools when compared with students at secular universities may be related to the institutional culture at evangelical schools, to students' clarified religious identities, or to the Christian emphasis infused into the curriculum (Astin et al., 2010).

However, these types of universities also seem more conducive to some forms of spiritual struggle (Astin et al., 2010; A. N. Bryant & Astin, 2008). This struggle does not necessarily translate into religious skepticism (Astin et al.). However, it can be painful (A. N. Bryant & Astin):

Regrettably, the pain of struggling might be amplified in environments that either refuse to acknowledge the existence of struggles or that call for premature and unsatisfactory resolutions to struggle for the sake of establishing commitment to one's faith tradition. (p. 24)

A recent survey of college students and faculty members within the CCCU referenced the tendency of Christian colleges to become isolated in their perspective, in some cases reinforcing judgmental attitudes and inhibiting healthy spiritual growth (Woodfin, 2012). Students responding to the survey raised concern about being pressured into religious activities on campus and prevented from expressing doubts or questions because of fear of reprisal. Woodfin elaborated:

A very common lament, and one that surprised me, was that being in a sheltered, Christian environment was actually causing many students to become complacent in their faith, or even hurting their faith. (p. 96)

Christian colleges and universities not only need to consider their role in the spirituality of students, they need to give attention to their role in the broader academic community. Leaders within the Evangelical college community have sounded a warning against becoming isolated or succumbing to triumphalism through the incautious application of a Christian worldview to higher education (Thomas & Guthrie, 1997). Within the broader university community there has been additional concern that Evangelical Christian schools will block efforts to pursue religious pluralism in the United States (Chickering, 2006b).

At the end of the day, universities are comprised of and focused on individual students. With that in mind, the review of the literature now turned to consider spirituality from the perspective of the individual student. According to Smith (2009), creating an environment conducive to the spiritual and moral growth of emerging adults necessitates understanding them. He observed:

...if traditions and communities of religious faith want better to foster ways that more of their own emerging adults can engage in lives of serious religious faith and practice, they, too, will have to come to terms with the social, cultural, and institutional structures and forces that govern emerging adulthood and shape religion and spirituality during this phase of life. (p. 299)

### Spirituality and the Student

Smith's (2009) extensive mixed methods study of adolescent and emerging adult spirituality indicated that this generation is the least religious in recent history. The decreasing religiosity is partially associated with an increased participation in negative behaviors, including nonmarital sexual activity, use of marijuana, and extensive

consumption of alcohol (Uecker et al., 2007). However, this decreasing religiosity does not translate into spiritual disinterest. In fact, this generation has a marked and growing interest in spirituality (Astin et al., 2010; Dalton, 2006b). These students' view of spirituality tends to be somewhat pluralistic, seeking to embrace the faith perspectives of others and they are usually unwilling to assert beliefs that may generate offense (Higher Education Research Institute, 2004; Smith, 2005; Smith 2009). The faith of students is often highly individualistic (Smith 2009). In fact, Smith (2005) stated that "The idea that one's life is being formed and transformed by the power of a historical religious tradition can be nearly incomprehensible to people who have allergies to outside influences" (p. 144).

For many of these students, spiritual practices and the concept of religion are instrumental, embraced for the benefits offered to the individual and coupled with a basic morality (Smith, 2005). It is essentially benign – a matter of intellectual assent or preference rather than a basis for life (Smith, 2009).

The religion that many US teens acclaim today is not commendable for youth because, for example, it is revealed in truth by a holy and almighty God who calls all to a turning from self and a serving of God in gratitude, humility, and righteousness. Nor is it commendable, alternatively, because it inducts them into a community of people embodying a historically rooted tradition of identity, practices, and ethics that define their selfhood, loyalties, and commitments. Rather, the religion that many US teenagers acclaim today is for them commendable because it helps people make good life choices and helps them feel happy. (Smith, 2005, p. 154)

Research further indicates that the spirituality and religious practices of students arriving on the university campus is largely already shaped by the influences of their early years (Smith, 2005; Smith, 2009; Uecker et al., 2007). Students' faith is influenced by the parents' religious practices, marital status, and level of spiritual interest (Smith, 2005). Additionally, other adults contribute to a student's religious identity, particularly in the religious socialization and relational bonds formed through shared religious practices and experiences (Smith, 2009).

In short, the combination of the teenager's parental religion, importance of faith, prayer, and scripture reading makes an enormous substantive difference in religious outcomes during emerging adulthood. (Smith, 2009, p. 220)

As college students arrive on campus they often describe their interest in spirituality as a quest or journey (Astin et al., 2010; Dalton, 2006a; Dalton, et al., 2006). This quest usually takes one of two basic paths: a religious direction (either focused on a single faith or in an understanding of a variety of faith traditions) or a secular path, usually focused on holistic wellness or self-understanding (Dalton, et al.). This spiritual quest seems more prominent during the junior year of college and there are observable, significant relationships between a student's choice of major and their propensity to engage in spiritual "questing" (Astin et al., p. 30). There is actually a communal component to students' spiritual quest as they are influenced by their traveling companions along the journey (Dalton et al.; Parks, 2000). In fact, Dalton wrote that this may be one of the main objects of the quest:

The impulses that drive the spiritual quest: the search for greater self-understanding; the need to connect with more enduring, more transcendent truths;

the search for purpose and meaning – all these seem to lend to a concern for belonging to a community. (p. 172)

The spiritual journey of college students is often accompanied (and even facilitated) by a measure of struggle (Astin et al., 2010; A. N. Bryant & Astin, 2008; Holcomb & Nonneman, 2004; Guthrie, 1997b; Ma, 2003; Parks, 2000; Smith, 2009). A study that explored the spiritual struggle in students' lives categorized the struggle in five major categories: "questioning one's religious/spiritual beliefs; feeling unsettled about spiritual and religious matters; struggling to understand evil, suffering, and death; feeling angry at God; and feeling disillusioned with one's religious upbringing" (A. N. Bryant & Astin, p. 2).

Qualitative interviews with college students suggested that struggles surface as students encounter contrasts between their real and actual selves, between their own views and the perspectives of others, and between religious principles and world realities (Rockenbach, Walker, & Luzader, 2012). The struggles can be precipitated by prolonged multicultural experiences and exposure to diverse ways of thinking or other religions (Astin et al., 2010; A. N. Bryant & Astin, 2008; Holcomb & Nonneman, 2004). The influence of peers who are struggling can be somewhat contagious, leading to further disequilibrium (Astin et al.).

Struggles are also often prompted by an emotional crisis or traumatic life events (Astin et al., 2010; Holcomb & Nonneman, 2004). Student response to traumatic events is varied. For example, there is a distinction between student response to the death of a close friend or family, which contributes to religious struggle, and the divorce of their parents, which contributes to religious skepticism (Astin et al.).

The struggle may, according to some measures, be more pronounced in Evangelical Christian colleges (Astin et al., 2010). Perhaps this is because students are encouraged to engage with deeply spiritual questions or alternatively, because students find themselves in disagreement with the religious norms (A. N. Bryant & Astin, 2008). Students at these universities are willing to explore different perspectives and desire to be challenged and stretched in their beliefs, but sometimes find that the conservative atmosphere of a Christian university inhibits questions or healthy spiritual struggle (Woodfin, 2012).

This is disconcerting because the season of struggle in students' lives is considered to be an integral part of the learning process (Baldizan, 1998; Lake, 2009a; Lau, 2005). In fact, ignoring or dismissing the struggle, particularly in the Christian college environment can be detrimental to a student's developmental process (A. N. Bryant & Astin, 2008). This can be exacerbated in a faith-based institution:

Regrettably, the pain of struggling might be amplified in environments that either refuse to acknowledge the existence of faith struggles or that call for premature and unsatisfactory resolutions to struggle for the sake of establishing commitment to one's faith tradition. (A. N. Bryant & Astin, p. 24)

Universities instead are called to provide an atmosphere that is hospitable to student struggle, striking the appropriate balance between supporting students and challenging them (Holcomb & Nonneman, 2004). The atmosphere must leave room for disequilibrium and resolution (Baldizan, 1998; Lau, 2005). It is important for students to have "reassurance that their struggles are justified and a legitimate part of their developmental process" (A. N. Bryant & Astin, 2008, p. 24).

Some of this dissonance and struggle spiritually can occur in the context of a discipline situation (Baldizan, 2008; Lau, 2005). The cognitive dissonance experienced as students consider the relationship between their espoused values and their actions, for example, in the area of sexuality, can lead to a season of spiritual struggle (Smith, 2009). Sometimes this dissonance pushes students further away from ongoing participation in organized religion (Uecker et al., 2007). While a season of spiritual struggle may yield high spiritual impact (Ma, 2003) it can also result in stunted moral development if “one is locked into maladaptive ways of conceiving of and responding to the existential questions life poses” (A. N. Bryant & Astin, 2008, p. 23). The difference may lie in a number of factors related to a student’s collegiate experience:

In short, students who struggle spiritually in college often have some meaningful connection to spirituality or religion – through their own religious tradition, the religious affiliation of their campus, contemplative spiritual practice, or faculty support of spirituality. In the absence of these factors, such students would likely experience spiritual decline as a result of their struggling. (A. N. Bryant & Astin, p. 19)

University personnel, including the faculty and student affairs professionals, are uniquely situated to help students navigate their spiritual quest, particularly in seasons of struggle. A growing body of research has indicated increased attention to this aspect of student development, helpfully challenging faculty and staff to embrace and prepare for this important role in students’ lives.



## Spirituality and University Personnel

University policies and priorities are primarily communicated through the staff and faculty members of the university. Student affairs personnel, in particular, “are in a most strategic position on campus to help students explore and discuss ethical issues” (Baldizan, 1998, para. 6). These individuals can contribute to student spirituality by serving as gatekeepers for student interaction and by supporting programming that addresses spiritual topics (Dalton, 2006b). They play a key “role in constructing and mediating many aspects of student culture” (p. 149).

When it comes to spirituality, theorists in the field have called for student affairs personnel to be more involved in the spiritual lives of students (Dalton, 2006b; Dalton et al., 2006). However, many staff members are neither prepared nor trained to interact with students spiritually (Kiessling, 2010). The limited focus of their efforts means that:

Unfortunately, too much of student affairs concern and discussion about campus culture focuses on the excuses of student behavior and such areas as alcohol and drug use, sexuality, human relations, and cheating, and not enough on students’ interior lives and their search for authenticity, meaning, purpose, and spiritual fulfillment. When staff are continually preoccupied with keeping the lid on “student conduct”, they can promote a campus culture that places great emphasis on monitoring social behavior but ignores the spiritual needs and concerns of students. (Dalton, 2006b, p. 150)

Within the secular university sector, training in spirituality has not historically been included in the academic preparation of student affairs personnel (Dalton, 2006b). Leaders in the field, however, have called for that trend to be reversed (Dalton, et al.,

2006), and have explained that “Since student affairs staff are often responsible for responding to students’ spirituality interests staff need to be able to describe their own spiritual lives and beliefs in their interactions with students and colleagues” (p. 18). Research indicated that graduate programs that incorporate mentoring positively impact student affairs professionals’ propensity to “engage in holistic spiritually-infused practices” (Kiessling, 2010, p. 5).

Staff members can plan and facilitate programs to encourage student spirituality. Within the secular university context some of these appeal to both secular and spiritual seekers, including retreats, yoga, and the use of sacred spaces (Dalton et al., 2006). Spiritually focused programs are of particular value during student orientation and the early years of college (Astin et al., 2010). According to A. N. Bryant et al. (2003):

Arguably, the first year of college holds the potential for having the greatest impact on students’ religious and spiritual lives as they become inundated with campus culture, diverse points of view, and possible positivistic biases for the first time. (p. 727)

Student spirituality can also be emphasized through campus public services. Even outside the conservative Christian campus, some universities are including spiritual components in public gatherings. Emory University, for example, often concludes public gatherings with a benediction from a major world religion, authentically representing each tradition rather than reducing spirituality to its lowest common denominator through a common blessing (Wagner, 2008). Some research has indicated that within the Christian college context chapel requirements are positively correlated with student levels of religious participation (Hill, 2009). However, another study suggested that chapel

requirements contribute to an unhelpfully restrictive environment and should be discontinued (Jones & Cunion, 2012; Sanders & Joeckel, 2012).

Student spirituality is also positively impacted through service opportunities, particularly when coupled with time for reflection and integration with the learning process (Andolina, Meents-DeCaigny, & Nass, 2006; van der Ryn, 2007). The HERI study results indicated that service opportunities fostered equanimity, positively impacted spiritual questing, and enhanced measures of caring and connectedness (Astin et al., 2010). In fact, the results were so marked that the researchers noted, “one of the surest ways to enhance the spiritual development of undergraduate students is to encourage them to engage in almost any form of charitable or altruistic activity” (p. 147). The beauty of service learning, van der Ryn noted, is that:

Service-learning opens us to the “messiness” of a world that does not exist in neat categories. It dares instructors and students to experience the interplay between these two drives that make us human and offers the potential for greater humanity. (p. 7)

Christian student affairs professionals have been influenced and shaped in their work by a specifically Christian worldview (Thomas & Guthrie, 1997). In relation to spirituality, this worldview acknowledges the fallen nature of mankind, but provides hope in the example and work of Jesus Christ (Thomas & Guthrie). Their work takes on an inherently spiritual nature, consistent with their beliefs and focused on fostering the quality of wisdom in the lives of the students served (Guthrie, 1997a). Student affairs as a profession, whether in the private Christian college or public university, is viewed as a legitimate, contextualized means of influencing students (Guthrie). Guthrie asserted that

the teaching of Scripture and example of Jesus provide motivation to serve, even in difficult situations:

In the effort to help students learn and grow in wisdom in ways that conform to biblical patterns, student affairs practitioners at Christian colleges must not neglect their obligation simply to serve students. (p. 73)

Christian colleges and universities also benefit from committed faculty who are able to mentor students and contribute to a meaningful campus community. Christian college faculty embrace this role yet feel frustrated that their time commitments, course load, and committee demands limit their availability for significant investment in students' lives (Woodfin, 2012). Some faculty members expressed, as well, a concern that perhaps the lack of diverse perspectives and the more restrictive atmosphere of a Christian college may inhibit their capacity to be open and honest about struggles with the students they serve (Woodfin).

Spiritual formation in the Christian university is rooted in the restorative hope that students are transformed by God through interacting with the Bible and through healthy relationships. Christian educators encourage this process by "helping students to examine themselves in light of God's truth and challenging them to take decisive action in response to their discoveries" (Tenelshof, 2000, p. 118).

Having traced out the thread of spirituality from the university, student, and student affairs personnel perspective, the exploration now turned to student conduct codes. These topics are not incongruent. Rather, the policies of a university can either contribute to or detract from an atmosphere that facilitates students' spiritual growth:

Considerable attention should be given among our student development and campus-ministry staff to the culture we make on our campuses through our written and spoken communication regarding our student handbooks and codes of conduct. Our students long for safe environments in which to acknowledge their struggles and mistakes and find restorative solutions and loving, forgiving attitudes. (Barnard, 2012, p. 111)

### Student Conduct Codes and the University

The context and basis for an American university's authority and the expression of that authority through conduct codes has varied and adapted throughout the centuries of our nation's history. Lake (2009a) traced the roots of our early American universities back to the English visitorial system. In an earlier English context colleges were often established by donors who appointed a visitor to ensure that the intent of the donor was carried out in the university's operation. The concept was based on a parallel in the church community, where a steward was appointed as the eleemosynary entity, looking over donated alms (Lake). This concept made it to the new colonies, and "American colleges thus inherited a dispute resolution process for students and faculty that was built on legal norms of power, privilege, and sanctity, and visitorial jurisdiction" (p. 39). This basis for power was affirmed in a legal decision relating to Dartmouth College, in which the court affirmed that the original intent of a donor had to be preserved, even if the donor was now dead (Lake).

Visitorial power during those days could be vested in the trustees who maintained some measure of legal insularity, provided the intent of the donor was carried out. Education, in this context was viewed as a gift to the student (Lake, 2009a) and the focus

of student affairs was on the spiritual development of the young minds and hearts (Loy & Painter, 1997).

A number of issues contributed to the demise of the true visitorial system in American colleges and universities, including the involvement of additional donors (beyond the founding donor), tax issues related to donor control of institutions, the founding of new institutions without visitors, and the basic fact that simply put, American legal systems were not concerned about preserving the interests of donors who had passed away (Lake, 2009a). Thus:

In about a century or so, American institutions evolved to the point that visitorial power was unrecognizable or simply gone. The focus shifted from managing a legacy to management by and for a bureaucracy - the notion of managing *students for the sake of students* in an educational environment as a primary goal was still in the future. (p. 75)

The end of the visitorial era brought a new basis of authority to universities, who now viewed college not as gift to the student, but as a transaction or contract with the student's family, or more specifically, the student's parents (Lake, 2009a). Universities now operated in loco parentis, or in the place of the parents with the authority to supervise the lives of students (including directing their behavior and administering punishment as appropriate) and with the responsibility to care for students' welfare (Hoekema, 1994). During this transition the role of student affairs shifted focus to humanitarian guidance (Loy & Painter, 1997). It corresponded with the arrival of a new group of students at several land-grant universities, established by the Morrill Act (Chickering & Reisser, 1993). Legally the doctrine of in loco parentis was upheld by

significant court cases. A student who was suspended by Wheaton College in 1866 for joining a secret society was unsuccessful in his lawsuit against the school, with the courts claiming that they had no more jurisdiction over the university than they did over the matters of a family (Lake). Another case confirmed that authority and responsibility for discipline rested with the university's trustees (through delegation to the President) as part of a contractual agreement (Lake).

Universities during this season of history experienced a significant level of power and prerogative, facing very little legal or outside scrutiny for a relationship with students that was considered to favor the university (Lake, 2009a). As the field of student affairs began to professionalize, focusing more on student services (Loy & Painter, 1997) there was still very little distinction between a university's authority over academic issues and conduct issues – all was considered to be academic (Lake).

A combination of historic and legal factors would gradually curb the extent of universities' power and prerogative. The tragic incident at Kent State, Lake (2009a) wrote, demonstrated that "Excessive reliance on *power* tends to get in the way of the use of *judgment*. There is usually an inverse relationship between the use of power and the use of judgment" (p. 128). The advent of the Civil Rights Movement, as well, brought additional legal scrutiny to campus processes in protection of Constitutional freedoms (Lake). The field of student affairs was viewed as a "developmental science" in this era (Loy & Painter, 1997, p. 15). A subset of student affairs focused specifically on discipline issues became increasingly professionalized with an emphasis on uniform conduct code enforcement, procedural compliance, and the avoidance of litigation (Lake). In loco parentis as a procedural framework met its demise (Hoekema, 1994), abolished in large

part by the court decisions of the 1960s (Paterson, 1998). This transition brought about additional challenges for student affairs personnel, as expressed by Baldizan (1998):

As educational institutions have bid farewell to a formal parental role and legal support of that role, the development of moral and ethical standards in higher education has been left standing in isolation. Ambivalence has replaced certainty in the educational authority defined by due process. (p. 30)

Recent decades have been categorized by one theorist as “student affairs in transition” (Loy & Painter, 1997, p. 15.). One characteristic of the times is a growing dissatisfaction with overly legalistic systems that can be slow and inefficient, somewhat adversarial, costly, and antithetical to good educational goals (Lake, 2009a).

In what may be the last step in a long, painful, and often violent revolution, colleges and universities will have the opportunity to recognize that managing an educational environment is a complex environmental process, not merely the result of the application of objective systems of “justice” based on rules, processes, and sanctions. Law and legalisms certainly have their place; but we are institutions of *education*, not courts of law, and our virtues and goals are ones that even the law can never aspire to or achieve. (p. 26)

Today’s American colleges and universities continue to operate in a contractual relationship, but the contract is directly with students (Healy & Liddell, 1998; Lake, 2009a). Students are expected to demonstrate acceptance of the institution’s mission and values, along with academic and social skills necessary to thrive in the university’s environment (Healy & Liddell). The university is bound to deliver the educational experience promised to the student (Lake). From a legal standpoint, universities are held



responsible for following the procedures outlined and delivering the experience offered (Dannells, 1997; Hoekema, 1994; Lake). The terms of the contract are found in various institutional documents, including handbooks, catalogs, viewbooks, and course schedules (Dannells). The handbook, in particular, became “higher education institutions’ way of informing students about the values of the academy as they affect the limits of student behavior and about the consequences of violating those limits” (Dannells, p. 49).

A variety of reasons have been identified for student behavior standards as expressed in published conduct codes. Some of them relate primarily to legal issues and are in place to prevent litigation while others are intended to provide a safe and healthy environment (Lau, 2005). Others are in place to “prevent exploitation and harm” (Hoekema, 1994, p. 118). But within these primarily academic environments, a major focus of these conduct codes is academic integrity (Dannells, 1997; Duemer, Delony, Donalson, & Zaier, 2008; Hoekema; Kibler, 1998; Lau).

The focus on academic integrity often is further expressed in an honor code as a set of obligations that students assent to, expressing their commitment to academic integrity, both in their own lives and in the lives of their classmates (Hoekema, 1994). The honor code is an outgrowth of the belief “that behavior can be far more effectively shaped by the desire to live up to the standards of a community of which one feels a part than by the attempted enforcement of rules” (Hoekema, p. 80). They have been effective, some theorists believe, in providing students opportunities to consider moral dilemmas as the codes are enforced (Chickering & Reisser, 1993) and they contribute to a “campus ethos that promotes academic integrity” (Kibler, 1998, p. 165). The codes, however, may not be as supported by a generation that is morally relativistic and that is hesitant to

impose standards on themselves and one another (Lake, 2009a; Smith, 2009). As Lake pointed out, “Codes of honor often best reflect another generation’s values, not the values of the one ‘self-regulating’” (p. 189).

Beyond addressing issues of academic integrity, student conduct codes can serve to enhance the academic environment. Hoekema (1994) pointed out that codes protecting free speech help “promote an atmosphere of free discussion” (p. 121). Aspects of codes addressing social issues such as cohabitation, alcohol use, and sexual standards can provide a legal and developmental framework that allows for academic flourishing (Healy & Liddell, 1998; Hoekema; Lau, 2005).

Student conduct codes in the university are also intended to contribute to a sense of healthy, moral community (Burdette, Ellison, Hill & Glenn, 2009; Dalton, 2006a; Hoekema, 1994; Lau, 2005; Lowery, 1998). These communities are intended to reflect justice (Lowery). They can enhance the quality of life of community members but require individuals to voluntarily relinquish some of their individual rights for the benefit of the larger community (Lau). These communities are capable of fostering care and compassion while deterring destructive behavior (Dannells, 1997). Dalton described the relationship of the conduct codes to the campus community:

Belonging is important for college students because it not only helps them feel connected in a network of others but also provides important social and psychological constraints that define the limits of acceptable conduct, attitudes, and beliefs. Examples of such community boundaries and standards are academic integrity, respect for individual differences, academic freedom, student rights and responsibilities, use of alcohol, and sexual relationships. There is great debate

about just where and how academic communities should draw the boundaries of community norms, but there is wide agreement that every academic community must have defining standards that guide personal and group behavior. (p. 175)

Student conduct codes can also serve as an expression of institutional values and vision, translated into values and clear boundaries for preservation and protection of the institution's vision (Dalton, 2006c; Lake, 2009a; Lau, 2005). Some universities view their handbook policies as protecting the reputation of the institution, particularly in relation to their community or to specific constituent groups (Lau).

Within the Christian college community research indicates that student conduct codes are viewed as integral to the moral education of individuals (Duemer et al., 2008; Lau, 2005). Lau's qualitative study of two Christian universities discovered that the universities viewed their conduct codes as a means of teaching "students basic virtues central to a vibrant spiritual life" (p. 556). These codes sometimes retain vestiges of the *in loco parentis* structure (Lau; Lowery, 1998). This is particularly noticeable when framed out of a desire to protect students from falling into more serious moral issues or sins (Lau).

A number of faculty members at CCCU schools have expressed concerns about the extent to which *in loco parentis* is still operational at their universities (Jones & Cunion, 2012; Sanders & Joeckel, 2012). While the application of the *in loco parentis* structure may be helpful in decreasing negative behaviors such as excessive drinking and illicit sexual activity, it is not viewed as effective in promoting positive behaviors such as chapel attendance and engagement in spiritual disciplines (Jones & Cunion). Analyzing

the results of a survey of faculty and students and Christian colleges and universities, Sanders and Joeckel wrote:

The in loco parentis model that is in fact in place among CCCU institutions too often exhibits a stark disparity between its motivations and outcomes, a disparity that poses potentially serious threats to students' personal growth and development. When students comply with restrictive moral rules, they may expose themselves to an impersonal religiosity, unquestioned ideas of morality, and an inauthentic faith. (p. 141)

These concerns, however, may stem from misunderstandings about the in loco parentis model and from faulty assumptions about the extent of its ongoing influence in Christian universities (Schulze & Blezien, 2012). The survey referenced by faculty concerns about in loco parentis did not incorporate input from student affairs professionals at CCCU schools, did not reflect an underlying understanding of student development theory, and may have indicated a pre-existing bias (Schulze & Blezien).

This difference in perspective between faculty members and student affairs professionals underscores the importance of campus collaboration with regarding to student conduct codes, incorporating the perspectives of faculty, administrators, and students (Hoekema, 1994; Lake, 2009a; Lau, 2005; Sanders & Joeckel, 2012). Hoekema wrote, "When the process of revision is open and provides a voice for all who are affected, the result of such changes will be not just a better discipline code but a stronger community" (p. 153). The formulation of these codes needs to take into careful account the rationale for the rules, as well as the cost to enforcing them, including receiving and adjudicating complaints of violations (Hoekema). Within the Christian college context it

is vital for the conduct code to reflect a biblical worldview as one of the “thoughtful byproducts of the Christian beliefs that guide a Christian college” (Guthrie, 1997a, p. 67).

As part of the official record of a student’s contract with the university, the student conduct code should be carefully distributed and discussed with prospective students during the admissions process (Lake, 2009a; Lau, 2005). However, a realistic appraisal of student interaction with conduct codes reminds educators that “This is not a generation that reads complex documents full of objective directions and conforms behavior accordingly” (Lake, p. 294). Even if the handbook is carefully read and studied by students it will not automatically ensure congruent behavior.

Admittedly, providing more specific behavioral expectations in catalogs will not in itself instill responsible behavior or increase students’ sense of social responsibility. Any behavioral expectations found in catalogs will have to be coupled with initiatives to promote those behaviors both in and out of the classrooms. It is not enough to assume students will internalize behavioral expectations merely because they are printed in the catalog. (Duemer et al., p. 10)

With this in mind, the college’s responsibility extends beyond merely developing conduct codes to educating students about them (Lake 2009b; Lau, 2005). This educational process should not only explain the content of each rule, but the rationale behind that rule (Hoekema, 1994; Lake, 2009a; Lake, 2009b; Lau). According to Lake (2009b), “every rule statement in a code or policy should include an explanation of the spirit of that rule – the principles, values, standards that the rule hopes to enforce or foster” (p. 3). Surprisingly, when the stated policies of 110 nationally ranked liberal arts

universities were reviewed by researchers, fewer than half of them included a rationale for their rules (Duemer et al., 2008).

This is intriguing, given Hoekema's (1994) injunction that "a college that undertakes to explain just what its policy means and why it has been adopted demonstrates more respect for students" (p. 104). Student frustration with campus conduct codes can be reduced if the rules are explained, highlighting the rationale and educational value behind them (Jones & Cunion, 2012):

If students are not aware of the rationale behind the conduct policies, they are less likely to perceive the importance of these rules for developing their moral lives and therefore less likely to appreciate the rules. (p. 121)

Student conduct codes not only affect the lives of individual students, they are instrumental in shaping the overall climate and culture of a university. Barnard (2012) explained that, "Both policies and practices reflexively instruct and construct the culture that exists on the campus of faith-based institutions of higher education" (p. 102). The process occurs, according to Hoekema (1994), through dialogue in the context of community:

To form a genuine community, by fostering and encouraging the numerous smaller communities, in which students and faculty find their place and form their identity, is the ultimate goal of the entire system of student conduct regulation and discipline. (p. 166)

This community environment should foster the values of caring and compassion while deterring hateful or destructive actions (Dannells, 1997). It should embrace the values of communication, engagement, leadership, sustainability, and diversity (Wagner,

2008). The community dynamic is enhanced within a residential university setting, where student interaction and close friendships increase “opportunities for intellectual, academic, and social involvement, which have been found to enhance principled moral judgment” (Chickering & Reisser, 1993, p. 401). The university environment ideally allows for attention to the needs of the individual (Dannells; Guthrie, 1997a). However, it also does not lose sight of an individual’s responsibility to invest in the broader goals of the community (Lowery, 1998). Lowery wrote:

Our institutions have become so blinded by the need to protect the rights of students that they have lost sight of the responsibilities of membership in our communities. Creeds, community standards, and learning communities are but a few of the mechanisms and methods being explored as we look for ways to balance individual responsibilities within an educational environment. (p. 15)

The community, itself, can then provide a context to encourage a moral and spiritual response in the life of the individual (Burdette et al., 2009). Evangelical schools, in particular, have a higher capacity for encouraging moral behavior in the lives of students (Burdette et al.; Freitas, 2008). There is an inherent danger, however, in an excessive focus on behavior control:

To the extent that we focus on behavior to the exclusion of belief, we seek to control by rules and regulations – curfews, dress codes, mandatory chapel, policies on sex, alcohol, etc. Campus culture thus becomes what we make of it, an environment of constraint and restriction that ultimately foils our best chances for working together as students, staff, and faculty to create the ethos for which we long. (Barnard, 2012, p. 104)

Universities, then, continually navigate the space between excessive control over the student and disengagement in students' lives. Ultimately, in many ways, whether or not these waters are navigated effectively depends somewhat on the individual student's response. Again, a review of the literature provided helpful context for how students view and respond to student conduct codes as part of their university experience.

### Student Conduct Codes and the Student

A number of generational characteristics provided insight into student interaction with college and university conduct codes. Emerging adults have a highly individualistic view of morality, believing that their instincts are trustworthy and morality is essentially self-evident (Smith, 2009). A postmodern worldview makes them resistant to objective rules and external values (Blimling, 1998), leaving them with a vague combination of Karma and benevolence as their primary moral focus (Smith). Lake (2009a) pointed out that their discomfort with objective guidelines makes interaction with a student conduct code all the more challenging when he wrote, "This is not a generation that reads complex documents full of objective directions and conforms behavior accordingly" (p. 294). When they are confronted with accountability from the student conduct code, the students (and often their parents) may view the process as a game or challenge to be overcome, rather than an educational opportunity (Lake). Smith concluded:

And so they simply carry on as best as they can, as sovereign, autonomous, empowered individuals who lack a reliable basis for any particular conviction or direction by which to guide their lives. (p. 294)

These students also arrive on campus unused to rule enforcement, having grown up in environments more focused on self-esteem, praise, and rewards rather than



punishment (Lake, 2009b). The primary factor in their moral and ethical considerations, outside of their own intuition, is the input of their peers (Casteen, Gibson, & Lampkin, 2007). Relationally, a higher emphasis is placed on interpersonal relationships than involvement in the broader world context (Smith, 2009). However, the intense influence of electronic social media creates issues with intimacy (Casteen et al.). Intimacy is further distorted by the hook-up culture that is prevalent in the university community, normalizing casual sexual encounters without relational connection or context (Burdette et al., 2009; Freitas, 2008). This creates cognitive dissonance for religiously committed students (Smith) that is resolved either through rejection of the behavior, compartmentalization, or in some cases, rejection of the faith commitment (Smith; Uecker et al., 2007).

Students in this stage of life are progressing from independence toward autonomy, a process that requires explicit behavioral norms during its early stages and growing flexibility to individual growth and support in later stages (Chickering & Reisser, 1993). Their capacity for moral reasoning may show up in their response to student conduct codes. For example, a student comparing the moral reasoning of students who violated a university's conduct code with those who had not violated the code indicated that those who had not violated the code were, in fact, demonstrating a higher level of moral reasoning (Cooper & Schwartz, 2007).

As students transition through their early college they begin to rely more on their own internal voice rather than external voices as a primary authority (Baxter Magolda, King, Taylor, & Wakefield, 2012). The college years, therefore, may be marked by reaction to the restrictive nature of codes of conduct and institutional authority:

Students have thrown off the yoke of subservience to an institutional parent and claimed for themselves the right to make choices about living quarters, personal relationships, and studies, not following the familiar paths of their professors or older siblings, but rather shouldering the responsibility to form their own lives. (Hoekema, 1994, pp. 17-18)

Student interaction with a university's conduct codes will shift as they "move through a rule-orientation, legalistic way of thinking toward a preference for more abstract principles and confidence in their own interpretations" (Chickering & Reisser, 1993, p. 253).

This is particularly noticeable in Christian colleges and universities. When students sense that the university's rules are too restrictive they may respond in rebellion (Sanders & Joeckel, 2012). A survey of CCCU students indicated a marked decline in the compliance of seniors as compared to freshmen with regard to policies regarding student alcohol usage (Sanders & Joeckel). While these findings did not address the possibility of confounding variables (such as off-campus housing and the legal drinking age), they did indicate increasing student dissatisfaction with external authority:

The trend is for more students to break rules through their entire college career, a trend that logically follows from (among other things) a waning respect for the *in-loco-parentis* model and increasing antagonism with student life administration. (Sanders & Joeckel, p. 142)

The transition is not entirely negative, however. This season in a student's life is also marked by a growing acceptance of and capacity to integrate the perspectives of others as students develop emotional and instrumental independence and actually move

toward interdependence, or the capacity to see one's unique place within the larger community (Chickering & Reisser, 1993). This process should be encouraged, according to van der Ryn (2007), because:

Ego is not a dirty word. It is a word that signals our potential to evolve, to grow, to express our creative and unique identity. The other drive for self-transcendence represents the desire to expand that singularity and to merge with a larger reality - to be part of something bigger than ourselves. (p. 4)

University students are also engaged deeply in the process of developing personal integrity, carefully considering the relationship between beliefs, values, and actions in their own lives and in the lives of those around them (Chickering & Reisser, 1993). The process is facilitated through their relationships and, according to Chickering and Reisser, involves three basic steps: (a) Humanizing values or considering the interplay between their interests and the interests of others, (b) Personalizing values by consciously affirming their beliefs, and (c) Developing congruence by seeking to align behaviors with their personal values (pp. 236-237).

The season of emerging adulthood is also characterized by a focus on identity formation (Erikson, 1968). This process includes students' exploration of their body image, their gender and sexuality, their personal history, and their sense of self in relation to others (Chickering & Reisser, 1993). The discovery of identity does not happen merely through personal introspection, but through thoughtful interaction with others (van der Ryn, 2007).

Ultimately students are developing a sense of purpose, which "entails an increasing ability to be intentional, to assess interests and options, to clarify goals, to

make plans, and to persist despite obstacles” (Chickering & Reisser, 1993, p. 209).

Within the liberal-arts tradition this is sometimes considered to be part of a student’s calling (Crosby, 2007). Research indicated that students are increasingly defining their purpose by what they want to be rather than what they want to have (Dalton & Crosby, 2007). The process of developing purpose requires students to assess (and often narrow down) vocational plans, personal interests, and interpersonal commitments (Chickering & Reisser). Interestingly, a student’s chosen career path actually can affect behavioral motivation, specifically related to alcohol usage (Bergen-Cico & Viscomi, 2008).

At the forefront of student encounters with a university’s conduct codes are university personnel, particularly in the field of student affairs, who are responsible for formulating, communicating, and enforcing these conduct codes. Schulze and Blezien (2012) described this important role:

While all campus members have a responsibility for the development and enhancement of a holistic community, student-life personnel have a particular responsibility for establishing development philosophies that shape students’ co-curricular experiences (outside the classroom) where students spend a significant amount of time each week. This includes formation of educational programs, policies, and procedures in areas such as residence life, leadership development, student activities, counseling services, athletics, career services, spiritual formation, and service activities. All these are designed to support, challenge, nurture, and protect individual community members and the community as a whole. (p. 132)

## Student Conduct Codes and University Personnel

The role of student affairs personnel changed dramatically during the civil rights era. The challenge of student protests and the dramatic issues fueling tension in the nation required administrators to “see students in a different light – as maturing adults who wanted to have a say in the way the university and world work” (Gaston-Gayles, Wolf-Wendel, Nemeth Tuttle, Twombly, & Ward, 2004, p. 268). Administrators saw themselves as not only custodians of the overall order and stability of the university, but as those responsible for helping students grow and mature (Gaston-Gayles et al.).

Recent trends in student affairs, fueled by the proliferation of computers, increasing government scrutiny, and the changing demographics of the typical college student require greater attention to conduct code issues and judicial affairs (Dannells, 1997). Ultimately, evaluation of the effectiveness of student conduct codes needs to be part of a university’s regular assessment cycle (Dannells). It must move beyond attention to student satisfaction and retention rates to actual student developmental goals (Chickering & Reisser, 1993). While this is a challenging process, it is essential to ensure that rules are accomplishing their intended goals (Hoekema, 1994). Ironically, even as universities have become more “fair” in complex systems of discipline management serious issues such as cheating and alcohol abuse are on the rise (Lake, 2009a). Blimling (1998) noted:

Much of the student behavior now seen on college campuses suggests that we have extended certain adult freedoms without first teaching students the self-discipline and self-knowledge necessary for them to make well-reasoned choices from a range of adult options. (p. 69)

When considering the role of the student development professional in formulating, communicating, and enforcing the student conduct code it is helpful to assess the goals of the process. The growing challenge of undesirable behavior on college campuses would suggest that universities focus on cultivating ethical behavior and morals standards (Dalton et al., 2006). Blimling (1998) pointed out that these two items (ethical behavior and morality) are not necessarily synonymous:

Ethical standards and moral principles are often cited interchangeably, but they are not the same. Ethical standards usually refer to the application of moral principles. Moral principles are derived from values, virtues, and the cognitive ability to adopt principled moral reasoning. Ethical standards are often codified as professional standards. (p. 66)

The process of developing moral principles necessitates humanizing values, or reevaluating old patterns of thought and becoming open to new perspectives (Chickering & Reisser, 1993). Professionals cognizant of this process “commit to dismantling influences that feed a selfish, narrow life and teaching students to see in new ways” (Casteen et al., 2007, p. 4). Students are challenged to become morally serious persons, willing to actively consider the perspectives of others as their thinking and actions are shaped (Casteen et al.). Many universities have listed desired character traits in students among their university core commitments or goals, indicating “the importance of values and ethics in higher education efforts to define, document, and assess undergraduate goals and outcomes today” (Dalton & Crosby, 2011, p. 3).

As Hoekema (1994) pointed out, however, the role of student affairs professionals extends beyond the cultivation of moral individuals to fostering moral communities. This

focus is intended to prepare students not only for moral interaction within the college community, but benefit “the communities and world in which they will spend their lives” (Dalton & Crosby, 2011, p. 1). Thus, the staff member’s role involves serving as a model within the community, engaging in dialogue that helps shape the community, identifying values held by the community and protecting them when threatened, and engaging students in efforts to resolve problems within the community (Hoekema, 1994). Hoekema elaborated:

To form a genuine community, by fostering and encouraging the numerous smaller communities, in which students and faculty find their place and form their identity, is the ultimate goal of the entire system of student conduct regulation and discipline. (p. 166)

A university’s response in a discipline situation is a primary contributor to the campus culture (Hoekema, 1994). Enforcement of the policies outlined in the conduct code is essential to communicate that rules are serious (Hoekema). Lake (2009a) stated it plainly, when he wrote, “every value we *really* have is one that translates into a *rule* that can be *enforced*” (p. 224). Enforcement of campus policies must ensure that sanctions applied when policies are violated are actually linked to the rule and context intended (Lake). Hoekema provided three basic moral premises for both implementing and enforcing specific policies, stating that they are valid and legitimate if: (a) the prohibited behavior is unacceptable, (b) the behavior can be effectively prevented, and (c) available measures of enforcement are fair and consistent (p. 146).

University personnel approach disciplinary situations from different perspectives and stances regarding student conduct, usually informed by the nature of their institution.

Differences are found in the extent of the student code of conduct, the process involved for enforcing the conduct code, administrative responsibility for discipline, and the level of student involvement in the process (Dannells, 1997). Sanctions applied can be punitive, rehabilitative, or educational in nature (Dannells). Universities range from a restrictive approach utilizing strict regulation to a highly permissive stance, emphasizing student responsibility and the legal obligations of the institution (Hoekema, 1994). Moderating the extremes of these approaches is a directive stance, in which university personnel attempt “neither to control behavior directly nor to leave it wholly to student discretion, but rather to influence behavior by means other than disciplinary rules and sanctions” (Hoekema, pp. 140-141). Ultimately, the student affairs professional recognizes that rules are not enough to change student attitudes (Lowery, 1998). Schulze and Blezien (2012) addressed the same reality when they wrote, “Conduct codes can be improperly used when they are administered as a means for compliance rather than as an avenue for transformation” (p. 135).

A survey of 214 judicial affairs officers indicated an overall dissatisfaction with legalistic frameworks in the field of student affairs and a desire to implement more flexible, developmental disciplinary systems (Bostic & Gonzalez, 1999). Student affairs professionals therefore need to ensure that their focus, even in (or perhaps especially in) relation to the student conduct code is educational:

Student judicial affairs professionals are taught that the student conduct system is part of the student development program of the institution, and should be used to provide developmental opportunities and growth for students who violate institutional policies. (Gregory, 1998, p. 56)



Disciplinary systems should be rooted in educational goals and values (Lake, 2009a). The sanctions utilized in the discipline process “should also pay close attention to the educational aspect of discipline” (Lau, 2005, p. 562). Leading Christian professionals in the field of student affairs have called on their colleagues to embrace their role as professionals, engaging the best practices of student development theory to motivate and encourage students toward growth (Guthrie, 1997a). Disciplinary structures should not be seen as merely ways to uphold institutional norms through punishment and reward, but as educational opportunities to foster individual responsibility (Gehring, 1998). When student affairs personnel address conduct code violations, they are able to engage students in a visiting and revisiting process that “*is* discipline in its most modern, positive, and widest sense” (Lake 2009a, p. 310).

Students’ capacity to perceive the educational value of a disciplinary situation is strongly correlated with their perception of the fairness of their interaction with the university personnel responsible for discipline (King, 2012). This correlation assigns significant responsibility to the individual interacting with a student in a disciplinary context, as “practitioners have the opportunity to transform a potentially adversarial disciplinary proceeding into a developmental intervention that fosters student learning” (King, p. 578). This has been uniquely highlighted in the Christian college context:

Every disciplinary encounter is a teaching moment to inquire about the student’s behavior, his or her thinking that contributed to current behavior choices, and the relationship of character formation to future decisions. Relationships with students are the context for this developmental work, while justice and mercy

serve as the biblical principles that shape disciplinary outcomes. (Schulze & Blezien, 2012, p. 132)

For the professional serving in a Christian college, this process is rooted in a Christian worldview in which the structures (including conduct codes and disciplinary processes) are linked to Christian beliefs (Thomas & Guthrie, 1997). A Christian worldview sees student behavior issues as linked to a sin nature, inculcated in the Genesis account of man's original sin (Thomas & Guthrie). Even outside the Christian college context the idea that sin underlies student behavior has been suggested (Weldy, 2009). The process of discipline, biblically speaking, is a process of growth, yielding good fruit for those who are trained by it (Hebrews 12). It is part of the process Christians call sanctification, meaning that our fallen state does not have the final word (Thomas & Guthrie). Student learning becomes part of the process of developing wisdom (Guthrie, 1997a). Lau (2005) summed this learning process up:

Thus, the goal of all student learning is to grow and mature in one's faith and understanding of God and the universe. This requires a value-driven educational experience that includes, but is not limited to, behavior codes designed to create a truly 'Christian' and 'moral' environment. (p. 553)

Ideally, an educational focus in discipline issues could strengthen collaboration between faculty and staff through ongoing assessment regarding student moral development and a shared focus on core competencies and commitments (Ardaiolo et al., 2011; Baldizan, 1998). The historic chasm between faculty and student affairs can sometimes make this difficult (Ardaiolo et al.; Loy & Painter, 1997), but faculty involvement in student affairs, particularly in helping to shape and enforce campus rules

is desirable (Hoekema, 1994). Some professionals in the field have proposed that student affairs professionals work with faculty to develop a univocal curriculum that encompasses all university experiences (Guthrie, 1997a) as well as courses that address topics such as student rights and responsibilities within the college community (Dannells, 1997). Ultimately, this level of collaboration benefits students, explained Chickering and Reisser (1993):

When student development professionals define themselves as educators working collaboratively with faculty to apply student development theory, they increase the direct and indirect impact of programs and services on students' movement among all vectors. (p. 277)

Chickering and Reisser (1993) also pointed out that “relationships provide the context for broadening perspective on right and wrong, for dealing with moral conflicts, for making difficult choices about what is true and what is best” (p. 260). Sadly, in a study of the most spiritually formative programs and factors at Christian colleges and universities, interaction with administrators was ranked as one of the least influential factors (Ma, 2003). The context of a relationship can establish a safe environment in which students sense that their struggle is justified (A. N. Bryant & Astin, 2008). This is facilitated when staff members are candid and open about their own struggles (A. N. Bryant & Astin; Chickering, 2006a).

Relationships can also provide opportunities for mentoring, a growing trend that links well with the postmodern approach of most students (Blimling, 1998). Mentors are particularly effective at helping students through difficult seasons or storms of life (Astin et al., 2010; Chickering & Reisser, 1993). New approaches to the discipline process have

suggested a formalization of mentoring through development of a master academic plan, facilitated by advocates throughout a student's time at college (Lake, 2009b). This trusting relationship allows for students to experience support during seasons of vulnerability, recognition for who they really are, inspiration through example, and accountability toward goals identified (Parks, 2008).

In an increasingly legalistic society there is measure of concern that the focus of student affairs professionals may have shifted from encouraging students in their growth and development to merely safeguarding institutional interests (Gaston-Gayles et al., 2004). However, the critical role of those who serve in student affairs cannot be underestimated. Crosby (2007) summed it up, stating:

Student affairs people, coaches, counselors, advisors, chaplains, and others who work directly with students outside the classrooms have both unique opportunity and obligation to help students to reflect on the unity of knowledge and to think about the focus and meaning of their lives, as well as to guide them in the understanding of their moral responsibilities to their peers, to faculty and other members of the academic community, and to the world beyond the university. The role of this group of leaders on campus is thus an integral and essential part of a liberal arts education. (p. 4)

### Conclusion

The traditional university context allows for a unique season of development and growth in a student's life. That growth encompasses spiritual exploration, moral development, and identity formation, in addition to academic preparation and sharpening. Attention to intentionality in the areas of student spirituality and student conduct codes is

growing and the research indicated that these are complementary themes. Understanding these themes from the perspective of the university, the student, and student affairs personnel provided an excellent foundation to build a study that explored the intersection of these topics.

The research reviewed indicated interest in student spiritual formation and a growing level of dissatisfaction with legalistic frameworks for student discipline and conduct code enforcement. However, very little research, even within the Christian college context, specifically viewed these issues as interrelated. Thus, the questions posed by this study represented a unique opportunity to investigate whether a growing concern in higher education (attention to the spiritual development of students) might in fact be facilitated by embracing a spiritually formative paradigm for the formulation, communication, and enforcement of student conduct codes. These questions were explored by qualitatively investigating the integration of spiritually formative goals into student conduct codes at four Midwestern Christian colleges and universities.

## CHAPTER III

### METHODOLOGY

#### Introduction

While the reviewed research literature did not specifically address the integration of spiritually formative goals and student conduct codes, the campuses of Christian colleges and universities provided an opportunity to explore the subject in depth. The research design, the data collection methods, and the analysis process all contributed to a robust and richly-nuanced understanding of the ways in which spiritually formative goals are integrated into the formulation, communication, and enforcement of student conduct codes.

Incorporated into this study was a desire to represent the voices of those not only serving as student affairs practitioners in Christian higher education, but those directly served by these campuses – the students, themselves. In this respect, although the study was not specifically initiated from a constructivist framework, it approached the topic in a way that allowed interviewees to become participants in the inquiry (Robson, 2002). The following research questions were considered:

1. To what extent, if any, are spiritually formative goals integrated into the formulation and revision of student conduct codes at selected Christian colleges and universities?

2. To what extent, if any, are spiritually formative goals integrated into the communication and enforcement of student conduct codes at selected Christian colleges and universities?
3. To what extent, if any, do students perceive the integration of spiritually formative goals in the formulation, communication, and enforcement of student conduct codes at selected Christian colleges and universities?
4. What interventions or actions, if any, by student affairs personnel affect (positively or negatively) student perception of the integration of spiritually formative goals into the formulation, communication, and enforcement of student conduct codes?

As research methodologies and specific data collection methods were considered, primary attention was given to the specific methods that would best answer the questions (Robson, 2002). Additional factors considered included the appropriate research context for addressing the topic, the level of flexibility required by the topic, the characteristics of the researcher, and the level of immersion and interaction available in the research design. All of these factors were considered with the goal of maximizing the researcher's capacity to understand the topic under consideration in depth and breadth.

### Research Design

The initial step in selecting a research methodology was deciding whether to utilize a quantitative or a qualitative approach. Qualitative research, while time intensive, allows for more significant interaction with a smaller group of participants in a context that is not manipulated or controlled by the researcher (Gay et al., 2006). This methodological choice fit the university context well, given that these institutions are not

closed systems. Rather, they are open systems, subject to endlessly changing variables and influences, well suited to qualitative research by Robson's (2002) criteria. A qualitative methodology, by nature, is limited in that it is not capable of proposing cause and effect relationships between variables, but it does allow for rich description and understanding of the topic under study. Gay et al. elaborated:

Qualitative research seeks to probe deeply into the research setting to obtain in-depth understandings about the way things are, why they are that way, and how participants in the context perceive them. (p. 14)

The flexibility offered by a primarily qualitative study also proved beneficial to this research study, allowing the process to evolve when necessary and welcoming the emergence of new frameworks from the data as the study progressed (Robson, 2002). Anticipating the need to address the fluidity of college contexts and variability in participant availability, this methodology proved attractive in its capacity for "changing the intended sample to follow up interesting lines, or to seek answers to rather different questions" (Robson, p. 82).

The specific research design chosen to best address this study's research questions was a case study, defined as "development of a detailed, intensive knowledge about a single 'case' or of a small number of related 'cases'" (Robson, 2002, p. 89). Case studies identify patterns and themes through interviews, first-hand observations, analysis of documents and other artifacts, and other data collection techniques that immerse the researcher in the selected context (Leedy & Ormrod, 2005; Robson). While case studies often focus on individuals they are also considered appropriate when applied to institutions or organizations (Robson). Utilizing multiple cases in a study, according to



Leedy and Ormrod, can increase the researcher's capacity to draw comparisons, to propose theory, or to suggest generalizations.

The chosen methodology, as well, suited the role of the researcher as a practitioner in the field under consideration. Effective research in this type of study, according to Robson (2002), requires an ongoing ability to grasp and interpret the issues and themes surfacing during the research process. Leedy and Ormrod (2005) agreed, actually suggesting that the researcher becomes one of the data collection instruments by spending extensive time interacting with the study participants, immersed in the data being provided. Prior knowledge or practical experience in the field is beneficial, given that "...the researcher's ability to interpret and make sense of what he or she sees is critical for understanding any social phenomenon" (Leedy & Ormrod, p. 133).

As a qualitative study, this research design allowed for a "deep and holistic or complex understanding of a particular phenomenon, such as an environment, a process, or even a belief" (Gay et al., 2006, p. 399). Collecting data from multiple universities allowed for comparison of data and the integration of perspectives and approaches from a variety of contexts.

### Population

The population selected for this study incorporated various stakeholders from the selected universities, including administrators, student leaders, and members of the student population. The timetable and capacity of the researcher necessitated significantly limiting the number of universities studied. A specific series of criteria were applied to narrow down the pool of universities considered for the study.

The initial criterion applied was membership in the Council for Christian Colleges and Universities (CCCU). Membership criteria for the CCCU includes regional accreditation, Christ-centered mission statements, hiring practices that limit faculty and administrative appointments to professing Christians, and high standards of financial accountability (Council for Christian Colleges & Universities, 2011). Limiting the study population to CCCU member institutions provided an initial filter to identify like-minded, similar institutions. A list of CCCU institutions was accessed from publicly available information on the organization's website (Council for Christian Colleges & Universities, 2012).

An additional criterion further restricted the potential sample size to CCCU colleges and universities located in a five state region (Michigan, Ohio, Indiana, Illinois, and Wisconsin) surrounding the Great Lakes region of the Midwest. This allowed for a purposive sample (Leedy & Ormrod, 2005; Robson, 2002), offering proximity to the researcher without compromising the characteristics of good informants, which according to Gay et al. (2006), "include the ability to be reflective and thoughtful, to communicate (orally, in writing, or both) effectively with the researcher, and to be comfortable with the researcher's presence at the research site" (p. 113).

The CCCU online database (Council for Christian Colleges & Universities, 2012) was accessed and 21 colleges and universities were identified in the selected region representing Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, and Ohio (no CCCU colleges and universities are located in Wisconsin). These colleges and universities were charted in an Excel spreadsheet. Two universities located within the region were deselected to prevent

researcher bias; one because the researcher's doctoral studies were being conducted there and the other because it was the researcher's place of employment.

To narrow the sample further, an analysis of the admissions criteria (specifically relating to a student's faith commitment) and selected policies in the student conduct codes or student handbooks of CCCU universities and colleges was undertaken to select universities that showed general congruence of the selected policies and the rationale for those policies.

Information for the analysis of admissions criteria was collected from publicly accessible information on each university's website. The Admissions page of each college's website was accessed and the internal search feature of each website, if available, was searched for information about the college's admission requirements. While a small percentage of the universities reviewed mentioned faith commitments in their requirements, many did not. Therefore additional review necessitated studying each university's actual application to ascertain whether students were asked to comment about their faith during the application process. Electronic copies of each university's application, if available, were downloaded and reviewed. Findings were summarized in Table 1 (Appendix B), with the universities only identified by number to protect the identity of the universities selected.

The specific conduct code policies selected for comparison in the sample selection process were drawn from Lau's (2002) study on the reasons for behavior codes at two selected Christian universities. One of the study questions asked campus stakeholders to identify whether or not policies enhanced or detracted from the institution's Christian mission. The policies most clearly identified as contributing to an

institution's Christian mission related to: smoking, alcohol, chapel, academic dishonesty, relationship with the opposite sex, theft, sexual harassment, weapons, discrimination, sexual assault, altercations, and Sunday observance (Lau).

The conduct codes for CCCU schools in the Midwest region were accessed online and the specific policies in each of these areas were charted and examined for congruence by two researchers. This process necessitated extrapolating and interpreting broader themes from the conduct code of each university. Specific policies regarding a student's relationship with the opposite sex, for example, were assumed to be found in a university's stated policy regarding relationships and sexuality. Policies regarding altercations were assumed to be found in policies relating to violence and conflict resolution. An additional challenge in the process was identifying a comprehensive source of student conduct code information in the online information available at each university. At some schools, for example, conduct code criteria could be found in application information, the published catalog, or additional documents. These policies were then charted (Appendix B, Tables 2 through 4) using the same numeric identifiers used with the chart of admissions criteria.

A number of the policies selected demonstrated clear congruence at each university reviewed. Each of the universities clearly prohibited academic dishonesty, theft, weapons, discrimination, and sexual assault. Policies regarding relationships with the opposite sex varied in their application, ranging from policies regarding open hall hours to specifically prohibited practices. All, however, referenced a level of moral purity.

Variation in conduct codes could be found primarily in policies relating to smoking, alcohol usage, and chapel attendance. Interestingly, these include policies that were identified as vestiges of *in loco parentis* in the Christian college structure by some faculty members in a recent study (Jones & Cunion, 2012), preventing negative behaviors and encouraging positive behaviors. A general pattern emerged from the initial data compiled during the review of these policies and the admissions process that allowed for selection of universities and colleges that were similar in their approach. The universities selected for possible participation were universities that both prohibited tobacco and alcohol usage by traditional undergraduates while requiring chapel attendance. Each of these universities also required prospective students to submit a statement about their faith experience during the admissions application process, although they did not all explicitly limit matriculation to students who profess to be Christians.

Invitations to participate were initially sent to six universities from the list of universities demonstrating conduct code congruence, assuming that not all of the universities invited would be interested in participating in the study. The remaining universities were identified as backup possibilities for invitations if initial invitations were declined or ignored. The invitations were emailed directly to the Chief Student Development Officer (CSDO) at each university, identifying the researcher and outlining an overview of the research project. The CSDO was invited to contact the researcher with additional questions. Follow-up voicemail messages were left for non-responding individuals one week after the initial invitation was sent.

Out of the six CSDOs invited to participate by email, five expressed interest in including their university for participation in the study and one never responded to the

initial email or a follow-up voicemail message. Follow-up contact by phone and email was made to each of the CSDOs or their designated representative to identify next steps, to answer questions about the research study, and to discuss the process of securing IRB approval from each of the universities. Four of the five universities provided follow-up information on next steps, moving the discussion to the IRB approval phase. The fifth university did not progress to the IRB approval phase, leaving four universities for participation (the target sample size identified in the research design).

At this point in the process the four universities selected for study were assigned pseudonyms allowing for consistent reference without revealing the identity of each participating school. In order to ensure that the university identities were sufficiently masked each college or university selected, regardless of actual name was titled College in the final report. Names from towns represented in biblical epistles were selected as the unique identifiers for each school, creating these pseudonyms: Galatia College, Ephesus College, Philippi College, and Colosse College. As of the date of this research report, no colleges or universities with these specific names were found in an Internet search.

The process of securing IRB approval from each participating university varied by institution. Two of the universities indicated that the IRB approval of the researcher's sponsoring university was sufficient. Documentation confirming that approval was forwarded to the institutional representative. Separate IRB submissions were made to each of the other two participating universities, requesting expedited review and approval. One of the universities was able to provide IRB approval within two weeks, and emailed notification of the permission to proceed to the researcher.

Securing IRB approval from the fourth institution added additional challenges to the study. At this university the process of gaining IRB approval took several weeks longer than anticipated, necessitating a revised schedule for campus visits. Final approval for research at that university also was subject to a modification in the informed consent form previously approved by the researcher's home university, as well as other participating universities. Modifications were minor, adding additional detail regarding data retention, and the update to the form was approved by the research advisor.

Phone and email contact with each university's identified representative allowed the researcher to discuss documents to be submitted for content analysis, specific instructions for submission of the Student Satisfaction Inventory (SSI) results, and the schedule for research visits. Two campus visits for each university were scheduled and logistics regarding the scheduled interviews, including location times and participants were finalized.

Administrators and student affairs/student development personnel (including resident assistants and student leaders) were identified by the university representatives and were invited for participation based on their role within the university, either by email from the researcher or from the university representative. The emailed invitation outlined the significance of the study, the role of the study participants and included a copy of the Informed Consent Form for participant's review. Invited participants were asked to confirm their participation by follow-up email and were encouraged to direct questions or concerns to the researcher.

Participants from the general student population were randomly selected to represent a proportional stratified sample from each class (according to academic credits

earned). Proportional stratified sampling is recommended for studies in which the “population contains different strata that appear in different proportions within the population” (Leedy & Ormrod, 2005, p. 205). This sampling process sought to ensure that there was representation from each class at the universities and colleges selected. The institutional representative from each university was asked to send a spreadsheet to the researcher that included information about currently enrolled students, including their names, class status, and university email addresses. Frequency tables were developed for each university to identify a target percentage for proportional participation based on a target focus group size of 8-10 participants (Appendix C, Tables 5-8).

The format of the data provided by two of the universities selected required additional flexibility by the researcher. Student data submitted by Philippi College included a combination of cohort years and anticipated graduation dates in the student data, rather than class status by credit hours. The student information provided by Philippi was updated to reflect class status based on inferences made when reviewing the cohort year and anticipated graduation dates. Colosse College provided only a list of traditional undergraduate students without including class status, preventing invitation of a stratified sample of students based on class. Additionally, Colosse College did not include email addresses with the student lists, requiring the researcher to secure email addresses for students selected in the random sample from a graduate assistant at the university as a means of keeping the list of invited students confidential. The list of invited students (and those confirming participation) was not shared at any point with the primary university contact person at Colosse.



The student lists for each university were retained in individual spreadsheets with columns representing their class, their last name, their first name, their email address, and a number assigned by the researcher. The lists were sorted by class, then last name, then first name. Participants were assigned sequential numbers with the sequence restarting for each class group. The researcher then used a publicly available computerized random number generator (Stat Trek, 2012) to select the specific number of participants from each class. Non-response from some of the invited participants was assumed so the researcher invited double the amount of desired focus group participants, or twenty proportionately sampled students from each university. The list from Colosse College, which did not include student class information, was sorted alphabetically by last name and first name, with each student assigned a number. Students were randomly selected from the entire list, rather than proportionately by class.

Invitations to the selected participants were sent directly from the researcher's email address to each student's university email address to preserve participant confidentiality. The invitations outlined the focus of the study, the scope of participation requested, the benefits anticipated, the incentive offered (participants were notified that a meal would be served in conjunction with their focus group participation), and the time and location of the focus group meeting. The email invitation included a copy of the Informed Consent Form for the participant's review. Prospective participants were encouraged to contact the researcher directly with questions about the study and were also notified that the study delimited participation to individuals who were 18 years of age or older. Students receiving the invitations were asked to respond by email to indicate

whether or not they were able to participate in the focus group. The initial participation invitations were, in most cases, sent at least one week prior to the campus visit.

Individual follow-up emails were sent to all invited participants prior to the scheduled meetings, soliciting responses from those who had not indicated participation or non-participation and confirming meeting times and locations. Any individual expressing that they did not wish to participate in the study received a confirmation email and was removed from consideration. If confirmed numbers were not at a minimum threshold of six participants for the student groups at least three days prior to the visit, an additional set of ten students was proportionately selected from each university using the previously outlined random number generation process. These students received the initial email invitation with a request to respond with confirmation of participation or non-participation.

High rates of non-response or unavailability at some of the selected universities necessitated the randomized selection of additional invitees, as well as flexibility in adjusting proposed meeting times. At Philippi College only one of the randomly selected students came to the first interview and at Colosse College a combination of three students participated in two interviews at the first visit. For the second Philippi visit, the initially participating student was permitted to invite additional friends to join the discussion, compromising the benefits of stratified random sampling, but increasing the participant pool and facilitating discussion with Philippi students. An additional Philippi student, invited for the first interview, participated in the second after turning 18 (the age of eligibility for participation in the study) between researcher visits. Detailed information on the number of participants is available in Appendix C (Tables 5-8).

One week prior to the first campus visit at each selected university the primary contact person received a phone call from the researcher to confirm final logistics and participation details. The researcher also reviewed the list of items requested for content and statistical analysis from each university, highlighting any missing items.

Two layers of confidentiality were provided to participating individuals. First, universities participating in the study were assigned pseudonyms. Second, participating individuals were assigned pseudonyms. A spreadsheet of participant data was compiled on a password-protected laptop and was sorted by participant gender, then first name. To facilitate the assignment of random, but reasonably common pseudonyms, first names of the researcher's Facebook friends were assigned to the participants, provided the names did not match an actual participant's first name. Demographic data was limited to information that could not specifically identify an individual. This information was kept in a secure, password-protected electronic file and will be destroyed after the requisite data maintenance time period.

### Data Collection

Utilizing a case study design, this research project incorporated a wide variety of data to provide depth and breadth in understanding as the research questions were addressed. Qualitative elements included documents submitted by each university and participant data and responses from focus group discussions. Quantitative data were drawn from university submitted responses to the Student Satisfaction Inventory as a means of triangulating the data. The specific data addressing each research question is documented briefly here, followed by a more extensive discussion of the focus group process that provided data for each of the four research questions.

## Formulation and Revision of Conduct Codes with Spiritually Formative Goals

The first research question explored the extent to which spiritually formative goals were integrated into the formulation and revision of student conduct codes at the selected universities. The initial step in the process was a review of key documents from each university studied, particularly the published student handbook and in the case of two of the universities studied, a one page synthesis of the primary policies presented to students. A content analysis is defined as, “a detailed and systematic examination of the contents of a particular body of material for the purpose of identifying patterns, themes, or biases” (Leedy & Ormrod, 2005, p. 142). This allowed for an unobtrusive, indirect means of research (Robson, 2002).

Interviews with senior administrators and leaders responsible for policy formation also provided essential data for this question. Topics discussed in these interviews included the process of handbook formulation and revision, significant policy changes or revisions, and the goals undergirding the handbook formulation and revision process. Questions regarding policy changes under consideration and the rationale for those changes also contributed to the data collected for this question.

## Communication and Enforcement of Conduct Codes with Spiritually Formative Goals

The second research question explored the extent to which spiritually formative goals were integrated into the way conduct codes were communicated and enforced. Data for this question, as well, included documents submitted by each participating university. The contact person at each university was provided a list of key documents that were submitted to the researcher in electronic form. This list included the latest edition of the school’s student conduct code, training and policy documents for student affairs

administrators and student leaders, samples of discipline or sanction letters with personal identifiers removed, documents pertaining to policy clarification or changes, and other items considered appropriate by the university contact person. These documents were uploaded into NVivo for later analysis (Appendix D).

Separate focus groups with staff members and student leaders responsible for student conduct code compliance provided data for the second research question relating to the integration of spiritually formative goals in the enforcement of student conduct codes. Extensive discussions about the process of policy communication and conduct code enforcement contributed primary data for this research question, as did questions regarding the goals and format of resident assistant training.

#### Student Perception of Spiritually Formative Goals in Conduct Codes

The third research question focused on the extent to which students perceived the integration of spiritually formative goals in the way conduct codes were formulated, communicated, and enforced at their universities. The bulk of the data for this research question was provided through focus group interviews with students at each of the institutions, which included the stratified random sample of student participants, as well as resident assistants serving as student leaders. These interviews included questions about what students perceived to be the goals behind the handbook policies, ways in which the handbook policies were communicated, the goals behind the communication process, and perceptions of the enforcement practices and policies of the university.

Research relating to this question also incorporated the use of quantitative data provided by the Student Satisfaction Inventory as a means of triangulating the data collected through qualitative means. Participating institutions were asked to provide the

responses to selected questions (Appendix A) from the two most recent administrations of the Student Satisfaction Inventory (SSI). This quantitative instrument, developed by Noel-Levitz, is administered at numerous colleges and universities (Noel-Levitz, 2011) and is recognized to meet the criteria of both reliability and validity (J. L. Bryant, 2006). Responses from selected questions relating to student conduct codes and institutional atmosphere were submitted by three of the four universities. One university, Colosse College, included responses from optional questions related to student spiritual formation collected by some CCCU schools. Galatia College did not provide any SSI information to the researcher. The data from the selected questions were emailed to the primary researcher and stored both on the primary researcher's computer and a backup storage drive.

#### Student Perception of Staff Interventions and Spiritually Formative Goals

The fourth research question also explored student perceptions of spiritually formative goals but focused on the impact of staff interventions related to conduct code formulation, communication, and enforcement. Data from SSI survey results, particularly two sets of data from subsequent administrations of the instrument at each university, were intended to provide a means of quantitatively assessing statistically significant variance in survey results over time. Two of the universities, Ephesus College and Colosse College were able to provide reports for two subsequent administrations of the SSI data within a four year timeframe. One of the universities, Philippi College, administers the SSI much less frequently and only provided a report of the most recent administration. The fourth university, Galatia College, did not provide SSI data.

Focus group interviews with students provided the primary means of qualitative data collection for the fourth research question. Students participating in the interviews, including resident assistants and the randomly invited sample of students, were asked about any policy changes at the universities, the perceived rationale behind those policies, and their reaction to the policy changes. These interviews also contributed data about students' response to staff interventions on a personal scale, with questions focused around trust, relationships with staff and faculty members, and perceptions of staff interactions, particularly relating to conduct code communication and enforcement.

#### Focus Group and Transcription Methodology

Each of the research questions utilized qualitative data collected from a variety of campus stakeholders, including administrators, student affairs personnel, student leaders, and students. This was accomplished through semi-structured interviews, allowing for consistency of questions (provided through questionnaires in advance) and information solicited at each campus (Gay et al., 2006). To maximize the time available and to benefit from the interaction of interviewees with each other, the interviews were conducted as focus group discussions (Leedy & Ormrod, 2005; Sim, 1998).

The schedule for the initial campus visits varied somewhat at each university but generally included a similar number of meetings and the same categories of stakeholders (Appendix E). Visits to each selected university included a meeting with the senior leadership of the student affairs department at the university that introduced the study, discussed the methodology, and asked questions that addressed the research topic. At one university, Colosse College, the interview with the chief student development officer was conducted via Skype because of scheduling conflicts during the onsite visits.

Subsequent focus group meetings separately addressed the perspectives of university personnel responsible for student conduct code enforcement, staff members responsible for residential or community life (including graduate students at two of the universities visited), student leaders such as resident assistants and commuter assistants, and the randomly selected group of students.

At the beginning of each meeting the researcher thanked the participants for their involvement, invited them to help themselves to the snacks or meal provided, and then presented the informed consent forms. Printed copies were distributed and the form was explained in detail by the researcher. Invited participants were given an opportunity to sign the form or decline participation without penalty. One copy of each signed consent form was collected by the researcher with one copy remaining in the possession of each participant.

After the informed consent forms were collected participant demographic forms were distributed, providing a means for participants to record their name and demographic information. For staff participants the demographic categories included: name, gender, years working in student affairs, years at the university, and position. For student leaders the demographic categories included: name, gender, class, major, and residential status. Categories for the general student population included: name, gender, class, major, and residential status. Demographic forms were color coded by university for easy identification by the researcher. Participants were reminded that neither the identities of the universities nor the participants would be revealed in the research report, but that demographic data could contribute to the data analysis. They were reminded, as well, that if quoted, their quote would be attributed to a pseudonym.



As semi-structured interviews, the content of each focus group discussion followed an outline that included both convergent (or closed) and divergent (or open-ended) questions (Appendix F), allowing for elaboration and discussion (Gay et al., 2006). The content of each focus group was captured through audio recordings for later transcription (Gay et al.) and through notes taken by the researcher. Two audio recording devices were started as each focus group discussion began to ensure adequate audio quality and coverage. The audio files were transferred to the researcher's primary computer and to a backup storage drive to ensure that the recordings were preserved. The participants in each focus group were asked to identify themselves by first name both at the beginning of the discussion and prior to question responses to facilitate participant identification during transcription of the interviews. Participants were reminded that personally identifying information would be removed from the transcriptions and that each person would be assigned a pseudonym prior to data analysis to preserve the confidentiality of each participant. The researcher also took notes on participant responses to assist in the transcription process. Interview times ranged between 60-75 minutes and at the conclusion of each interview the researcher noted any pre-selected questions that had not been discussed. Participants were thanked for their involvement and reminded that questions could be directed to the researcher at any time.

A second set of focus group interviews at each university followed a similar format and schedule. Participants in the first interviews were reminded by email of the interview times and locations at each university approximately one week prior to the scheduled second visit. Because the second interviews were intended to both follow-up and clarify data collected in the first interviews, additional participants were not usually

solicited at this stage. An exception was made at Philippi College and Colosse College in an attempt to recruit additional participants to represent the general student body. Five additional participants joined the second student focus group at Philippi; four representing a convenience sample of friends invited by the previous student participant and one previously invited by the random selection process, but unable to participate in the first interview.

At the beginning of the second focus group interviews, the researcher thanked the participants for their ongoing involvement in the study and invited them to enjoy the snacks or meal provided. The researcher read through the informed consent form previously signed by the participants, offered the opportunity for questions, and reiterated the voluntary nature of the study. If any new participants were involved they were provided with informed consent forms and given the opportunity to sign them or decline participation without penalty. Participants were again asked to identify themselves by first name before responding to questions and reminded that transcripts would be cleared of personal identifiers prior to data analysis as a means of preserving participant confidentiality.

The content of each group's second focus group interview began with questions that were not completely discussed at the first interview. Second interviews also included discussion of items observed and noted by the researcher during the first set of interviews. Participants were also invited to share perspectives and insights that had developed over the time elapsed since the first interview. As before, the interviews were recorded with two audio-recording devices and the researcher took notes on the discussion to facilitate later transcription.

The pseudonyms assigned to each participant were input, along with the submitted demographic data, into an Excel spreadsheet. This spreadsheet was loaded into NVivo as a source sheet, allowing information from the focus group interviews to be matched to each participant without compromising participant confidentiality.

Each of the recorded focus group interviews was transcribed using headings to identify each participant's contribution by the previously assigned pseudonym. A meta-analysis of transcription methodologies for qualitative analysis highlighted the importance of making clear choices regarding the level of detail incorporated into the transcriptions (Davidson, 2009). The primary use of the transcribed data was content provided by the participants, so nonverbal placeholders (such as “um” and “uh”) were not included in the transcriptions. However, verbal placeholders (such as “like”) were included to allow for accurate reflection of participants' voices. Group dynamics were not the primary focus of this study, but transcriptions incorporated moments of group agreement (other participants expressing brief verbal or nonverbal assent) with the use of the word, agreement, in parenthesis. Moments of levity or group laughter were documented by including the word, laughter, in parenthesis. This allowed transcripts to better document comments that were made in a joking or sarcastic manner.

Use of participant pseudonyms as headings allowed content from each participant to be tracked by the previously collected demographic characteristics, role, and institution through the NVivo analysis software. The recorded data was compared with the researcher's notes to confirm the order of each participant's contribution. Each transcription, once complete, was uploaded to NVivo software and identified by the university's pseudonym, the visit number, and interview number.

## Analytical Methods

The data analyzed as a means of addressing all four of the research questions in this comparative case study was primarily qualitative, drawn from submitted university documents and extensive focus group interviews. The additional quantitative component, results from the Student Satisfaction Inventory, contributed to an overall understanding related to research questions three and four, which explored student perceptions at the participating universities. The analytical methods necessarily involved a means of qualitative data analysis, interpretation of SSI results, and synthesis of the data.

### Qualitative Data Analysis

All four research questions necessitated the analysis of qualitative data. The first research question, exploring the integration of spiritually formative goals into the formulation and revision of conduct codes, required the analysis of university-provided content such as student handbooks. Additionally, responding to this question required the analysis of interview transcripts with administrators and student development personnel for themes related to conduct code formulation and revision. The second research question, addressing the integration of spiritually formative goals into the communication and enforcement of conduct codes, utilized similar data such as submitted documents and interview transcripts and traced out themes relating to communication venues, enforcement philosophies, and discipline practices. The third and fourth research questions both explored student perception and also included the analysis of qualitative data drawn from interviews with students.

Analysis of the qualitative data collected for all four research questions was facilitated and organized by using qualitative data analysis software, specifically

NVivo 9, allowing the possibility of integrating methodologies by linking quantitative data, such as demographic information or closed-end survey responses, with qualitative data, such as open-ended responses and material from a content analysis (Bazeley, 2006). NVivo provided a systematic means of organizing large amounts of data of different types, leaving behind a clear audit trail of coding decisions made during the process of research analysis (Welsh, 2002). NVivo allowed the researcher to search through material more thoroughly and systematically (Welsh; Robson, 2002), organizing various data elements from a variety of sources such as the student conduct codes, demographic data, and interview transcripts into nodes, or organizing categories. NVivo also provided a number of query, data-modeling, and reporting tools that allowed the researcher to explore relationships between nodes. The researcher attended a two-day training session, gaining certification and proficiency in the use of the program.

In order to identify spiritually formative goals in qualitative data the specific characteristics to be studied were selected (Leedy & Ormrod, 2005). This necessitated clarifying spiritually formative goals and operationalizing them in a way that allowed for exhaustive and mutually exclusive categorization of the content in the documents (Robson, 2002). The categories utilized comprise the spiritually formative goals outlined in Chapter One:

1. To cultivate a community that is conducive to spiritually beneficial influences (Lau, 2005).
2. To foster a sense of mutual moral responsibility in the lives of students (Hoekema, 1994).

3. To maintain an atmosphere that is protected against spiritually detrimental influences.
4. To contribute to an environment that is conducive to the integration of faith and learning.
5. To provide moral guidance in students' lives as they progress to maturity.
6. To promote discipline in students' lives as a reflection of Christian values (Lau).
7. To encourage the lifelong practice of wisdom in students' lives (Guthrie, 1997a).

Additional nodes were set up in NVivo to identify Scripture references as well as quotes that encapsulated the research themes. Nodes related to communication and enforcement provided for the analysis of themes related to research question two, as did nodes relating to the role of resident assistants and student leader training. Student perceptions were also tracked using nodes related to their perceptions, frustrations, and feedback about specific policies to draw out themes related to question three. Linked to research question four, categories for policy changes and policy enforcement were established. As the content analysis progressed, the researcher gained familiarity with the data and took note of any additional themes that surfaced during the analysis (Gay et al., 2006). Additional themes that emerged from the data were traced in NVivo included the values of trust, confidentiality, restoration, and relationship. The emergence and prevalence of these themes would later give rise to a new spiritually formative goal identified in the data.

In order to ensure content reliability through the content analysis of this subjective material, a research assistant was employed to serve as an additional rater (Leedy & Ormrod, 2005, Robson, 2002). The research assistant was trained in the ethical treatment of human research subjects using online material and was trained by the primary researcher in the use of NVivo. The researcher provided the research assistant with an overview of the background to the research and discussed the categories of spiritually formative goals. A practice review was undertaken, using segments of the code of conduct from the researcher's home university. Both the researcher and the research assistant coded the document independently, then reviewed the results through comparison analysis functions within NVivo. Varying items were discussed and then noted for clarification.

As each document and transcript was reviewed in NVivo every sentence or paragraph relating to a spiritual formative goal was coded or marked for inclusion in one or more nodes (Leedy & Ormrod, 2005). Specific attention was paid to manifest content and latent content (Robson, 2002). Items were reviewed independently by the researcher and the research assistant with subsequent meetings to review coding through the comparison analysis available in NVivo. Coding correlation scores for primary nodes were calculated as Kappa coefficients using internal statistical analysis tools within NVivo, then exported to Microsoft Excel for further analysis. The average Kappa coefficient (weighted by source size) was 0.3357 (Appendix G, Table 9).

This score was below the published ranged for fair to good Kappa coefficient results in NVivo, but additional discussion and review revealed more consistency than the analysis statistical analysis suggested. Within several transcripts, sections of

conversations were coded similarly, if not exactly – a factor that does not translate into the statistical analysis. Additionally, the primary researcher included introductory questions and contextual comments in the coding as a means of ensuring efficiency in later review and analysis. The primary researcher, as well, coded multiple themes more often than the research assistant, a fact borne out by the score for unique data coded by the primary researcher (2.52% of source material), versus unique data coded by the research assistant (0.69%) (Appendix G, Table 9). Again, discussions related to the coded material indicated significant congruence in the perspectives and understanding of the themes between the primary researcher and the research assistant.

After all documents and interview transcripts were reviewed and coded according to the categories (or nodes) relating to spiritually formative goals, reports were compiled of the data collected for each category using the report function within NVivo. Individual reports allowed the researcher to review the collected data for each theme in an organized fashion, tracing out the progression of the theme across a variety of sources. Reports were printed for the additional themes identified through the content analysis as well as the Scripture passages referenced explicitly or implicitly in the data.

#### Interpretation of SSI Results

The third and fourth research questions focused on student perception of the integration of spiritual formative goals into student conduct codes as well as student perception of staff interventions relating to the conduct code. A review of the submitted data from the Student Satisfaction Inventory (SSI) provided a means of quantitatively exploring these questions. The SSI solicits student responses to two Likert scales for a series of statements regarding their university. The first Likert scale measures the level of



importance assigned to the statement by the student and the second measures the level of satisfaction recorded by the student. The gap between the level of importance and the level of student satisfaction is calculated, providing universities with data about where student expectations are not being met. The mean scores from the most recent two administrations of the SSI for each university (including importance, satisfaction, and gap scores) for a series of pre-selected questions were reviewed to see if statistically significant gaps were identified for the selected questions.

The questions selected from the general SSI related to staff interactions, student conduct codes and disciplinary procedures, and overall institutional tone (Table A). Member schools of the CCCU have the option of including additional questions relating to the spiritual climate on campus and student spiritual formation. Not all of the studied universities collected these optional responses but those that did submitted these results with the other SSI data. The questions selected and university scores were charted and areas with statistically significant gaps were noted, as were areas of statistically significant variance with national norms.

A few challenges surfaced in the collection and analysis of this information. The first was that the SSI information did not include raw data or individual survey responses, which prevented the researcher from carrying out additional statistical analysis. Neither the comparative data nor the administration years for the survey were consistent, which prevented direct comparison. For example, two schools (Philippi and Colosse) provided data that compared their scores with the national four year private university scores, while Ephesus provided information comparing their scores to the CCCU data set. Two of the universities (Colosse and Ephesus) provided at least two chronological data sets

(two years apart) allowing for inter-institution comparison, while Philippi only provided one year's worth of data, given that the previous administration of the survey was more than ten years prior.

While two of the universities (Philippi and Colosse) provided the full report from Noel-Levitz, including strategic planning overview information spotlighting areas of strength and areas of challenge, Ephesus College responded with only the previously identified scale items. Only one of the universities, Ephesus College, collected the scale items optionally distributed at CCCU institutions. Lastly, one of the studied universities, Galatia College, did not provide SSI data.

Analysis of the data did not include additional statistical analysis. Rather, where possible, the list of institutional strengths and target areas was reviewed to see if any of the scale items referenced in this study were listed. If no executive summary was provided, the data were reviewed to see if there were any scale items with gaps greater than one point between student reported importance and student reported satisfaction. Where possible, statistically significant differences between the school and comparison pool were listed based on the report provided. If multiple sets of data were provided, a simple review of the scores indicated whether gap scores in student satisfaction had increased or decreased for the selected scale items.

#### Synthesis of the Data

According to Leedy and Ormrod (2005), the process of analyzing data necessitates not only organizing and categorizing the data, it requires interpreting the data by identifying patterns that emerge, then synthesizing it to address the research questions. With data drawn from numerous documents, interview transcripts, and from SSI results,

it was essential to build time into the research process for the synthesis stage. This process was also an essential step in mitigating against researcher bias as additional themes were permitted to emerge from the data (Robson, 2002).

The process was facilitated by generating reports related to each theme identified and coded earlier in NVivo, inclusive of all sources. This allowed for a review of the themes, regardless of source, to gain general impressions from the data before reviewing individual sources. At this point the theme reports were then individually reviewed again, with specific attention paid to each data element's relationship to one of the four research questions. The notes from the data were cataloged in an extensive mind-map as a means of visually representing and organizing the data using an iPad.

Once the individual pieces of data were then synthesized, giving attention to previously identified themes (such as the spiritually formative goals) and new themes that emerged from the data, the final analysis of the data was completed, tracing out themes that emerged from multiple data points, but also identifying examples from specific documents or interview participants. Throughout the process, it was recognized that the data reviewed, particularly the data drawn from focus group interviews, was limited to a small degree of theoretical generalizability, rather than any measure of empirical generalizability (Sim, 1998).

### Limitations

A primary limitation in any qualitative study is the challenge of pursuing reliability and validity. Within a flexible, qualitative design validity is defined as “the degree to which the qualitative data we collect accurately gauge what we are trying to measure” (Gay et al., 2006, p. 403). The challenge in the process was to ensure that a

framework was permitted to emerge from the data, rather than rigidly imposing a theoretical structure on the data collected. Additionally, since the primary researcher is a practitioner in the field of student development at a Christian college, the possibility of researcher bias had to be acknowledged as a potential limitation.

An ongoing limitation in data collection was inconsistency in the information available, both through online sources and through materials submitted to the primary researcher by representatives from the selected institutions. The scope and location of admissions policies and procedures, as well as student conduct code initially reviewed for the process of site selection varied considerably. Additionally, material published online did not always reflect the full scope of a policy or the actual enforcement practices employed by the university.

A limitation in the population sampled was the level of homogeneity in the universities studied. While the proximity sample allowed the research and site visits to be conducted in a reasonable time, the universities selected may draw students from a very similar demographic and geographic region. This factor, coupled with the small sample size of less than 4% of the universities in the CCCU presented a significant limitation in the generalizability of this study, even to other Christian universities within the United States.

A general limitation to the study was the extensive use of focus groups as a primary source of data. Focus groups offer several advantages, including a capacity to include several participants at once, a unique interpersonal dynamic between group members, and a reasonably non-threatening environment for participants, but caution must be exercised in collecting and interpreting their data (Sim, 1998). The level of

involvement of the facilitator, the makeup of the group, and the dynamic engendered by each group members' participation all factor into the quality and candor of the information shared, often amplifying converging opinions and muting diverging perspectives (Sim). This limitation was addressed logistically by giving careful attention to the process of building rapport with and between focus group participants and by attempting to draw out individual opinions during the discussions. From a methodological standpoint, this limitation was somewhat mitigated by the number of focus groups conducted over a five week period of time on four separate campuses. According to Sim:

It may therefore be possible to identify a form of consensus across groups in terms of the range of issues concerned, even if it is not possible to identify reliably a consensus within a group on any single issue. (p. 349)

Recruiting participants, particularly for the randomly selected student focus groups, proved to be challenging and a potential limitation. In order to preserve the confidentiality of general student participants the invitation to participate was initiated directly by the primary researcher – an unknown party to the student invited to participate. This was mitigated somewhat by use of an incentive (a meal catered by a local restaurant), but recruiting willing participants was a challenge. Repeated invitations, expanded invitation lists, and flexibility in interview times attempted to address this limitation. At Philippi College, additional students were invited by an earlier participant to the second interview, increasing the sample size, but replacing the attempt for a random stratified sample with a convenience sample made up of one student's friends. Overall, the small size of each focus group meant that only a fraction of the student body

was represented in the general focus groups. Generalizability to the broader student body could be improved by conducting additional focus groups or developing a quantitative instrument to survey the student body.

An additional institutional limitation, referenced earlier, was the limited information about the student population provided by Colosse College, which did not include class status or email addresses for the students. This limitation was somewhat mitigated by simply inviting a randomly selected percentage of the overall student body which meant that while the sample invited was not proportionally stratified, it was still randomly selected. In order to preserve the confidentiality of the students randomly invited to participate in the focus group, the university assigned a graduate assistant to provide email addresses for the randomly selected students to the researcher. The list of students invited was not shared with any of the other staff members at the university and the identify of students confirming participation in the study was known only to the researcher.

The exact composition of each focus group at the universities visited varied somewhat, with some including administrators and resident directors together and with others focusing solely on resident directors. At one of the universities utilizing graduate assistants as residential staff the graduate assistants were included in the focus group with resident directors and some administrative staff. At another university, the graduate assistants participated in a separate focus group discussion on their own. The student focus groups were more distinct, divided specifically into resident assistants (invited because of their student leadership position) and the randomly selected students. At one university, one of the randomly selected students disclosed that he had served as a

resident assistant previously. At another, a resident assistant was also one of the students randomly selected, so she participated in both discussions. None of these focus group composition differences, in the final analysis, presented significant limitations to the data collected or the research methodology.

The study also limited participation to students who were 18 years of age or older. While the universities selected have a number of students under the age of 18, their participation in the study would have required parental consent and would have brought a significantly different demographic of student into the discussion. One student at Philippi College self-disclosed that he did not meet the age requirement prior to the first interview, but was able to join the focus group during the second visit after turning 18.

While the SSI is a nationally-utilized instrument, recognized as a reliable and valid measurement, the level of detail provided by each institution varied. None of the universities had access to the raw data from the survey and were able to provide only executive summaries and aggregate reports relating to the data collected, preventing any additional statistical analysis by the researcher. Additionally, only one of the schools studied collected responses for the additional optional questions regarding student spirituality suggested by the CCCU and only two provided data from more than one administration of the survey. The comparative norms provided by the schools were different, with two normed to national four-year private institutions and one normed to other CCCU schools. One of the participating universities did not provide any SSI data. In the end, the SSI data proved to be most useful when considered as background information to each university studied, but were limited in their capacity for comparative analysis between the universities or as measures of institutional culture change.

The final limitation was the possibility of researcher bias, given the researcher's role as a practitioner in the field of Christian higher education. Efforts to mitigate the effects of this potential limitation included triangulated data, efforts to look for contradictory evidence, and acknowledgement of biases and assumptions throughout the research study (Leedy & Ormrod, 2005). The primary means of addressing researcher bias was the practice of reflexivity (Gay et al. 2006) by keeping a journal, engaging in discussions with colleagues regarding the research process, and submitting conclusions to the review of peers in the field of Christian higher education and spiritual formation.

### Summary

The data collection and analysis process for this qualitative study, while intense and time-consuming, offered a level of immersion in the data that contributed significantly to the researcher's understanding of the themes explored through the research questions. The methodology contributed richness and depth, not only to the final product, but to the process, itself. As the strands of data were pulled together, not only were previously researched spiritually formative goals visible, but a new theme emerged from the tapestry woven by this study.



## CHAPTER IV

### FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS

#### Introduction

This research investigation began with the goal of exploring the integration of spiritually formative goals into the formulation, communication, and enforcement of student conduct codes at selected Christian colleges and universities. As a primarily qualitative study, the perspectives represented in the final analysis include those of real, current practitioners in the field. The voice of the student is presented both in aggregate and individual form, drawn from lively conversations in campus conference rooms, fueled by pizza and caffeine. The questions addressed were:

1. To what extent, if any, are spiritually formative goals integrated into the formulation and revision of student conduct codes at selected Christian colleges and universities?
2. To what extent, if any, are spiritually formative goals integrated into the communication and enforcement of student conduct codes at selected Christian colleges and universities?
3. To what extent, if any, do students perceive the integration of spiritually formative goals in the formulation, communication, and enforcement of student conduct codes at selected Christian colleges and universities?

4. What interventions or actions, if any, by student affairs personnel affect (positively or negatively) student perception of the integration of spiritually formative goals into the formulation, communication, and enforcement of student conduct codes?

These conversations breathed life into the policies and procedures outlined in university documents, adding depth, nuance, and practical application to the process. The range of participants, extending from senior level administrators to randomly selected students allowed for breadth of research. The time invested on each campus and the relational capital fostered by a repeat visit provided depth to the discussion. In the final analysis an encouraging and richly-colored portrait surfaced from the canvas of the research study. Not only were the previously identified spiritually formative goals evident in the student conduct codes at each university, an additional goal emerged from the data.

### Findings

The framework of the study applied four research questions to seven spiritually formative goals. The presentation of the findings will follow the format of the four research questions, applying them in turn to each of the previously identified formative goals. At the conclusion of the analysis, the additional spiritually formative goal that emerged from the analysis of the data will be presented.

### Formulation and Revision of Conduct Codes with Spiritually Formative Goals

The first research question for this study focused on the integration of spiritually formative goals integrated into the formulation and revision of student conduct codes. The details of this question will be reported for each of the specific spiritually formative

goals, but it is helpful at this point to outline the conduct code formulation and revision process described at each of the universities.

At two of the universities studied, Galatia College and Colosse College, the handbooks outlining the student conduct code have not had major revisions in a number of years but are subject to an ongoing review during the summer months. This review allows for revisions based on emerging trends in higher education and legal issues such as refined sexual assault policies and mandatory reporting.

Ephesus College, however, under the direction of a new VP for Student Development, commissioned a complete revision of the student handbook and a one-page lifestyle covenant approximately four years ago. The intent of the process was to more accurately reflect the heart of the university in the documents and provide additional rationale for each of the policies. The revision process included feedback from a broad cross-section of the campus community (faculty, staff, and the university cabinet) and was primarily drafted by the residence life staff of the university. The policies are reviewed on an ongoing basis with recent edits relating to sexual assault and the university's chapel policy incorporated into the latest edition.

The student handbook at Philippi College, as well, was significantly reorganized and rewritten after a change in leadership and structure within the student development department a few years ago. The revised document reflected an additional emphasis on student care within the university and is reviewed during the summer months each year to ensure ongoing congruence with the mission of the university, as well as compliance with legal issues in higher education.

The goal of conduct code formulation and revision was summed up in a Skype interview with a senior level administrator. After discussing the legal implications of the process, a significant concern in today's litigious climate, this individual stated:

As you're looking at these policies, you're ensuring that they adhere to, you know, state – federal law, and that's one thing. But to ensure that it adheres to biblical principles and it – it has biblical foundations flowing within it is key.

(Douglas)

The first of the spiritually formative goals explored was the cultivation of a community that is conducive to spiritually beneficial influences (Lau, 2005). This theme wound its way through each of the handbooks and documents describing the policies related to the campus. Provided documents described the type of community desired. The Christian college community, according to Philippi's Community Covenant, while not a church maintains some of the features of a church, built on the commandments of Christ to love the Lord with your heart, soul, mind and strength and to love your neighbor as yourself. The community experienced at the university, Galatia's handbook explained, is a key factor in why students choose to come to Galatia and is centered on growth in Christ. The season of living in community at Colosse was described as a blessing and is "paramount for growth in Christ" (Colosse College, 2012, p. 21).

This community, Philippi College documents pointed out, is fostered by the institutional standards in place and held together by covenant relationships. At Ephesus College it (2012d) "requires agreement on what behaviors will and will not be acceptable" (p. 27). The materials provided to students included "behavioral guidelines that will help foster a Christ-honoring community" (Philippi, 2011a, p. 8). According to

the Galatia College Handbook the accountability offered within the community, particularly in relation to the community expectations, provides opportunities for spiritual growth.

A commitment to cultivating a spiritually beneficial community was also found in the rationale offered for specific policies within the university documents. The chapel requirement at two of the universities, Philippi College and Ephesus College, was specifically described as a core component of the spiritual life of the community. An assortment of policies including prohibitions of public nudity, hazing and attention to clothing choices were explained with an emphasis on Christian community and relationships. The atmosphere of the residence halls, including instruction on room decorations, campus raids (a pre-planned activity to foster relationships with other residents), and hours available for mixed gender visitation or open dorms was described in community terms.

Another spiritually formative goal explored in this study was fostering a sense of mutual moral responsibility in the lives of students (Hoekema, 1994). Again, this theme was found directly or in allusions peppered throughout all of the documents provided by the four universities studied. Students were reminded to embrace personal responsibility for their choice of the campus community, recognizing that joining the community brings both responsibility and expectation. Individuals were instructed to give careful attention to relationships and their impact on the broader community.

A commitment to mutual moral responsibility was incorporated into instruction regarding the exercise of personal freedoms within the broader community. For example, students were reminded of their biblical responsibility to the weaker brother or sister,

balancing their own personal growth with the personal growth of others. Discretion in entertainment choices at Philippi College and clothing selections at Galatia were described as tangible reflections of moral responsibility.

The moral responsibility of students, according to the documents reviewed, is also extended into a level of responsibility for the spiritual health of others. Students were instructed to hold each other accountable to the standards of the community. References to the biblical teaching on conflict resolution in Matthew 18 provided a template for these encounters in documents provided from Philippi and Colosse Colleges, as did the specific legal requirements outlined for mandatory reporting of criminal events at Colosse and Ephesus. This responsibility extends to campus guests.

A desire to foster moral responsibility in the lives of students also affected handbook revisions at two of the universities studied. Campus administrators explained that at Ephesus College, the chapel enforcement policy (incorporating an infrastructure to connect students with residence life staff for discussions regarding chapel attendance violations) was revised out of a desire to better motivate students regarding their community responsibilities. The handbook revision process, completed four years ago, was motivated by a desire to help students better understand how they are responsible for shaping community through their behavior.

Lau's (2005) previous research on reasons for student conduct codes also indicated that at the Christian college or university policies were put in place to maintain an atmosphere that is protected against spiritually detrimental influences. This was certainly reflected in the wording of the documents provided by the universities participating in the current study. Philippi College's handbook, for example, stated that

part of the purpose for the policies in their community covenant is “to remove whatever may hinder us from our calling as a Christ-centered academic community” (Philippi, 2011a, p. 1). Successfully pursuing their vision for community requires the “avoidance of harmful practices” (p. 3). Colosse College extended this theme further when discussing any breach of their community covenant:

Violations of our Community Life Expectations tear at the fabric of our community and our Christian character and compromise the kind of environment we are striving to nurture. (Colosse, 2012, p. 26)

This spiritually formative goal was applied to the rationale for a number of specific prohibitive policies, including references to behaviors specifically forbidden in Scripture such as pride, dishonesty, injustice, and sexual practices outside of heterosexual marriage. It was additionally applied to the rationale for university policies regarding alcohol, tobacco, and substance abuse, citing these items’ potential for destructive influence.

A particular subset relating to protecting the campus against spiritually detrimental influence was found in the language referring to human sexuality. It found application in policies relating to prohibition of pornography, cohabitation, and sexual assault. Media choices were to be carefully considered to “avoid any entertainment or behavior, on or off campus, which may be immodest, sinfully erotic, or harmfully violent” (Philippi, 2011a, p. 3). The policy extended to oversight of room decorations and details regarding university-sponsored dances, which are intended to protect against the negative aspects often associated with modern social dancing.

Other detrimental influences prevented by the application of student conduct policies included behaviors detrimental to human flourishing such as hazing, hate speech and gambling. Interestingly, in at least two of the universities researched, student withdrawal policies were couched in language reflecting a desire to protect the campus from an individual's detrimental influence. The rationale, for example, for denying readmission to an individual included refusing someone whose "presence at the University would endanger the healthy, safety, or welfare of themselves or other members of the [GC] community" (Galatia College, 2012, p. 25).

Christian colleges and universities also utilize student conduct codes to contribute to an environment that is conducive to the integration of faith and learning (Lau, 2005). Within the student handbook or other published documentation of conduct codes this was often connected to the institutional mission of education within a Christian context. The preface of Philippi's community covenant referenced the university's unique role as an academic institution "that takes seriously the life of the mind" (Philippi College, 2011a, p. 1). The role of the university has a specific and significant educational component and the policies within the handbook promote an atmosphere suited to academic rigor within a Christian liberal-arts context. The community is intended to promote students' intellectual development as well as their faith. Ephesus College (2012a) stated:

Rules and practices of conduct are formulated with the welfare of the student in mind and with a view of promoting the highest of Christian ideals and scholastic attainment. (p.184)

This goal was related to a number of specific policies outlined for each university. Three of the universities studied explicitly linked their residential requirement to the



educational process with specific instructions regarding ways to encourage the community's capacity to study, such as quiet hour requirements. Unsurprisingly, chapel requirements were listed as a core component of the living and learning environment and a requirement for graduation. Additional policies addressing this goal related to male and female interaction, intimidation of other students and classroom behavior, procedures related to involuntary withdrawal, and the preservation of academic integrity.

While additional handbook information is not directly related to student conduct codes, information in the documentation provided referenced other departments and their relationship to the educational mission of the university. These departments included Student Development, Student Care, Career Services, and the Office of Christian Outreach. Information about student government and student organizations was included in this category, providing educational opportunities for students. As a subset of the department of Student Life at Colosse College (2012):

The Office of Christian Formation and Mission is committed to helping students apply lessons from life and the classroom in a supportive, supervised, “real-world” environment. (p. 22)

Christian colleges and universities also formulate conduct policies to provide moral guidance in students' lives as they progress to maturity (Lau, 2005). The documents reviewed in this study evidenced this spiritually formative goal, both in the way policies were presented as foundational to moral behavior within the community and in the way students were reminded that their commitment to the policies serves as a means of personal growth and cultivation of integrity. The standards reflected the

universities' desire to infuse morality based on the Christian Scriptures into the community. Galatia College (2012) described this desire explicitly:

The Bible, thoughtfully and prayerfully interpreted, is the community's final standard and model for personal and interpersonal conduct. Love, justice, mercy, compassion, purity, obedience, respect, self-control, and wisdom are primary scriptural principles embraced by [Galatia College]. Each member of the community is challenged to be committed to living a Christ-like life. (p. 3)

A desire to morally guide students was described in policies regarding chapel attendance, cohabitation, dress code and modesty, sexuality, speech, and media choices within the Colosse College handbook. Galatia College specifically referenced aspects of moral guidance when referring to their classroom expectations, as well as policies regarding substance abuse, illicit sexual activities, gambling, theft, immodesty, pornography, and racist language. The community standards relating to sexual purity at Ephesus College were rooted in biblical standards for morality and Philippi College specifically addressed truthfulness in their covenant.

The documents communicating student conduct expectations also discussed the moral implications of students' interaction with the campus policies. According to Philippi, adherence to their community covenant, even if not in complete agreement with it, reflects and cultivates integrity in a student's life and living within the community can bring personal transformation. The policies were described as guidelines for moral training within a student's season at Colosse College, with specific policies (such as the policy on substance use) serving as a guideline for individual decision making at Ephesus. The community standards foster congruence between personal beliefs and

behavior according to Galatia's handbook, particularly when accompanied by accountability focused on personal growth.

Conduct codes at Christian universities are also sometimes implemented to promote discipline in students' lives as a reflection of Christian values (Lau, 2005). The handbooks and community covenants reviewed from the participating institutions discussed the promotion of Christian virtues and disciplines both in general terms and specific terms. A primary discipline discussed was the celebration of a Sabbath, with policies prohibiting the scheduling of Sunday morning events and restricting other Sunday activities to spiritual activities, focusing the day on "worship, fellowship, deeds of mercy, and rest..." (Philippi College, 2011a, p. 25). Local church participation, another aspect of Christian discipline was emphasized in several of the handbooks. Additional support for local church participation was described by Colosse College, including information about local churches and opportunities for students to interact with local church leaders during special events on campus.

Additional personal spiritual disciplines such as Christian fellowship, worship, prayer, and reflection on God's Word were incorporated into sections of the handbooks describing the university's chapel requirement. Specific wording for the policy at Colosse College (2012) clarified this requirement and the cultivation of personal spiritual disciplines:

While it is acknowledged that spiritual formation is not accomplished merely by a requirement, we do affirm the importance (and historical precedence) of committing ourselves to the kinds of spiritual disciplines found in Chapel. We encourage all [Colosse] students to embrace this requirement positively as a

spiritual discipline through which God can stretch them, transform them, and better equip them for service and witness in the world. (p. 17)

Additional spiritual disciplines such as personal devotions, Bible study, and accountability groups were both encouraged within the student handbooks, and accounted for in descriptions of campus resources available to students.

The final spiritually formative goal discovered in a review of the literature and investigated in this study is the goal of encouraging the lifelong practice of wisdom in students' lives (Guthrie, 1997a). Handbooks expressed this goal in descriptions of student outcomes and future growth. As a specific example Colosse College's (2012) Handbook stated that:

We seek to nurture students to become spiritually mature and biblical informed persons who make well-reasoned and wise intellectual and moral judgments, thereby equipping and motivating them to tackle real-world problems. (p. 4)

Additional references to the cultivation of wisdom, however, were very limited in the documents provided for this study. A brief reference to wisdom was mentioned in a discussion about media choices in Philippi's handbook, but this was the only noted reference to a specific policy. Descriptions of services offered through various campus offices also included references to wisdom and lifelong goals, particularly the area of Student Care, Career Services, and the Office of Christian Outreach at Philippi College. Colosse College also referenced future growth and calling in their descriptions of career services and Ephesus College (2012a) described their athletic program as preparing students for "a life of meaningful work and service" (p. 179). These, however, were inferred, rather than explicit references to lifelong wisdom.

In short, then, the documents outlining specific conduct codes at the universities researched evidenced, in varying measure, the spiritually formative goals described in the review of the literature. The next phase of inquiry moved to assessing the second research question: To what extent, if any, are spiritually formative goals integrated into the communication and enforcement of student conduct codes at selected Christian colleges and universities?

#### Communication and Enforcement of Conduct Codes with Spiritually Formative Goals

The first stage in the communication process described at each of the universities through focus group interviews was during the admissions phase of a student's enrollment at the college. Students at Galatia College and Ephesus College recounted checking off a box to indicate that they had both read and agreed to the code before coming to the university, a step met by a level of skepticism by the administrators and resident directors interviewed at the same universities. An administrator at Colosse College frankly stated that at their university:

It's not something that's necessarily kind of a stand along document that – that to me would communicate the degree to which we hold students accountable to it.

So I think it's – it can get lost in the wash of the entire admission process. (Lenny)

A resident director at Colosse College, discussing the extent to which the policies of the university were communicated to students expressed his concern that even this step in the admissions process might vary based on the incoming student, particularly when recruiting student-athletes. This concern was validated by the experience recounted by a football player in a later interview at the same university. When discussing the ways in which the student handbook policies had been communicated to him, he shared that one

of the coaches “kind of explained it” during the tour. Later in the conversation he acknowledged that although he remembered learning that Colosse was a dry campus (in relation to alcohol use), he had only recently learned that students were not permitted to drink off-campus once they were of legal drinking age.

Other students, as well, admitted that this step in the communication process was less than effective. Several RAs at Philippi College stated that while they were required to check a box indicating that they had read the student handbook, only half of the students present at the meeting actually read the document before matriculating to the school. Another student at Philippi did not actually mention this particular step in the Admissions process when asked about the ways in which the university had communicated student handbook policies and one RA shared that some students had their parents complete the application process, never even encountering the afore-mentioned check-box. The story at other schools was no different. Recalling the admissions process at Galatia College, one chuckling student simply confessed, “Um – I don’t know if I read it or not” (Ashley).

Administrators seemed well aware of the fact that students were not being sufficiently exposed to the handbook policies through the admissions policy. A senior administrator at Ephesus College acknowledged the necessity of growth in this area:

...we need to be very clear with who we are and I think this is an area where we need to be even better – is even in the recruitment process, being very clear. We want you here, but we want you to know this is who we are. (Gary)

Given the lack of student connection to handbook policies during the admissions process, administrators at each of the universities discussed the necessity of including

orientation to handbook policies during preregistration and new student orientation. At Galatia College separate sessions for students and their parents were included during the preregistration sessions held during the summer months before matriculation, focusing on the handbook policies and the vision for campus community set by them. This was coupled with orientation sessions at the start of the school year, when trained student leaders discussed the entire conduct code with groups of new students. A senior administrator stressed that clarity and consistency in communication are primary goals of the process:

...delivery is important and so I really do believe that that's one of the keys to students understanding the community standards at [Galatia] – is we've crafted that message very carefully. It's not been "Yeah, let's just cover it. Let's just throw it in here." We've really thoughtfully approached how to communicate that to our students. I think it's paying off for us. (Joanne)

First year students at Galatia College also were enrolled in a class that includes a discussion of the university policies as part of the curriculum. This allowed students to interact with peer advisors and faculty members and ask questions about the policies in an accessible context. Revisions to the class structure and the training process for the peer advisors within the last three years focused on better equipping student leaders to respond to questions about the handbook policies. The class provided opportunities for students to build relationships with Student Development staff members, many of whom are instructors in the program.

In addition to introducing the handbook policies to new students, Galatia College held residence hall meetings at the beginning of the fall semester for resident directors to

review university policies with all students. A resident assistant recalled the content of those meetings as focusing on more “commonly broken” rules – open dorm policies, alcohol and drug use, and sexual misconduct. Floor meetings following the hall meeting were conducted by resident assistants and allowed for more personal interaction, particularly facilitating questions that might not be asked in the context of a larger group.

At Ephesus College, as well, community standards were reviewed during new student orientation, providing an opportunity to ensure that students understand what type of university Ephesus is and to select out if they decide that they are not comfortable with the established parameters. While the topic was serious, the tone of the meeting was intended to be lighthearted, incorporating a level of humor and visual media. After an introduction, students were split by gender for follow-up meetings, where a one-page document encompassing the core conduct expectations was reviewed line-by-line with the students. When asked about student reactions to this meeting a resident director stated that the response was varied. Some students, already familiar with the university standards, viewed the process as a formality while others were caught off-guard. Students particularly remembered the clarity of the expectations discussed at the meeting and the sincere offer by the administration for students to opt out without penalty (and with a refund) if they felt that they did not want to be held accountable to the university standards.

Floor meetings were incorporated into the orientation of new students at Ephesus, as well, and were also led by student leaders. One resident assistant described the purpose of the meeting as:



...just to reiterate, like, this is the covenant. You should follow it and, like, in a more personal way. So it's not, like, as intimidating coming from your RAs talking to you. Like, we meet them where they're at rather than somebody up in Student Development telling them. (Hillary)

Resident directors at Ephesus followed up with individual students who were unable to attend the initial meeting and commuting students attended a specific session for them while students were in the breakout sessions with their residence halls.

New students at Philippi College were reminded of the community standards, as outlined in a one-page covenant, with a short reflection from the Vice President for Student Development and a video clip about the concept of community. The presentation, according to a resident assistant, assumed that students had already read the student handbook; an assumption reinforced by a student recalling that because she already knew what to expect from the university, the content of the meeting was not a surprise. The initial introduction was followed-up by a meeting in the residence halls or living units in which the covenant was read out loud by all of the students (including returning students) and signed in that community context. Resident directors at Philippi agreed that for the most part, students seemed to appreciate the dynamic of reading and signing the document together. Because this reading occurred on an annual basis, it served as a point of reinforcement and ownership for all students. An additional advantage pointed out by a resident director is the fact that reading the entire document aloud highlighted that the document is about much more than prohibitions against alcohol or details about open dorm policies.

Resident assistants at Philippi were trained to conduct follow up meetings with their fellow students after the hall meeting at the beginning of the semester as a means of facilitating a peer-to-peer conversation about the community expectations. This tailored the conversation to the specific needs of each residence hall, allowing students to discuss the covenant at developmentally appropriate levels. Students expressed appreciation for these meetings and the opportunity to ask questions of the RAs. One of the resident assistants reflected on the experience of discussing the community covenant with his residents as being spiritually encouraging, deepening his excitement for (and appreciation of) the covenant.

A class assignment for new students at Philippi stimulated ongoing reflection and dialogue regarding the policies of the community covenant. A resident assistant provided details:

Everyone writes a paper on it for the required biblical and theological studies class. The paper goes something like this, “If a friend from a different college or university asked you why [Philippi] has all these restrictive rules, how would you respond?” (Jim)

When asked about their paper for the class students indicated appreciation for the opportunity to share their perspective and genuinely interact with the topic of the college’s community covenant. The topic required them to wrestle not only with the rationale for the university’s policies, but with the question of how they would personally respond to the covenant. One of the students interviewed recalled:

And writing my paper was really helpful because we have to kind of research something. It’s not just like reading it and forgetting what you read. So the paper

helped me figure out how I felt about the covenant and how I view it and what it means to me. (Amber)

Hall meetings also provided the primary means of introducing students to the handbook policies of Colosse College at the beginning of each year. Acknowledging limited time for these meetings, resident directors moved quickly through major policies related to alcohol usage, mandatory reporting, open hall guidelines, sexual misconduct, and the growth initiative as a means of voluntary self-disclosure. These meetings were continued with breakout sessions with the resident assistants on each floor, where the goal was not just reviewing policies, but building relationships, getting to know each other and articulating a sense of vision for the type of community created in residence hall living. Interestingly, a discussion in the student focus group highlighted the differences in the way policies were presented to each gender. The impression of a male student was that the primary message communicated at the meeting was that the rules are to be taken seriously in light of the consequences that would result for violations of the expectations. The female student reported that the tone of the meeting was that there was help available for students, at which point the male student acknowledged that there was some discussion of grace that would be extended to students who self-report through the university's growth initiative program.

All of the universities studied utilized signed commitments from students as part of the process of communicating and enforcing conduct policies. Two of the schools studied, Ephesus College and Philippi College, distilled their primary policies and vision for campus community into a one-page document. Interestingly, administrators at the other two universities indicated a desire to develop a similar document. Ephesus and

Philippi reinforced the communal nature of the commitment by having students sign the documents in a group setting. At Ephesus College students signed the document one time as a student during the orientation sessions. Philippi College had students sign the document after reading it aloud annually at the opening hall meetings. In some residence halls at Philippi student accountability to the document was reinforced by additional reminders, such as a large-format copy of the covenant signed by the residents.

Student perspectives on the signed documents were somewhat mixed. There was a measure of skepticism about whether or not students actually knew what they were signing in the admissions and orientation, or if they were aware enough about the college atmosphere to make an informed decision. However, students seemed to understand that the university appropriately could hold students to their signed commitment and that students should not be surprised or frustrated if held accountable for violations of the conduct code.

Each of the universities occasionally referred back to the signed document when addressing student discipline issues. One of the universities researched, Philippi College, added the additional step of having students sign the covenant again after significant disciplinary incidents, reminding them of both their responsibilities to and restoration into the campus community. The wording of the requirement included in several disciplinary letters emphasized the relational aspect of the covenant:

I ask that when you sign your name to the Community Covenant that you see your word as a commitment to your roommates, your friends, faculty and staff, and to the Lord. (Philippi College, 2012, p. 2)

As these universities seek to communicate and enforce their conduct code policies the spiritually formative goals identified earlier could be traced through the process. The first of these, again, is the cultivation of a community that is conducive to spiritually beneficial influence (Lau, 2005). As administrators discussed the opening meetings to present their schools' conduct codes the theme of community surfaced often. The goal expressed by a senior administrator at Ephesus College was that students would begin to grasp and value the reality that living in community presented a greater good than individual needs. To that end, student development professionals worked hard to recast students' perspective on the policies. A senior administrator at Galatia College stated:

...we talked about why these rules are in place - and again, we don't refer to them as rules; we refer to them as community standards - why they're in place, because they're so much more than rules. They're what helps us frame our community. And some are biblical and - and some are just what we think will contribute to living in a healthy community. (Joanne)

This influenced the opening residence hall meetings at Galatia College where one of the goals was to communicate and clarify expectations for community living, as well as the accountability process in light of the community requirements. As resident assistants at Philippi College were trained to facilitate their floor meetings they were instructed to present the covenant as bigger than prohibitions; it was designed to be the foundation for the community. One resident assistant at Philippi, reflecting on that meeting, expressed that while he may not have chosen to structure everything exactly the way it was presented in the covenant, he appreciated the community created by it and was willing to be held accountable to it. At Colosse College, a resident assistant used the

opening meeting to encourage the men of his floor to invest themselves in the community as something bigger than themselves.

Informally, administrators and student development professionals consistently discussed the ways in which their community was shaped for spiritual influence by the standards established and enforced. A senior administrator at Ephesus College pointed out that because their school was not marked by student commitment to a central creed, the parameters were particularly important. “They simultaneously say who we are and who we’re not, and I mean – that’s important” (Gary). An essential feature of that community was the willingness of individuals to submit to the standards, even if not completely agreeing with them. A resident director at Philippi College, as well, explained their desire to create a very particular type of environment, distinguished from other types of universities, for students to thrive by calling students into a covenant relationship. An administrator at Philippi, when asked about the reasons for boundaries within the community provided this description as her first response:

...these are common agreements to keep us living well together functioning well as a community; not – it’s not all about what you can’t do. There’s a lot in the covenant about what we want us to be like as a community, in terms of loving one another, all holding each other accountable, being patient, bearing with each other, really encouraging each other to be more like Christ. And so, yeah – there’s some – there’s some boundaries there, but really without those boundaries, we wouldn’t have the community that we have. (Bethany)

This environment became spiritually beneficial in a very personal way for students who were looking to redefine themselves and were appreciative of the

atmosphere created by the community standards, according to staff members at Galatia College. While one staff member in a discussion at Colosse expressed a concern that culturally bred individualism could militate against the value of community, another participant in the same meeting pointed out that, "...however much they want to claim they're individuals, they're desperate for community. They're desperate for it. They're going to find it somewhere" (Michael). Resident directors at Philippi acknowledged that some older students expressed being tired of the constraints of the covenant, but many shared that it was exactly why they came to the university and they were willing to remain accountable to it.

A desire for a spiritually beneficial community also could be observed in the ways administrators discussed specific policies. The prohibition of student alcohol use at Galatia College, while not explicitly rooted in Scripture, was rooted in their best judgment of the type of community desired. At Ephesus College the concept of community was invoked in reference to open dorm policies, where the goal was cultivation of a healthy same-gender community. The rationale for Ephesus' chapel policy was that chapel is central to the community as a key place to interact and worship with other members of the community.

Within the university context the process of communicating community standards eventually translates into enforcing them, or more specifically addressing breaches of the standards. A document used to train others in the discipline process at Colosse College reminded the reader that in a perfect Christian community, the fruit of the Spirit would govern and no law would be necessary; however, because the community is imperfect, policies were in place to keep it healthy and vibrant. Philippi College pointed to the great

commandments of Jesus to love God and love your neighbor as the hallmark example of what community could be, but acknowledged that human sinfulness necessitated more explicit standards and enforcement within the community in a document discussing the biblical and philosophical foundations of discipline.

Violations of the behavioral expectations in these contexts, then, chipped away at the desired community according to Colosse's RA training materials. Enforcement measures served as a means for rebuilding community in a God-honoring manner at Philippi College. Enforcement contributed to a spiritually beneficial community when:

In order to maximize the potential for growth, we seek to create and maintain an environment on campus that will encourage, challenge, and hold each member accountable. (Colosse College, n.d. a, p. 2)

The discipline process with this goal in mind, then, sought to balance the values of what is best for the individual with what is best for the community according to Colosse's training materials. The conduct enforcement process provided a valuable opportunity to shape and define a student's perspective of Christian community as a collection of sinful individuals mutually in need of grace. Dietrich Bonhoeffer's description of this type of community was referenced in at least two conversations at separate universities. When students have violated the expectations for life within the community, according to a resident director at Colosse, a disciplinary encounter provided the means to restore them to that community:

...because community is so inevitable and you will find yourself in community – we have to focus on restoration – because if we don't it's just going to isolate and



isolate and isolate and drive students further into what they're dealing with.

(Elizabeth)

Disciplinary letters, providing the written record of a student behavioral violation, also included references to a goal of a spiritually beneficial community. Letters relating to residence hall visitation violations and sexual misconduct at Colosse College both included a statement that the prescribed disciplinary response was for the benefit of both the individual and the community. Probation letters from Philippi College stated that even though prior permission from an administrator would be necessary, involvement in campus activities as a means of connection to the community was encouraged.

The process of communicating and enforcing community standards at the universities studied also incorporated the second of the spiritually formative goals found in the research literature - fostering a sense of mutual moral responsibility in the lives of students (Hoekema, 1994). Students were introduced to this goal from the moment they arrived on campus with sessions during new student orientation. At these meetings students were encouraged to move past their bent toward individuality to understand their responsibilities to the community at Colosse College and were reminded that their role was bigger than their own needs as they thought about community at Ephesus. Philippi College showed a video produced for orientation sessions that provided tangible direction for students regarding their community responsibilities. A chief student development officer at Colosse College explained this to students using a family metaphor:

A family operates with certain understandings...precursors and you may not agree with everything that happens, but you...because you're a part of that family...you agree to adhere to it and you agree to be a part of it. And so it's important for you,

as students, to understand that you may not agree with everything that's out there, but you've agreed to be a part of the Colosse family by signing our statement of faith and by signing our community life expectations. And you're an active part of this community, which demands responsibility. (Douglas)

Opening meetings in the residence halls offer an opportunity to discuss individual responsibilities within the community in the environment where students live, a goal referenced at Galatia College. Resident Directors at Philippi College reminded students of their community responsibility to hold other students accountable to the community covenant, a responsibility that was not reserved for resident assistants and paid staff members. Reading the community covenant out loud in residence halls at Philippi tangibly reminded students that individual decisions in relation to the community covenant affected more than the individual and reinforced shared ownership and accountability of the principles in the covenant.

Corollary documents and training materials provided by the universities also highlighted the goal of fostering a sense of mutual moral responsibility. One of the goals of residence life spelled out in the Residence Life Handbook at Philippi College (2011f) was that, "Students will be able to identify how their personal actions and beliefs impact those around them" (p. 1). The training manual for resident assistants at Ephesus College pointed out that living in community requires the sacrifice of personal freedoms for the benefit of the community and reminded student leaders of their voluntary commitment to maintain the standards of the community. Colosse College instructed student leaders that even violations of campus policies that are not explicitly sinful in Scripture are still violations of scriptural principles because they are broken promises to the community.

The idea of mutual accountability factored prominently into the way moral responsibility was communicated at these universities. The Residence Life Handbook at Philippi College, documenting a message communicated in hall meetings, reinforced that students were answerable to one another, not just to those in positions of leadership and authority in the community. When individuals willingly joined the Philippi community they took on the responsibility not only of living by the Community Covenant, but of addressing concerns with fellow students according to the scriptural pattern described in Matthew 18. Colosse College (n.d. b) communicated a similar message when discussing their mandatory reporting policy:

With this model, we are asking individual community members to take responsibility and ownership of the community environment. By asking members to confront their fellow students, each member has a responsibility to do what is right, not only for the community, but also for the well-being of the offending student. (p. 2)

Student development professionals at the universities studied agreed that efforts to foster moral responsibility in students' lives were hampered by a cultural predilection toward individualism. Staff members at Philippi College pointed out that many students, at least in their actions, expressed the belief that other people are not really needed and failed to consider the possibility that their actions, even if done in secret, impacted others. At Ephesus College, personnel added that students' perspective on policies regarding alcohol use and residence hall visitation were usually rooted in what was best for them, not the broader community. This is reinforced, according to an administrator at Colosse College, when churches present spiritual formation and growth in individualistic terms.

Ironically, even with an individualistic outlook, one student affairs professional pointed out that it seems that students instinctively sought out a level of community and connection by banding with other groups of students on the campus. However, this did not always breed healthy interaction, particularly when students were considering their responsibility to hold others accountable for breaches of the community covenant. Sometimes students were prevented from engaging responsibly with others out of a somewhat misguided attempt to protect their friends from consequences. Students' fear of being branded a snitch may have kept them from seeking help or accountability for others in their community.

Administrators at these universities reported addressing the issue head-on in the messages being presented to their communities. The VP for Student Development at Philippi College, commenting on the issue of moral responsibility stated:

We are trying to train our community that when you see someone sinning, the first response should be, your heart should be broken – and compassion – and “I want to talk to that person because I’m concerned and I care – not because I want to get them in trouble or, you know, I’m judging them.” ‘Cause in reality, we are all making mistakes. It should – we are – our hearts should be breaking for each other in all kinds of areas. (Keith)

Another administrator at the same university expressed his passion to equip students for moral responsibility when he said, “I’m trying to work myself out of a job and if – if our community’s functioning as a biblical community, I have no meetings. I have no meetings” (Chad). It is an ongoing challenge, best addressed in the context of

one-on-one conversations that can give attention to practical examples and individual points of application, explained an administrator at Ephesus.

The process of conduct code enforcement provided opportunities for those one-on-one conversations, according to a senior administrator at Philippi. The Residence Life Handbook at Philippi College included instruction about students owning their actions and taking responsibility for accountability in the community as a core goal of the discipline process. Likewise, training materials at Colosse College included the disciplinary goal of seeing students take responsibility for their actions. One of the administrators at Philippi discussed the transformative moment during a disciplinary conversation of seeing students grasp that their actions affect others in the community.

Through the interview process discussion of specific examples provided a tangible picture of how student development professionals were trying to foster a sense of moral responsibility in students' lives. One administrator shared that following a disciplinary incident, she often asked students how they would advise a friend considering similar choices, given their experience. In situations involving roommate conflict at Colosse College, one of the resident directors stated that rather than giving in to a student's desire to avoid the conflict by moving out, she often imposed a two-week waiting period in which the students had to work on their relationship – often resulting in a restored friendship. Disciplinary responses reported through the interviews often included tangible measures to cause students to reflect on the community impact of their actions, ranging from students affected by inappropriate dance parties to the number of people put in danger and inconvenienced by a prank involving a homemade bomb. One

resident director explained it this way to a student doing community service: “You’re doing community service because you affected community” (Mary).

Disciplinary letters, as well, reminded students that the truth opens the door for personal responsibility and that at the core, students are solely responsible for their actions. A letter addressing a prank that targeted Public Safety officers at Philippi College not only challenged the student to encourage others involved to come forward, it emphasized the student’s responsibility to serve as an advocate for the Public Safety officers within the university context. Students receiving discipline letters at Philippi College were reminded to consider others affected by their actions and to embrace their responsibility for positive influence on others. Students were commended for their willingness to take responsibility, even when it was difficult. As Philippi required students to re-sign their community covenant following a disciplinary incident, they were reminded to consider their responsibility to the broader community in the students’ disciplinary letters.

This study also investigated the extent to which the spiritually formative goal of protecting against spiritually detrimental influences (Lau, 2005) factored into the way handbook policies are communicated and enforced at the selected universities. This goal was identifiable in the student leader training materials at Ephesus College as resident assistants were reminded that community is shaped partly by what is not allowed into the community. Colosse’s restorative discipline guide emphasized that the community prohibited certain items as a means of keeping out practices specifically prohibited in the Bible and pointed out that any violation of the community expectations weakened and compromised the desired environment.

These principles were reinforced by the perspective of the administrators and other professional staff members interviewed. The VP for Student Development at Philippi College explained:

What I say is, any time you join any organization – I don't care if it's Christian or non-Christian – there are things that you say "Yes" to and there are things that you say "No" to. And every organization makes decisions about where their boundaries are. A lot of our boundaries are drawn around where Scripture says the boundaries are, but there are – the institution has made a lot of boundaries to say, you know, "What – over time certain behaviors have been destructive for us as a learning environment, and if we're gonna help you become more whole in Christ, we are...we are, you know – we've drawn some lines to help this be a safe place."

(Keith)

Protection against spiritually detrimental influence factored most prominently in discussions about university policies prohibiting student alcohol consumption.

Administrators at Galatia shared that they believe students both recognized the importance and appreciated the distinction of the campus atmosphere preserved by minimizing the influence of alcohol use. Interviews with personnel at Ephesus College and Philippi College included discussions about the danger to the younger undergraduate population that would surface if their school's prohibition on alcohol were to be lifted. Ephesus took their policy one step further, with a policy that prohibits students from being present in contexts where alcohol is being served as a means of protecting students from detrimental behaviors that may accompany the use of alcohol by college students.

When it comes to policy enforcement, Philippi College (2004) explicitly stated in policy documents that it “reserves the right to address behavior, regardless of where it occurs, that is detrimental to the student, others, the community, and itself” (p. 2). In their training materials for restorative discipline Colosse College referenced a passage in Scripture that describes the exclusion of a member in a Christian community for disciplinary purposes as a rationale for suspending or dismissing an individual who unrepentantly remains a detriment to the campus community.

Disciplinary letters provided by Philippi College reflected the protective goal of their disciplinary policies. A collection of suspension letters addressing issues of sexual harassment, stealing, alcohol use, and lying all indicated that part of the reason for removal of the student is to protect the campus from unhealthy influence. A letter addressing a student’s use of pornography advised that additional problems with pornography would necessitate restricted internet privileges to “give you space to start working toward internal heart changes” (Philippi College, 2011b, p. 1). An emphasis on protecting the campus from detrimental influence was obvious in a disciplinary probation letter which stated:

Participating in an environment of drinking goes against the community [Philippi] desires to foster. The Covenant is in place so that situations like this do not have to cloud or impact your [Philippi] experience or relationships. (Philippi College, 2012, p. 1)

The fourth spiritually formative goal, contributing to an environment that is conducive to the integration of faith and learning (Lau, 2005), factored occasionally into the written policies and training materials related to the enforcement of handbook policies



but is not prominent. One staff member at Galatia College described the goals of the first hall meeting of the year as including defining a community that was intentionally safe for others spiritually and academically, but otherwise the only other time the theme was observed in the focus group interviews was a Philippi College administrator's reference to the danger of alcohol distracting students from their educational responsibilities.

As in the student handbook, the integration of faith and learning was briefly included in references to the university mission statement in Ephesus College's RA Training Manual. Colosse College incorporated the perspective that significant learning takes place outside the classroom when discussing restorative discipline in training materials and stated that one of the goals of restorative discipline was educating students by explaining the rationale behind their community expectations.

In the arena of enforcement, behavior expectations contribute to Philippi College's (2004) capacity to carry out its educational goal, as described in policy documents:

Briefly, if it is assumed that an important aspect of the College's educational mission is building community to the glory of God, then the College will endeavor to establish behavioral expectations that will contribute toward this goal.

(p. 1)

The goals of student discipline in Philippi College's procedural documents included maintaining an environment conducive to healthy living and learning. This goal was reflected in Colosse's assertion that the holistic development of students was critically affected by the campus environment. This extended at Colosse College (2012)

to their involuntary withdrawal policy which “exists to maintain a campus environment conducive to learning and accomplishing the university’s educational mission” (p. 35).

The universities studied infused the goal of providing moral guidance in students’ lives (Lau, 2005) into their communication and enforcement of conduct policies in numerous ways. The manual used to train resident assistants at Ephesus College expressed the community’s desire to promote and pursue personal holiness by following biblical precepts and engaging in spiritual disciplines. The disciplinary procedures at Philippi College and Ephesus College both included the goals of personal growth by helping students make better choices. The goal was explicitly stated at Philippi College (2004) as “providing students with the opportunity to learn and grow when they make unwise decisions, giving direction and encouragement for desirable behavior as outlined in Scripture” (p. 1).

As student development professionals at Colosse described their role in conduct enforcement they included the goal of helping students to develop the moral value of integrity by following through on the community commitment they had made. Disciplinary moments, reported Galatia staff members, provided an opportunity to discuss moral choices with students and to discuss the motivations behind their actions. In some cases, according to resident directors at Philippi, those moments allowed staff members to address aspects of brokenness that may exist in a student’s life, and served as “places of intersect in their lives where something may need brought to the light” (Sandra). One staff member at Philippi described helping students think through future options when faced with similar circumstances during a disciplinary conversation. Moral guidance is facilitated, stated an administrator at Ephesus College, by moving past

behavior to heart issues, finding out the “why behind the what” (Gary) to help students think through change. A resident director at Colosse College agreed, stating, “sometimes we are less concerned about what they did or how they behaved and more about what that says about who they are and who they’re becoming” (Lauren).

As professionals in faith-based institutions, several of the staff members and administrators interviewed acknowledged depending on divine wisdom to morally guide students and to provide students with a picture of morality that is “found in life with Christ” (Michael). Efforts to better understand a student’s context for their choices at Ephesus College have included discussions of past patterns of behavior and assessments for addictions in the case of substance abuse. Philippi College incorporated evaluative tools to help understand student talents and gifts for better choices. A conversation between a resident director and a student at Galatia included warning the student of the consequences that may be experienced later in life if the student chose to continue accessing pornographic material. Even in a situation requiring a student dismissal, the hope of the administrator at Galatia College was that the experience would be instructive, providing consequences for the student that would foster healthier behavior before the consequences became more serious.

Disciplinary letters included elements of moral guidance. A letter from Ephesus College (2011) identified the commitments and conditions outlined as providing “a positive structure for personal growth, responsible behavior and a pathway for success in life” (p. 2). A letter from Colosse College expressed the desire of the staff to provide help and direction for the student growth while a letter from Philippi shared a word of hope that the experience had been beneficial in shaping the student’s character.

Some of the discipline letters submitted for study included elements of warning as a means of moral guidance. Addressing an open hour visitation violation, one discipline letter warned of the potential dangers ahead if the student were to again place himself in a situation such as the one precipitating the disciplinary incident. A letter following up on discipline at Colosse College for sexual misconduct included warnings of the impact of premarital sexual activity on the student's romantic relationship, while positively including expressions of support and accountability through university personnel.

Specific instructions related to moral guidance were also included in many of the submitted disciplinary letters. These requirements included having follow up meetings with staff members, listening to sermons, reflecting on questions regarding future choices, reflecting on Scripture passages and self-reflective journaling to identify harmful patterns of thought. A letter discussing the terms of a student's suspension for sexual harassment included several criteria for readmission that seemed intended to provide moral guidance: counseling to discuss coping mechanisms, an accountability relationship, and a reflection statement documenting growth and change.

The varying data elements analyzed for this study yielded only four references to the goal of promoting discipline in students' lives as a reflection of Christian values (Lau, 2005). The training manual for resident assistants at Ephesus College (2012d) included "corporate worship, fellowship, and biblical instruction in chapel, participation in spiritual emphasis services and involvement in a local church" (p. 77) as significant components of residence life. The Residence Life Handbook at Philippi College (2011f) communicated the goal that "Students will demonstrate a desire to grow in Christian virtue and spiritual practices that contribute to faithfully living the Christian life" (p. 1).

Spiritual disciplines factored briefly into an administrator's discussion of Ephesus College's chapel requirements and one of the submitted discipline letters suggested the disciplines of Scripture memorization and meeting with an accountability partner as a means of combating a student's temptation to view pornography.

The final spiritually formative goal drawn from the research literature, encouraging the lifelong practice of wisdom (Guthrie, 1997a), while not represented significantly in formal communication with students, did factor into discussions regarding the goals and process of conduct code enforcement. Training materials for Ephesus College RAs referenced the mission of the university which includes equipping individuals for lifelong service. Philippi College (2011f) went a step further, stating that the role of the residence life program at Philippi was drawn from the college's mission to "develop whole and effective Christians" (p. 1).

Resident directors at the universities visited discussed their role at the university as being involved in preparing students for the rest of their lives. For example, a resident director at Ephesus College stated:

I think for me, too, college is such a transforming time, that like, just being able to walk them through the process of taking advantage of any areas of growth that God brings along their path – I think that's what I try and ensure in my student is, like, "Where does God have you right now and what is he trying to work in you?" And then gently pushing them in that... (Natalie)

These student development professionals consistently saw their influence as extending beyond a student's time at the university. Another RD at Ephesus expressed a desire to help students understand their identity in Christ, "because if they focus on that

one thing, it will funnel into the rest of their lives” (Tammy). Staff members discussed student perception of the university policies, recognizing that occasionally the rules (in relation to alcohol and residence hall visitation) may be too restrictive to accurately represent and prepare students for life after college. However, a resident director serving at Galatia College described conversations with students shortly before graduation to discuss how their choices (particularly relating to alcohol) would impact their reputation.

Philosophically, student development professionals described discipline as an opportunity to educate students in a transformative way. A senior administrator at Ephesus College commented, “And so everything they do, I see as crafting their spiritual life” (Gary). Often these wisdom-infusing moments occur in responses to probing questions regarding God’s perspective on the situation and students’ perception of how God views them. An administrator at Colosse College emphasized using disciplinary moments for students to reflect on their integrity in little commitments during their college years as valuable preparation for keeping the commitments made later in life. A season of abstinence from certain items (such as alcohol), a resident director pointed out, can provide wisdom for later in life:

...throughout your life you’ll have seasons when you have to abstain from something... an opportunity for you to grow and learn how to do that right now will help you with that. (Shelly)

The process of inculcating wisdom in students’ lives, explained a Philippi College administrator, requires developing the skill of self-reflection; a skill that he hoped students would remember from disciplinary conversations with him. Specific examples of that process included a resident director challenging a student’s definition of community

within the context of a conversation about marijuana usage. Another administrator at Ephesus College described a process of asking students to reflect on how their current actions might impact where they wanted to be in ten years. Ultimately, a goal expressed was to equip students to “wrestle through some of these choices on their own” (Cliff).

A desire to see students grow in wisdom and for disciplinary actions to have positive, long-term benefits was observed in some of the submitted disciplinary letters. One of the letters expressed the desire that the situation referenced would help the student “develop more fully into the person God desires you to be” (Ephesus College, 2012b, p. 1). Letters from Philippi called on students to engage in self-reflection regarding possible consequences to their future if behavior patterns were not changed. One of the letters from Philippi College (2011d) used language reflecting the university’s mission statement, expressing a desire for the student to “become more whole and effective in Christ” (p. 1). The language of a disciplinary letter from Ephesus College (2012b) captured the goal of lifelong wisdom well, stating, “I believe these conditions and commitments, if fulfilled, will provide you a positive structure for personal growth, responsible behavior, and a pathway for success in life” (p. 2).

#### Student Perception of Spiritually Formative Goals in Conduct Codes

Having reviewed the data for evidence of spiritually formative goals in the communication and enforcement of student conduct codes, the attention of the research now turned to student perception. The focus at this point was on the third research question: To what extent, if any, do students perceive the integration of spiritually formative goals in the formulation, communication, and enforcement of student conduct codes at selected Christian colleges and universities?

Survey results from the Student Satisfaction Inventory (SSI) submitted by the universities provided a quantitative component and a means of data triangulation to the study. Specifically, institutions were invited to submit responses for pre-selected scale items on the survey that appeared to relate to the topic. The SSI information submitted did not include raw data or individual responses, which prevented the researcher from carrying out additional statistical analysis. Additionally, neither the comparative data provided by each of the participating schools nor the administration years for the survey were consistent, which prevented direct comparison between the participating universities.

Additional limitations related to the use of this data included the fact that while two of the universities (Philippi and Colosse) provided the full report from Noel-Levitz, including strategic planning overview information spotlighting areas of strength and areas of challenge, Ephesus College responded with only the previously identified scale items. Only one of the universities, Ephesus College, collected the scale items optionally distributed at CCCU institutions. Lastly, one of the studied universities, Galatia College, did not provide SSI data. The use of this data, therefore, was limited to providing general observations based on summary information provided to the researcher by the universities. However, some helpful triangulating data emerged in the process.

A review of all of the SSI information provided indicated that the two highest scale items (excluding the CCCU optional items) in terms of student reported importance for the three schools providing data were:

- Item 2 – The campus staff are caring and helpful.
- Item 59 – This institution shows concern for students as individuals.



The lowest scale item in terms of student reported importance on all of the SSI information provided by three schools was:

- Item 56 – The student handbook provides helpful information about campus life.

This simple evaluation of item ranking based on the survey data submitted indicated that students perceive the role of the campus staff in communicating concern for them as more important than the quality and accessibility of information provided through the student handbook.

Ephesus College provided SSI data for the scale items requested from the standard administration of the SSI and the items selected from questions that are optional for CCCU schools. The data provided was from Fall 2009 and Fall 2011 administrations of the survey. While strategic planning information was not provided by Ephesus, gaps of  $>1$  between student reported importance and student reported satisfaction were recorded for two scale items in 2009:

- Item 40 – Residence hall regulations are reasonable.
- Item 71 – Channels for expressing student complaints are readily available.

No statistically significant differences between Ephesus College and the reported comparison pool (CCCU schools) were recorded in the 2009 data, indicating that the levels of student satisfaction in the target areas were comparable to other CCCU colleges and universities.

The Fall 2011 administration of the SSI at Ephesus College reported gaps of  $>1$  in three of the standard scale items investigated:

- Item 40 – Residence hall regulations are reasonable.

- Item 63 – Disciplinary procedures are fair.
- Item 71 – Channels for expressing student complaints are readily available.

Two of the scale items in the standard set of SSI items yielded statistically significant differences in the level of student satisfaction when compared with other CCCU schools:

- Item 40 – Residence hall regulations are reasonable ( $-0.48, p < .01$ ).
- Item 71 – Channels for expressing student complaints are readily available ( $-0.36, p < .05$ ).

Gap scores between student reported importance and student reported satisfaction on seven of the eight standard items applicable to this study increased. Overall it appeared that based on the SSI survey data an opportunity exists to address student satisfaction levels related to residence hall regulations, disciplinary procedures, and channels for student complaints at Ephesus College. It should also be noted, however, that on one of the scale items from the optional CCCU items, the mean level of student satisfaction was higher than the CCCU comparison pool:

- Item 76 – Faculty, administration, and/or staff are helpful to me in processing issues related to my faith ( $0.31, p < .05$ ).

Information provided by Philippi College only covered one administration of the SSI (Spring 2012) but included the executive summary from Noel-Levitz. On the executive summary three of the standard scale items related to this topic were listed as areas of strength for the university:

- 2 – The campus staff are caring and helpful.
- 30 – Residence hall staff are concerned about me as an individual.

- 59 – This institution shows concern for students as individuals.

None of the targeted scale areas for this study were listed in the executive summary as areas of challenge for the university and there were no gaps  $> 1$  between student reported importance and student reported satisfaction. The mean difference between Philippi College and national four-year private universities was significantly higher in all of the targeted scale items ( $p < .001$ ).

This data indicated that students at Philippi College overall evidence higher levels of satisfaction than their peers at national four-year private colleges (CCCU comparative data was not provided) and are particularly satisfied with the level of care and concern shown to them by campus personnel.

Colosse College was able to submit SSI results from Fall 2008 and Fall 2010 administrations of the survey. Both sets of data included the executive summary information and provided comparison information to national four-year private institutions rather than the CCCU sample.

The strategic planning overview from the Fall 2008 data at Colosse College identified two of the standard scale items as strengths:

- 2 – Campus staff are caring and helpful.
- 59 – This institution shows concern for students as individuals.

The overview also identified one of the standard scale items as an area of challenge for Colosse College in the Fall 2008 summary:

- 40 – Residence hall regulations are reasonable.

Statistically significant differences in four scale items were reported when comparing Colosse with the national four-year private institution sample in Fall 2008:

- Item 30 – Residence hall staff are concerned about me as an individual (0.38,  $p < .001$ ).
- Item 40 – Residence hall regulations are reasonable (-0.18,  $p < .05$ ).
- Item 56 – The student handbook provides helpful information about campus life (-0.18,  $p < .05$ ).
- Item 71 – Channels for expressing student complaints are readily available (-0.27,  $p < .01$ ).

The strategic planning overview from the Fall 2010 data at Colosse College identified the same standard scale items as strengths as the strengths reported on the Fall 2008 survey:

- 2 – Campus staff are caring and helpful.
- 59 – This institution shows concern for students as individuals.

The overview also identified the same standard scale items as an area of challenge for Colosse College in the Fall 2010 summary:

- 40 – Residence hall regulations are reasonable.

Statistically significant differences in three scale items were reported when comparing Colosse with the national four-year private institution sample in Fall 2010:

- Item 2 – The campus staff are caring and helpful (0.23,  $p < .01$ ).
- Item 30 – Residence hall staff are concerned about me as an individual (0.41,  $p < .001$ ).
- Item 56 – The student handbook provides helpful information about campus life (-0.24,  $p < .01$ ).

The gap scores between student reported levels of importance and student reported satisfaction narrowed in each of the eight standard scale items investigated by this survey between Fall 2008 and Fall 2010. While narrowing gaps do not automatically indicate higher levels of student satisfaction, they do indicate greater congruence between student expectation and student experience in Fall 2010.

Limited information from the Student Satisfaction Inventory prevented thorough incorporation of quantitative data into this study, but a general picture emerged from the data sets provided. Philippi College, while only presenting one set of survey data, evidenced consistently high levels of student satisfaction in the target areas investigated by this study when compared with national four-year private institutions. Ephesus College, comparable to the CCCU norms based on data provided has an opportunity to decrease the gap between student expectation and student experience in areas such as residence hall policies, disciplinary procedures, and channels for student complaint. Colosse College, based on data provided made progress in narrowing the gap in several areas between Fall 2008 and Fall 2010 and, when compared with national four-year private institutions, is marked by higher student satisfaction in the attention and care provided by staff. The limitations and variance in data provided merit caution in the strength and number of conclusions drawn.

Returning to the qualitative components of the study, student interview data was analyzed to explore each of the spiritually formative goals related to student conduct codes. The first of these, cultivating a community that is conducive to spiritually beneficial influences (Lau, 2005) was observed directly or inferred from numerous comments shared in the focus group interviews.

Students were asked about what they perceived to be the goals behind how the student conduct policies were presented at the opening hall meetings each year. A student at Philippi shared her perception that one of the goals was to create a better community around shared practices and values. A student leader at Galatia commented that the opening meetings were intended to help students understand the standards and their impact on a healthy community. Students at Colosse College used similar language, describing the rules as contributing to a healthy community.

Some of the students interviewed provided the perspective that the rules not only contributed to, but defined the university as a community and distinguished their school from others. Additionally, the boundaries in place, posited the students, created a sense of community among its members, even in seasons of accountability and enforcement (when coupled with grace). In separate conversations students at Galatia College suggested that balance in enforcing the rules is necessary to ensure that the desired community is maintained, even to the point of encouraging those who are not spiritually-minded to eventually self-select out of the community.

At each of the universities visited the concept of a campus bubble surfaced when discussing the community atmosphere created by the rules. In context, this referred to a range of perceptions about the community, usually suggesting an environment that is somewhat sheltered and insular. Some students said that while they were aware of the bubble dynamic and its potential pitfalls, they were appreciative of it because it provided a place to foster spiritual maturity. The boundaries, according to some of these students, actually provide a level of freedom to spiritually grow in the college community. There is freedom from the distractions and habits that may have prevented spiritual growth in high

school. There is freedom to “learn and grow and try things and succeed at things” (Sharon).

It was acknowledged that the policies do occasionally chafe and sometimes are perceived as creating an artificial community, leading to student apathy. However, one of the students interviewed, a resident assistant at Ephesus College, suggested that students may appreciate its influence more when it was no longer available:

I think that the students who are here, if they have not realized that yet, they will realize that when they leave – that it is truly a blessing to be here because of the community – because of how nice and kind most people on this campus are...

(Reuben)

Students also perceived a goal of fostering spiritually beneficial community in the rationale for specific policies at their universities. At each campus students discussed their open dorm policies (the guidelines regulating opposite gender visitation hours in the residence halls). The policy was understood as facilitating community both by limiting the amount of time spent exclusively in a romantic relationship and by facilitating and encouraging healthy same sex relationships. Student leaders not only understood this goal’s integration into a specific policy, they became advocates for it. A resident assistant at Colosse College expressed:

I feel as if you communicate in the open house – at least our policy that I’ve always addressed with the guys – that we’re really trying to help you create a community for yourselves. Because after you leave school, you need to learn how to be in a community. You need to learn how to plug yourself into a place that has guys that will sharpen you. (Ben)

Throughout the course of the interviews students also discussed other policies that contributed to a spiritually beneficial community. Examples shared included the policy outlining guidelines for acceptable movies on campus at Galatia contribute to an atmosphere that is more spiritually uplifting, as do the policies regulating public displays of affection and the prohibition of student use of alcohol.

Most encouragingly, many of the students interviewed reported both appreciation for and spiritual growth from the community fostered, in part, by the policies formulated, communicated, and enforced. An older student at Galatia College expressed how incredible his experience at the university had been, understanding that in part, it was due to community standards that “help kind of create that culture and keep a certain culture here...” (Cory). The environment was described by a student at Philippi College as exerting a measure of positive peer pressure and benefit, even for those who do not specifically intend to follow the policies. Students at both Galatia College and Ephesus College compared the type of community fostered to their understanding of what the early church might have been like. Jared, a student describing the atmosphere at Galatia, elaborated that the rules have:

...facilitated an environment where I’ve been able to grow a lot in my faith and to ask – ask questions in a safe place, and know that people are supportive of the Christian lifestyle.

Conversations with students at the universities visited indicated a strong student perception of the second spiritually formative goal related to student conduct policies: fostering moral responsibility in the lives of students (Hoekema, 1994). In a focus group interview with resident assistants at Philippi College the topic turned toward



individualism and community values. One of the student leaders involved pointed out that it is essential to present the benefits of the policies in a way that is not exclusively self-referential by drawing attention to the way individual choices benefit the community. Another student added that it is helpful to remember that adherence to the boundaries is not just an expectation of the administration, it is the expectation of the community. It was acknowledged, however, by one of the students present that a more thorough understanding of the policies did not come automatically or early. She began to notice it after “three years of reading the community covenant” (Caley).

Students expressed the theme of mutual moral responsibility in their understanding of specific policies at the university, recognizing that the policies provided an opportunity to contribute to the community through their personal choices in areas as diverse as media choices and open dorm policies. The concept factored prominently in discussions about the rationale for university prohibitions on student alcohol consumption, which were seen as a measure motivated by concern for younger students. One student at Philippi College acknowledged that the rationale for prohibiting alcohol usage was understandable, but that perhaps the community could benefit from a measure of freedom that would allow them to learn how to make wise choices with alcohol.

On numerous occasions students expressed appreciation for the dynamic of a community in which individuals are mutually responsible for the growth of one another, genuinely caring for the needs of the weaker brother. A senior at Ephesus College shared that she was grateful for “how people come along side each other, just like encouraging each other in their faith...” (Hillary). One student’s appreciation for his mutual responsibility in community was heightened by a negative experience with peers in a

summer program in which there was no accountability to a core set of expectations, which later impacted his decision to become a resident assistant. Resident assistants at Philippi discussed the importance of encouraging their fellow students toward positive choices, not just in holding them accountable when policies are violated. This did not go unnoticed by students. In a later conversation at the same university a student expressed appreciation for the resident assistants, stating, "...you appreciate their being there for you to hold you accountable and you want them to be. You want their approval and their respect in a healthy way" (Emma).

Many of the students interviewed also perceived a moral responsibility to hold each other accountable. A student at Philippi College reported that students basically understood an unofficial honor code relating to mutual accountability to the university's community covenant. Resident assistants at Ephesus College expressed a desire for more students to understand their responsibilities as an example, particularly in relation to their university's dress code, a sentiment shared by students interviewed at Colosse College. An interesting dynamic emerged from an interview with students at Colosse College as one student described his method of joking with students about the conduct expectations as they turn 21 as a means of subtly encouraging accountability to the university policies. His story sparked a longer discussion about the possibility that a level of sarcasm and humor can assist students in peer accountability.

At each of the universities visited students were presented with a hypothetical situation in which they became aware of a friend violating university policy by regularly consuming alcohol, allowing for a discussion about moral responsibility related to a more tangible example. Some students indicated that they would follow their understanding of

the process outlined by their university by going first to the individual, then approaching a person in authority such as a resident assistant. Many students, however, shared that while they would approach the student personally, they would not feel right in bringing the situation to the attention of staff personnel. Student sentiments included, “If they want to risk getting in trouble, that’s up to them” (Cory), and “I’d probably just tell them to be careful and just stop, ‘cause it’s not my place to go tattle. Like, I’m not your mom” (Joy).

Some of the students reported hesitation in providing accountability because of an awareness of their own personal struggles as well as the belief that fellow students are adults, capable of their own decisions. Student fear of being seen as the “enforcer” also prevented them from directly confronting moral issues in the lives of others. Some of the situations discussed in student interviews were not hypothetical. A student at Philippi College shared the dilemma she faced when a roommate’s boyfriend was repeatedly staying overnight at their apartment. While frustrated by the situation and concerned for her friend, she felt very uncomfortable and unsure about how to address the issue.

At Colosse College, student perception of moral responsibility was heightened by university policies requiring students to report any behavior that violates university policies. Students interviewed at Colosse remembered being informed of the requirement through the mandatory hall meetings at the beginning of the semester and the student leadership retreat. They perceived it as an important component of leadership at the university, but were also motivated to report other students by fear that failure to do so would cost them their leadership positions. From the perception of the students interviewed, the requirement may have placed unnecessary pressure on student leaders

and in the case of one of the students interviewed, may have kept him from friendships with students who were on the fringe of university policies.

Students interviewed also perceived the spiritually formative goal of protecting the campus atmosphere from detrimental influences (Lau, 2005) in the way conduct codes were communicated and enforced. The boundaries provided by the conduct codes, according to a resident assistant at Galatia College allowed students to leave distracting and destructive habits from high school behind. This was reinforced by a student at Philippi College who suggested that it would be very challenging for some students to resist the “party scene” if alcohol usage was not prohibited. Another student was candid about her appreciation for the boundaries when she stated, “I feel like I escaped to [Philippi], honestly. I just left all that stuff I dealt with in high school and came here because I wanted to” (Amber).

Students also perceived that the boundaries prevented exposure to behaviors and contexts that were not conducive to their growth and actually provided additional freedom to explore and develop their identity within a healthy atmosphere. During a discussion with resident assistants at Philippi College students shared stories about their exposure to college environments that left them feeling uncomfortable, annoyed, and even unsafe. One of the students summed their perspective up well, stating, “...the more that I’ve grown familiar with, like, what college is supposed to be I’ve been realizing how different [Philippi] is from most college atmospheres” (Caley).

In campus interviews students acknowledged the protective nature of specific policies. Galatia College’s restriction on R-rated movies being viewed in the lounges, for example, was intended to prevent negative influence on the campus, explained one of the

Galatia resident assistants. Students explained the rationale for the prohibition of alcohol use as keeping the community safe for those who are struggling. At Philippi College one of the interviewed students described her negative experience at another Christian university that allowed legal age drinking off-campus, pointing out that “that led to a lot of just, like everyone drinking” (Anita). A student interviewed at Colosse College referenced a similar reason for their university’s alcohol prohibition, confirming that the rule made a lot of sense as a means of protecting younger students.

Conversations about the protective nature of the university’s policies occasionally turned personal as students acknowledged that the boundaries “kind of protect us against ourselves” (Carol). The rules, Carol explained further by using the illustration of tomato plants, served as a structure to not only direct but to protect student growth. A resident assistant at Ephesus College was candid in her interview:

...if I had not gone to [Ephesus], I would possibly have gotten caught up in, like, the partying life and that – that wouldn’t have helped me at all find out who I am. It would’ve hidden that, you know, because that opens up the possibility for, you know, substance abuse and that kind of thing... (Sharon)

Students did not extensively discuss the fourth spiritually formative goal of student conduct codes: contributing to environment that integrates faith and learning (Lau, 2005) but occasionally made reference to the boundaries of the university as contributing to the academic mission of the university and student learning. When discussing student perceptions of the student handbook one student at Galatia College remarked, “...there’s just an understanding that, like, everything makes sense and it’s to better ourselves and the community of learners that we’re in” (Ashley). Resident

assistants at Galatia expressed that the conduct policies created an environment in which students can thrive academically, focusing on what they're learning in the classroom without additional distractions. Approaching it from a more holistic perspective, a resident assistant at Philippi College shared that perhaps students resist student conduct policies because they are attempting to compartmentalize their education by limiting the university's influence to the classroom:

I think sometimes they're sometimes frustrated because they feel like they come and what they're paying for is the life of the mind; they're not paying for the development of the whole person. They don't see that as part of the product they're buying into. (Matthew)

Students did, according to data gathered during the focus group interviews, perceive that student conduct policies provide a measure of moral guidance for them – one of the additional spiritually formative goals (Lau, 2005). The rules, if followed would help you “get ahead in life” (Alan) and could make students better individuals as they prepared for their future. Pete, a student at Colosse College admitted that he did not know the reasons for all of the rules, but that one of the underlying reasons was, “I guess for being, you know, a God-fearing man and a man of God.” A student interviewed at Philippi College expressed appreciation for the biblical foundation of the school's policies and the way they allowed her to apply scripture to her Christian life. In fact, she saw such a level of congruence between the policies and scriptural principles that she stated that if students were to simply focus on growing spiritually, the university's covenant would not be an issue.

Many of the students interviewed at these universities perceived not only that the policies themselves provided moral guidance, but that the individuals responsible for policy communication and enforcement did so, as well. The university provided guidance, explained students, by walking with you as you navigate your experience, with the policies as guidelines. One of the resident assistants at Galatia College powerfully expressed her delight in being involved in the challenge of providing moral guidance for her peers:

I think that's one of the most beautiful parts – probably one of the hardest parts of being an RA. But also, I think those are the times when you really get to speak into people's lives in how you approach that and you, like, what – what you say in helping people grow is really beautiful. (Tanya)

The sixth spiritually formative goal – promoting discipline in students' lives as a reflection of Christian values (Lau, 2005) – was not identified in the data provided by the focus group interviews with students. However, the seventh goal of encouraging the lifelong practice of wisdom (Guthrie, 1997a) factored into a few of the conversations. A resident assistant at Ephesus College articulated her belief that the rules were not simply to keep people sheltered for four years without preparing them for the next chapter of life. Rather, the rules and the environment provided by them encouraged students to make wise choices. In a follow-up conversation, the same student expressed that while other students may not realize it until after graduation, the environment helped them figure out who they were and shaped their future.

In at least one context, the cultivation of wisdom was being fostered by a resident assistant as a student leader. Ben, an athlete and RA at Colosse College described his speech to the men of his section at the beginning of the school year:

And we're growing up to be not only in God's image, but we'll be leading people...And if we don't learn to do that now while in college, we're not gonna learn to do that well later on.

Students did acknowledge the challenge of the campus bubble, particularly when considering whether or not the university atmosphere was preparing students well for wise choices regarding the usage of alcohol. The perception was that perhaps a complete prohibition on all alcohol use by students prevented opportunities to exercise that privilege with the benefit of a supportive community to keep students accountable. One of the Philippi resident assistants expressed concern about the amount of binge drinking by his fellow students immediately after each semester. Another student at Philippi shared her perspective that:

...you're going to be thrown into the real world soon – sooner or later – where you have to make that choice. You might as well make it while you're in an environment where a Christian or Christian community can help you with that struggle, rather than – I feel like – when no one's going to be there. (Emma)

#### Student Perception of Staff Interventions and Spiritually Formative Goals

The fourth research question explored in this study was: What interventions or actions, if any, by student affairs personnel affect (positively or negatively) student perception of the integration of spiritually formative goals into the formulation, communication, and enforcement of student conduct codes? Originally it was anticipated



that comparative results from the Student Satisfaction Inventory would provide helpful quantitative data to address this question. As discussed earlier, the SSI data provided minimal insight into the study. The data explored with this question, then, was exclusively qualitative, drawn from the interviews conducted onsite at the universities participating in the study.

Before exploring the fourth research question in relation to specific spiritually formative goals it was helpful to document the changes identified at each university, along with overall student impressions of the impact of those changes. While some of the universities had made significant changes to their conduct code documentation and enforcement practices, those changes extended back four years, preventing an analysis of the changes' impact on current student populations. However, a few specific policy revisions were discussed in the process.

A recent change at Galatia College was the university's policy regarding social dancing. Reflecting a stance previously held by the denomination affiliated with Galatia, the university previously prohibited social dancing on campus. However, as the denomination changed its policy, the university felt it was appropriate to reconsider theirs. This allowed university administrators to amend a policy that generated significant student resistance and actually allowed them to have more input into the types of dances students were attending and the environment associated with them. When asked about handbook changes at the university, students immediately referenced the dancing policy acknowledging that they understood that the change reflected a revised stance on dancing by the denomination. Interestingly, while basically excited and encouraged by the

university's willingness to reconsider the policy, one student raised the question of whether or not it was "a rule made to give more freedom or to have more control" (Cory).

Discussions about policy changes at Ephesus College focused on recent revisions to their chapel requirements, allowing additional chapel absences for all students and removing the attendance requirement from seniors in their final semester. Students noticed the change, prompting one underclassman to comment, "I feel like [Ephesus] has kind of slacked off – not slacked off – they've become more lenient almost" (Eric). An older student appreciated the policy change and the additional freedom in her schedule, as well as the allowance for seniors to begin making their own decisions regarding chapel attendance. The chief student development officer at Ephesus shared that additional policy changes under consideration related to developmental issues for students (such as curfew, movie policies, and open dorm restrictions) as well as issues relating to societal and cultural shifts (such as media and technology usage).

At Philippi College and Colosse College major changes were initiated prior to a window of time that would be experienced by their current students. Philippi changed their policy to allow social dancing several years previous to this study, reflecting a cultural shift in perception about social dancing and a refining of the university's historic position. A subtle change in their enforcement process was an attempt to change enforcement nomenclature from "discipline" to "conduct" out of a desire for students to perceive less judgment in the process. An administrator at Colosse College traced major changes back ten or twelve years, when the university moved to a more restorative approach to discipline by doing away with their primary means of enforcement – student fines.

Interventions affecting student perception, then, appear to be more related to ongoing interactions with staff members, rather than broad, sweeping changes to institutional policy or procedure. Three of the previously identified spiritually formative goals did not emerge in student perceptions of staff interventions; specifically the goals of cultivating a spiritually beneficial community, protecting against detrimental influence, contributing to the integration of faith and learning (Lau, 2005).

Students described a number of actions by university officials that seemed to affect their capacity to embrace a measure of mutual moral responsibility, one of the spiritual formative goals described by Hoekema (1994). Resident assistants at Philippi College described how the opportunity to openly and honestly discuss the community covenant and rationale behind it with leaders at the university impacted their willingness to advocate for the covenant and hold students accountable to it. Another student at Philippi expressed hope and appreciation for a growing atmosphere of trust on campus, believing that, "...if you, like, hold somebody to, like, 'We trust you to do this,' I feel like they're gonna do it with a better attitude" (Jessica).

A moment of trust and candor during the second visit to Galatia College revealed that some of the students being interviewed were wary of bringing student situations to the attention of the administration. As the discussion progressed one of the older students shared that in his experience, he was not aware of a situation at the university where a friend was reported to administration that turned out well. His fear was that the school would bring down punishment rather than assistance, although he acknowledged that perhaps reporting the situation to an RD might yield a more measured and helpful response. In fairness, administrators at Galatia College had, just prior to the research

visit, initiated significant disciplinary responses for students that were well-known in the campus community. The perceptions of students attending the focus group discussion may very well have been influenced by the events immediately preceding the discussion, particularly given that students would not have had access to the full story because of the university's commitment to student confidentiality. Whether or not this was the case, however, it is worth noting the extent to which high-profile discipline incidents impact student perceptions.

When discussing the conduct enforcement process at Philippi College, students indicated appreciation for the intervention of staff members, a positive perception of the goal to provide moral guidance to students (Lau, 2005). One student reported that the university handled a disciplinary situation involving a friend with individualized attention to the student and an effort to help her friend think through the underlying motivations behind the infraction. In the end, this student's friend was motivated toward behavioral change, which surprised the student being interviewed. Other Philippi students appreciated the fact that "they want you to grow and understand what you did wrong" (Emma) and that "...overall, they do a great job of handling it" (Warren).

Additionally, a student at Galatia College expressed appreciation for the intervention measures offered by the university's growth initiative, allowing for a more redemptive and morally directive response for students who self-disclose conduct code infractions:

So I think that's really – that shows the heart behind it. I think it's not just about the rules, it's about helping people grow and become better people. (Pamela)

The only intervention or action by university officials appearing to impact student perception of the goal of cultivating personal discipline as a reflection of Christian values (Lau, 2005) was one student's comment regarding Ephesus College's recent change in chapel policies, which exempted seniors from the requirement in their final semester:

If you want to go, you can go, but you don't – you're not forced to go and you're – you should be taking charge of your spiritual life. (Hillary)

The final spiritually formative goal explored when assessing student perception of university interventions or actions was the encouragement of lifelong wisdom (Guthrie, 1997a). This theme seemed to surface as students discussed ways in which the university was preparing them for life after the bubble – the sheltered environment provided by the university policies and practices. A resident assistant at Philippi, after gaining greater exposure to university discipline processes stated that she “gained a lot of respect for this institution in terms of seeing us as individuals and trying to prepare us for life” (Caley). Students at Ephesus College, also resident assistants, discussed the bubble but appreciated the personal mentoring and care provided by university staff, which they believed would help them navigate to life after college. Again discussing the change in Ephesus' chapel requirements, a student perceived a benefit in a requirement that better equipped students to make their own decisions as they prepared to transition out of college.

Students also shared suggestions about how to cultivate wisdom and broadened perspective in their peers by exposing them to experiences outside the campus community. This idea was raised by a student at Philippi College who suggested exposure to other communities and ministries as a means of preparing students for life

after college. It was echoed by a student at Galatia who suggested that it would be good to “experientially break students into what is happening in the real world” (Craig).

#### A New Theme – Conduct Codes as Opportunities for Relationship and Restoration

The primary data reviewed for this study (student handbooks, training documents, disciplinary letters, and focus group interviews) was initially analyzed for the presence of the seven spiritually formative goals of student conduct codes identified in the research literature. In the course of compiling and analyzing the data, however, an additional theme emerged, factoring prominently into numerous conversations with focus group participants and easily observable in the printed documents submitted for the study. It was, in fact, embedded in the response provided by a senior administrator at Colosse College when asked about the goals behind their conduct policies:

I think one of the major – or probably the most paramount goal is reconciliation. Often times our students are at places in which they act out. They’re asking for help. They’ve had some difficulties along the way. And with that – to help them understand, too, it’s important for them to reconcile themselves to God...they also need to be reconciled to their community. (Douglas)

The additional spiritually formative goal of student conduct policies within the Christian college context is to provide an opportunity to reflect the character of God by pursuing restoration and relationship in the lives of students. More specifically, as the conduct policies of a Christian university – ranging from relatively minor policies such as curfew to issues with legal implications such as the distribution of illegal drugs – are violated, a powerful opportunity for restoration and relationship is presented.

Once this new theme was identified, it was readily traceable through the four research questions of the study in a measure that exceeded many of the other previously identified goals.

This theme was apparent in the formulation and revision of student handbook policies, particularly in sections of the handbook describing the accountability process. Galatia College (2012) inferred it with a simple departmental mission statement at the beginning of their handbook: “Love enough to challenge. Care enough to support” (p. 3). At Ephesus College (2012a) the process of discipline was intended to “correct inappropriate behavior and achieve restoration” (p. 192), while Philippi College (2011a) asserted that “Our desire is for students to redeem situations and to help restore students to the community” (p. 4). Within a section in their handbook discussing restorative discipline, Colosse College (2012) explained:

Discipline is rooted in God’s love. It is not punitive in nature but restorative. It is a way to build relationships and reconcile and restore individuals to the Lord and the community. Our approach to discipline focuses on people and relationships, not rules and regulations. (p. 33)

This theme of restoration and relationship was observed in specific policies and processes outlined in student handbooks. The explanation of the growth initiatives at Galatia College and Colosse College, which allow for a different accountability response for students who self-disclose policy infractions, described a response that provides support and partnership in response to a student’s need for help, rather than punitive action. Policies on premarital pregnancy included commitments to a redemptive response and treating the students involved with support, care, and grace.

As administrators discussed revisions to their conduct policies the conversation was, again, infused with a desire for restoration of and relationship with students. This goal motivated Colosse's move away from using fines as a disciplinary measure and was the impetus behind the implementation of their growth initiative. When a senior administrator at Ephesus College was asked about policy changes being considered he shared his desire to rewrite aspects of the handbook to reflect a more pastoral heart for students who are hurting. As an example he explained that the university was adding a sentence to their sexual assault policy to address student fears of disciplinary action being taken if the context of an assault involved a conduct code infraction (such as use of alcohol or violation of open dorm hours).

This new spiritually formative goal – that conduct code policies would provide an opportunity to reflect the character of God by pursuing restoration and relationship in the lives of students – was apparent in the way the participating universities communicated their conduct policies and was deeply embedded into the way their policies are enforced. At the opening meeting for new students at Philippi College, a video describing the process of addressing tension in the community (including behavioral infractions) pointed students to the possibility of growth and restoration through conflict. Colosse College and Galatia College both introduced their growth initiatives during new student arrival. An administrator at Galatia surmised that approximately a third of their growth initiative plans for students were initiated after the first hall meeting during orientation, often related to a students' desire to quit smoking.

The senior administrators for student development at each of the universities were unequivocal about their commitment to the restorative opportunities available through



student discipline situations. One vice president interviewed expressed her hope that students would always experience a process that was redemptive and compassionate, while remaining consistent. Another referred to the Greek word for “maturity” used in the Bible, pointing out that it was used to describe the healing of broken bones and the mending of fishing nets. In the context of student discipline, maturity then becomes “the mending of something so that it becomes useful again” (Gary). Likewise, conversations with the chief student development officers at Philippi and Colosse were laden with references to student restoration and reconciliation.

A philosophical and practical commitment to the restoration of students through conduct code enforcement was also observable through staff training materials provided for this study. Ephesus College (2012d) stated that “Our goal in any disciplinary encounter is to provide a pathway to redemption and discipleship” (p. 33) and the first goal of disciplinary confrontation at Colosse College (n.d. b) was “to facilitate restoration in the student’s relationship with Jesus Christ, with others on the floor/in the suite, and with you” (p. 1). At Philippi College, as well, the first goal listed in the disciplinary process was student restoration.

Student development professionals acknowledged that this process is not easy. Additional discussions with staff members and administrators at Philippi College focused on the factors that occasionally make the goal of pursuing restoration in a student’s life difficult. Students are often resistant to the truth in a disciplinary context or may not desire restoration to a community that is frustrating them with its expectations. Sometimes, explained study participants, the barrier was students’ self-perception, whether the students failed to acknowledge responsibility for their actions or at the other

end of the spectrum, engaged in self-condemnation. Ultimately, asserted one administrator, the restoration of students began with the Holy Spirit's work in their lives.

Interviewed personnel explained that a commitment to student restoration in the process of enforcing student conduct codes occasionally exposed a tension when sanctions were imposed and students failed to perceive any element of grace in the college's actions. Sometimes this was expressed in humorous ways, such as when an administrator at Galatia College was accused of "having a sphincter on his soul" (Ryan) by a student being dismissed for a drug violation. Administrators pointed out, however, that grace and forgiveness are not mutually exclusive of consequences that may naturally occur or be imposed as an accountability measure for growth. One of the resident directors expressed hope that a disciplinary moment could help students remember that "being held accountable and being loved are not mutually exclusive" (Brian). The tension, explained an administrator at Colosse, was best addressed by looking at the character of God revealed in the Bible:

So in the Word you see the character of God being one that is both about discipline – and that's necessary – and consequences for sin, but at the same time, just incredible grace – and the grace of the cross. And there is a tension there and so we're trying to model that and teach that as we go through this process.

(Michael)

With the goal of restoration in place, disciplinary moments then provided opportunities to enact that goal in a tangible situation. The senior administrator at Ephesus College saw "these incidents as absolutely critical to their long-term development" (Gary), and resident directors at Philippi College described these moments

as opportunities to live out the message of the Gospel in students' lives. Disciplinary encounters required students to face their own brokenness and need for restoration in Christ and allowed for student perspectives on the process of discipline to be reshaped and revised, according to several administrators interviewed.

A number of practical examples were shared as student development professionals described the goal of viewing discipline as an opportunity for restoration in students' lives. This pursuit affected the way disciplinary incidents were referred to at Philippi College, where resident directors received emails from the administrator entitled, "Another Ministry Opportunity." The same administrator, attempting to redefine the campus community's perception of this role clarified to others that his primary role was not discipline; it was loving students, based on the Hebrews 12 description of discipline as an act of love.

A number of staff members interviewed shared that they regularly incorporated an expression of forgiveness into disciplinary meetings with students, often surprising them, particularly when students had never heard those words directly expressed in response to their actions or perhaps were not prepared to forgive themselves. One of the administrators interviewed directly asked students if the process felt restorative or punitive, looking for ways to ensure that the student understood the goals of the process.

During the visits to each of the universities, staff personnel shared suggestions for communicating restoration at the conclusion of a disciplinary incident and expressed a desire to grow in that step of the process. Students placed on disciplinary probation at Philippi College were asked to re-sign the community covenant as an expression of restoration to the community, but the university was considering an additional step of a

follow-up conversation with students three or four months after the disciplinary requirements were satisfied. Galatia College and Ephesus College, as well, were thinking through more formal steps to officially mark the completion of a discipline situation in a student's life.

In addition to providing opportunities for restoration, the process of enforcing student conduct policies can provide opportunities to build relationships with students. Student development personnel interviewed expressed the value of having a relationship with student prior to disciplinary encounters, establishing trust and positively impacting student attitudes toward the staff members involved in the encounter. The vice president for student development at Ephesus College stated:

I really do believe it. I've seen it. I've seen the times when a student comes in and either the RD or an RA or I have a relationship with him or her. There's a very natural disciplinary process and that's healthy and it's redemptive and it's healing and we come out on the other side. Then there's transformation because there's a relationship there. (Gary)

In practice, then, it was not surprising that student development personnel emphasized concerted efforts to build relationships with students intentionally before disciplinary events occurred. This intentionality extended to practical benefits offered to staff members, such as opportunities for staff members to eat in the cafeteria for free at Galatia College as a means of fostering relationships with students. The expectation extended to resident assistants, who as student leaders were expected to develop relational capital with students early in the semester.

Even if a relationship had not already been established, disciplinary encounters could be the catalyst to getting to know students, according to professionals interviewed. One resident director went as far as to claim that, “some of my best relationships with students have been through discipline situations” (Mary); a sentiment echoed by a resident director at Ephesus College stating that “almost all of the deepest relationships I have come at an intersection of – of their life and the conduct code” (Sam). An administrator at Galatia College helpfully explained that in a season requiring discipline, students are often broken, embarrassed, and perhaps cut off from other relationships. Consistent input from an administrator can build the relationship and model grace to the student in the process. The dynamic is heightened in a residential university context, proposed one resident director, because “There has to be a looking in the eyes – you live right next door to them” (Luke). Staff members emphasized the need to carefully listen to a student’s story, seeking to know him or her beyond the disciplinary context even while investigating the details of the infraction.

The opportunity to build a relationship in a disciplinary incident is reinforced if a level of intentionality is infused into preserving the relationship following an enforcement conversation. Various means of preserving a staff member’s relationship with students were discussed, including allowing resident directors to serve as advocates for students in a disciplinary encounter and paying careful attention to nonverbal communication and body language through a disciplinary conversation. Administrators discussed intentional follow-up encounters with students and the importance of even casual greetings as a means of reinforcing that students were not being shunned. One resident director attempted casual contact with a student disciplined for an alcohol

incident for a year before the relationship thawed and another resident director performed a student's community service with her to facilitate relational follow-up.

University personnel discussed the vital role of confidentiality in preserving relationships and communicating restoration. At Galatia College and Colosse College practices in staff meetings incorporated a higher commitment to confidentiality by ensuring that student disciplinary details are not discussed. Students were occasionally surprised by the fact that other staff members were not aware of their disciplinary situation.

As documentation of student disciplinary encounters, discipline letters submitted for this study provided evidence of this theme. Students receiving discipline letters were commended for their courage in disclosing their infractions, often in deeply encouraging and personal terms, such as those used in a discipline letter to a Philippi student:

A mark of a man is taking responsibility for oneself and doing the right thing, even when it is difficult and the pressure is on. You modeled that extraordinarily. I hope my sons grow up and learn to own their mistakes and not hide from consequences like you have shown. (Philippi College, 2011c, p. 2)

Disciplinary letters to students expressed forgiveness to students, freedom from shame, and affirmation of students' worth in God's eyes. A student being disciplined at Colosse College (2011) was reminded that God uses discipline to "shape us into the likeness of His Son, Jesus Christ" (p. 1). At Ephesus College (2012c) a student was told that "God can use this situation to bring about positive changes in your life" (p. 1). Even a letter communicating a consequence as serious as a suspension from Philippi College (2011e) expressed a desire for the student to return to the university and informed the

student that “Everyone who has been involved in this decision wanted me to let you know that you are forgiven” (p. 2).

Disciplinary letters also expressed the value of relationships, offering or in some cases requiring the student to develop a mentoring relationship. Administrators writing the letters expressed their appreciation and care for the student and implied a commitment to ongoing relationship.

In light of this new spiritually formative goal – providing an opportunity to reflect the character of God by pursuing restoration and relationship in the lives of students – the focus of the study returned again to the third research question regarding student perception. Students at the universities studied also perceived the integration of this spiritually formative goal in the way conduct policies were formulated, communicated, and enforced at their universities.

When discussing discipline issues at Ephesus College, one student stated immediately that she saw the university goals as focused around redemption and restoration and appreciated the fact that the school provided mentors to encourage and support students through the restoration process. A student at Philippi College described the university as a “really forgiving community” (Jessica) that provided encouragement and support for students who were struggling. Galatia College was an environment, described a student, that had helpful rules with an appreciated level of flexibility in enforcing those rules. The staff at Galatia, according to students interviewed, were perceived as gracious and merciful, particularly when dealing with incidents that were self-disclosed. Students referenced the growth initiative programs at Galatia and Colosse as evidence that the universities made a restorative process available for students.

Of particular interest when considering student perception of a relational and restorative goal was the role of the resident assistant as a student leader. A resident assistant interviewed at Galatia College expressed appreciation for the fact that part of her role was walking alongside students who were being disciplined. This sentiment was echoed by RAs at Philippi College, who described even the seating position in disciplinary meetings as reflecting their opportunity to advocate for their students. The disciplinary process was described by a Colosse College RA as “about trying to restore them to a point where they can participate in the community on the floor” (Kevin). While disciplinary situations presented a level of awkwardness in the relationship between a resident assistant and other students, RAs at Ephesus affirmed that it was essential to acknowledge the awkwardness and simply move on, providing a level of consistency and support in students’ lives. Reuben, one of the RAs involved in the discussion summed up their role in communicating restoration well:

So I think that – I always think that it’s important that we remember that, you know, whenever we mess up, God – if we just go to God and ask him for forgiveness, He’ll throw it in the sea of forgetfulness and we move on. So I think that that’s a way of incorporating what God does for us in what we do in everyday life, you know what I’m saying?

Out of any of the spiritually formative goals discussed, this one was perhaps most shaped by student perception of staff actions and interventions, which was the focus of the fourth research question. At two of the universities visited the student development administrators were dealing with significant disciplinary issues, which provided tangible



reminders of how quickly student perception of the discipline process can influence students' trust in the staff.

Student responses when asked about the discipline processes at their universities were mixed. A student at Galatia College acknowledged that students did not spend much time thinking about the discipline processes at the university until they were actually caught for an infraction, or until word got out about extreme situations such as expulsions. However, several students at Galatia were very familiar with the goals of the growth initiative and expressed appreciation for the way it communicated grace, mercy, and a desire to help students. In fact, one student referred back to the growth initiative as a means of refuting critique in the community regarding the university's recent suspension of a student.

When asked about her perception of the discipline process at Philippi, a student commented that based on her friends' experience, she felt like the process was gracious and beneficial. She even recounted a story from her mother's time as a student at the university to illustrate that the university handled discipline well. Another student at Philippi, however, recalled that her friends' experience in discipline at the university was not so positive, requiring them to simply comply in a way that left them more callous and embittered about the process. At Ephesus College, a resident assistant expressed appreciation for the care and consistency brought to the discipline process and illustrated it with a story of a friend who was disciplined during his freshman year, but now was serving as a resident assistant.

A key intervention affecting student perception of the spiritually formative goals of restoration and relationship also emerged in discussions about the role of the resident

assistants. Repeatedly, resident assistants were referred to as student ambassadors for the university, serving as a presence in the residence halls and as advocates for the student development staff. Several of the resident assistants interviewed expressed this responsibility, as well, understanding the importance of advocating for the staff, serving as examples in the residence halls, relationally investing in the community and responding well to the rules.

Resident assistants acknowledged that their advocacy role was challenging, particularly because students often carried a negative impression of the RA's role and authority in the residence hall. Another resident assistant pointed out that conversations often stopped when she walked into the room because of students' fear that they might get in trouble. This perception was confirmed during interviews with other students. A student at Philippi College stated that the authority of an RA served as a barrier to open conversation – a fact that prevented her from considering applying for the position. At Colosse College a student shared her frustration that information provided to an RA about her illness was passed on to an administrator without her knowledge. In a discussion with students at Philippi a student listed trust, respect, and a non-judgmental perspective as essential components of a good RA.

In addition to defining resident assistants, at least in part, as student ambassadors, the universities participating in this study worked hard to cultivate trust among these student leaders and equipped them for conversations that would extend that trust. Staff members at each of the schools invested significantly into student leaders by engaging them in extensive training sessions and by intentionally building deeper relationships with them. A resident assistant at Galatia College expressed her appreciation for the trust

extended to her by her resident director, whose vulnerability and honesty about his spiritual life in turn fostered her trust in him and the other staff members at Galatia:

So, I trust that [Galatia] hires these very godly people and that – and that they know what’s the right thing to do. Even if I do not know them all personally, I have trust in the people for sure. (Tanya)

Resident assistants were also given opportunities to discuss student conduct policies and disciplinary procedures with administrators as a means of facilitating trust and answering questions, according to personnel interviewed. Students reported being positively impacted by these discussions. Resident assistants at Galatia College acknowledged that these sessions built their trust, not only in the conduct policies of the university, but in the staff enforcing them. Resident assistants at Ephesus College agreed, stating that RA training built their trust and eased their fears regarding what would happen to students they were holding accountable. A resident assistant at Philippi College was candid about the fact that it took becoming an RA and gaining exposure to the discipline process to build her trust in the structure of the institution.

An interesting component of how that trust was facilitated was administrators’ willingness to allow student leaders to express questions and even disagreement about the conduct policies during the training process, even while reinforcing that students would be held accountable to them. Resident assistants at Galatia College and Colosse College appreciated the trust extended to them in allowing them to express their doubt and frustration about the rules. For one RA at Philippi College, finding freedom to discuss concerns about the university’s standards was important in the process of her becoming a resident assistant:

...it was definitely an experience where we had a lot of, kind of – just a lot of open communication about where we were and a place to share our thoughts and doubts and work through them together and in a – in an environment where we were supported in that honesty, which was really cool. (Caley)

This final spiritually formative goal – seeing conduct codes as providing opportunities to reflect the character of God by pursuing restoration and relationship in the lives of students – when applied through the grid of all four research questions, proved to be particularly embedded into the way conduct policies were enforced and perceived by students at the Christian colleges participating in this study.

### Conclusions

This study began with the goal of researching the extent to which spiritually formative goals were integrated into the formulation, revision, communication, enforcement and student perception of student conduct codes at participating Christian colleges and universities. The picture that emerged from varying data incorporated into the study was of four universities that were intentionally and extensively committed to the spiritual formation of their students, while consistently and compassionately giving attention to the conduct policies that marked their respective institutions.

### Formulation and Revision of Conduct Codes with Spiritually Formative Goals

The spiritually formative goals identified in Lau's (2005) earlier research on the reasons for student conduct codes, as well as goals drawn from Guthrie (1997a) and Hoekema (1994) were observed in varying quantities in each of the conduct policies at the selected universities. Each of the universities consistently incorporated the goal of cultivating a spiritually beneficial community (Lau) into their handbook policies. An

additional focus observed in the printed policies was that of protecting the community from morally and spiritually detrimental influences, another of Lau's observed goals. Sections discussing the ways in which handbook policies could morally guide students, another spiritually formative goal (Lau), often emphasized guiding students away from morally detrimental influences or vices. Fostering moral responsibility, Hoekema's theoretical contribution to this framework was usually documented in terms of limiting one's personal freedom for the sake of others and addressing moral infractions and conflict in the lives of others. More generally stated, the desired community and individual responsibilities were defined predominantly by the behavior and influences to be avoided or addressed as undesirable.

Less clear (and less prevalent in the data) was a distinct picture of what positively defines these communities or would motivate students toward positive cultivation of their spirituality. For example, while Lau (2005) suggests that Christian universities may utilize conduct policies to contribute to an atmosphere of faith and learning, very few references to this goal (or academic issues in general) were observed in the documents provided or the interviews conducted. As academic institutions, focused on equipping students for critical reflection and disciplined thought, a greater emphasis on intellectual inquiry and scholarship as a means of worship might be warranted. Additionally, the goal of cultivating spiritual disciplines (Lau) was not extensively incorporated as rationale for the universities' policies other than brief references to the importance of Bible study, prayer, Sabbath observations, and chapel policies. The only one of these requirements for which students would actually be held accountable, according to printed policies, was chapel.

Other than references to university mission statements and descriptions of services for career planning and life calling, very little reference was made to the positively stated goal of cultivating lifelong wisdom (Guthrie, 1997a). This is surprising, given the emphasis on the principle of wisdom drawn from the Christian scriptures. Additionally, a process of cultivating wisdom by recognizing (and responding to) students' developmental stages in the application of conduct policies was not readily apparent at any of the universities, with the exception of revised chapel policies at Ephesus College and some variance in residence hall visitation policies for older students.

In conclusion, then, while spiritually formative goals are most definitely evident in the formulation and revision of conduct codes at the universities studied, the integration is limited and would benefit from additional emphasis on positive cultivation of spiritual disciplines and the development of wisdom. If assessing the spiritual emphasis by student handbooks alone, one might assume that the primary focus is on creating somewhat isolated communities by preventing certain behavior and influences as a means of allowing students to develop as moral agents, even though positive virtues are referenced. This same perspective also appears to influence the way conduct policies are communicated to students and enforced at the universities studied.

#### Communication and Enforcement of Conduct Codes with Spiritually Formative Goals

The universities researched through this study did appear to be infusing spiritually formative goals into the ways that their conduct codes were communicated and enforced. It must be stated, however, that methods of communicating the conduct codes varied in scope, format, and depth at each of the studied institutions. Student handbooks, whether

printed or electronic, were widely acknowledged as functionally invisible to most students, who give them perfunctory attention, at best, perhaps when completing an application for admission. Educational opportunities to discuss and address the schools' conduct policies were usually limited to new student orientation or opening residence hall meetings, potentially lost in the swirl of information accompanying a new school year. The prospect was more encouraging for student leaders, who at each university were provided with additional opportunities to discuss the policies and the rationale behind them with university personnel.

The same dynamic observed in the printed conduct codes – a focus on mitigating negative behaviors rather than promoting positive actions – could be observed when analyzing the primary messages about conduct policies within the campus community. The goal of providing students with moral guidance through the school conduct code (Lau, 2005) was usually presented in terms of helping students avoid negative behaviors. In fact, the negative behaviors for which students are usually held accountable were limited to external actions such as violations of the schools' alcohol policies, open dorm violations, and substance abuse, rather than biblical vices such as pride, greed, or covetousness. The goal of promoting discipline in students' lives as a reflection of Christian character (Lau) was only marginally observed, at least as understood by the researcher. In other words, students were rarely held accountable for failing to actively engage in positive behaviors, perhaps with the exception of chapel requirements.

Two of the spiritually formative goals offering significant potential for influence extending beyond a student's season at the university were observed considerably in the focus group discussions with administrators. The cultivation of lifelong wisdom (Guthrie,

1997a) factored into the goals expressed by administrators and other personnel as they discussed preparing students for life after college. Additionally, Hoekema's (1994) proposition that conduct codes could foster a sense of mutual moral responsibility in college students was evident in the interviews held at each campus, as well as some of the disciplinary letters. Students were being actively challenged to both consider the impact of their actions on others and to lovingly hold others accountable for their choices – both principles reflected in Scripture as marks of Christian maturity. Again, however, primary accountability and moral engagement appears related to students helping one another avoid vices and detrimental influence, rather than in their moral responsibility to cultivate Christian disciplines and positive virtues.

Additionally, for students to more effectively embrace their responsibility within the community might necessitate more intentional efforts to focus discussions about the conduct policies and community expectations to student developmental stages. For example, the level of moral responsibility expected in the area of alcohol usage is vastly different for the student who has reached the legal drinking age than it is for an 18-year old freshman. Particular attention at these universities must be given to equipping students for wise choices regarding alcohol use, even while enforcing their policies prohibiting students from drinking.

It is clear that spiritually formative goals are integrated into the communication and enforcement of student conduct codes at the participating universities. Once again, however, the emphasis on communication seems to be primarily on preventing negative behaviors as a means of guarding the community against detrimental influence, rather than promoting Christian disciplines as a means of cultivating wisdom. This is



particularly true when considering policy enforcement, which almost exclusively addresses behaviors to be prevented, rather than practices to be encouraged.

#### Student Perception of Spiritually Formative Goals in Conduct Codes

Briefly observed from a quantitative standpoint through the submitted Student Satisfaction Inventory results, the student handbook as a means of providing information about campus life is not particularly important to a student. Any spiritually formative goals perceived by students, then, are primarily gathered from other means of communication regarding the handbook policies, either through group meetings, training sessions (for student leaders), or through interactions with student affairs personnel.

Students on the campuses visited were well aware of the community emphasis behind their schools' rules. The word, community, in fact, surfaced often and students instinctively both understood and appreciated that the university connected them to others beyond themselves. They understood, further, that conduct policies helped define the community by protecting the campus from detrimental influences (Lau, 2005). The environment fostered by these rules, according to students, was appreciated, if somewhat insular.

The protective (and occasionally restrictive) nature of the policies was particularly referenced by students in relation to policies regarding student alcohol usage and residence hall visitation. It was in this context that students expressed concern about the Christian college bubble, and whether or not the environment fostered would effectively prepare them for wise choices in those areas after they graduated. Additionally, students expressed occasional confusion and reluctance about their responsibilities as moral agents, particularly in reference to holding their peers accountable to the university

policies. The spiritual and moral individualism identified by Smith's (2009) research and discussed by personnel interviewed was evident in some of the students responding, who were reluctant to interfere with the moral choices of others.

As with the ways in which policies were formulated, communicated, and enforced, students did not seem to readily or extensively perceive the conduct codes as contributing to the integration of faith and learning or to the development of positively oriented Christian disciplines in their lives, both goals identified in Lau's (2005) research. Very little reference was made by students to the academic culture of their universities or to the ways in which their personal spiritual practices were affected by the university's conduct policies.

With this in mind, it is apparent that while participating students also perceive certain spiritually formative goals in their universities' conduct codes, the goals can be perceived as a bit insulating at best and somewhat isolating at worst. Most of the students interviewed appreciate the campus community created, in part, by the conduct code policies and viewed it as spiritually beneficial to them. However, at the conclusion of this study, a nagging question remains as to whether or not the atmosphere is effectively equipping each of them with a level of wisdom and moral responsibility that will sustain their spiritual growth beyond the college years.

#### Student Perception of Staff Interventions and Spiritually Formative Goals

The data analyzed for this study did not allow for the assessment of the impact of macro-level policy changes or broad campus-wide interventions. None of the universities researched had made major changes to policies or procedures that would have been observable in the students interviewed, or even during the period covered by submitted

data from the Student Satisfaction Inventory. Thus, the question was explored exclusively on the micro-level, assessing student perceptions of staff interventions based on their experience (or their friends' experience) with university personnel. This is a significant focus of exploration, however, given the fact that the top items of importance in the Student Satisfaction Inventory items submitted by the universities studied related to the universities' care for students as individuals and the extent to which campus staff were caring and helpful.

The feedback from students interviewed, for the most part, seemed to indicate a high level of appreciation for the care extended by the staff. Resident assistants, in particular, expressed respect and appreciation for university personnel and for their capacity to infuse spiritually formative goals into the way conduct codes were communicated and enforced. These students, it must be pointed out, gained significant additional exposure to the rationale behind the conduct policies through extensive training sessions that allowed for dialogue and even a level of disagreement related to the policies. Student leaders were provided with venues to work through questions and misperceptions about the policies – a process that many of these students reported as being spiritually and morally beneficial.

In honest moments at each of the universities, students did occasionally express a level of concern in their universities' capacity to consistently engage redemptively in students' lives during seasons of difficulty. Vestiges of concern about an overly protective and unnecessarily intrusive environment are, perhaps, fostered by students who see student affairs personnel as primarily enforcing campus alcohol policies and restricting students from mixed-gender residence hall visitation. While these practices

and policies are not theoretically driven by the in loco parentis model, they may be perceived as somewhat parental and parochial.

In conclusion, when considering student perception of spiritually formative goals as affected by staff interventions, it appears that a sizable gap remains. The research design did not allow for generalizability to entire university populations, but a picture emerged of students connecting to student affairs personnel from polar opposite points – as student leaders and as students facing disciplinary action. This leaves the vast majority of students without an intentional, integrated means of reflecting on the dynamic between their university's conduct code and their responsibilities as an individual. For those encountered through a disciplinary incident, a new opportunity for dialogue and reflection surfaced, but many of the students at these universities may have had very little contact with someone who could discuss the expectations of the university with them in a way that recognized their individual personality and unique contribution. This could become particularly troubling as students progress through their time at the university leading some, perhaps, to a measure of struggle and rebellion and others, more troublingly, down the path of unthinking compliance and apathy.

#### A Recurring Opportunity – Conduct Codes, Relationships, and Restoration

With this in mind, disciplinary incidents, though challenging, present a unique opportunity in students' lives. Earlier research points to these moments as potentially transformative in a student's life (Gregory, 1998; Schulze & Blezien, 2012) and to seasons of struggle as vital opportunities for spiritual growth (Lau, 2005). It is not surprising, then, that a new spiritually formative goal was identified in the current study, highlighting the opportunity to reflect restoration and relationship when addressing

conduct code infractions. This finding illuminates the tension and cognitive dissonance described by Smith (2009) and Lau (2005), as students wrestle with points of disconnection between their beliefs, the norms of the campus culture, and their actions. In this respect then, the conduct code becomes a conduit for restoration and relationship, insofar as it offers the potential for students to interact more deeply with their values and understanding of community, mediated by caring staff and faculty members.

An encouraging reality observed at the universities visited was the prevalence of committed, spiritually mature staff members actively engaged in the process of encouraging students toward Christian maturity. The conduct code policies were, fact, most often mediated by student interaction with a staff person, whether in dialogue through RA training or during a disciplinary encounter. The personnel interviewed spoke often of the difficulties of their jobs, but invariably returned to the joy of investing in students' lives, even – or often especially – during seasons of struggle. Their passion was extended into the lives of the resident assistants interviewed – student leaders engaged in the challenge of holding their peers accountable to the expectations of the university in a spiritually formative way. The instincts and attitudes of the student development team members at each university evidenced professionalism and careful reflection about the responsibilities entrusted to them.

The overall conclusion of this research study confirmed that the university personnel responsible for the formulation, revision, communication, and enforcement of student conduct codes can play a significant spiritually formative role in students' lives. These responsibilities are not mutually exclusive of encouraging students toward spiritual maturity; on the campuses studied, they are integral to the process. However, additional

attention must be given to the positive nurture of student spirituality through Christian disciplines and a focus on – and environment conducive to – cultivating wisdom.

Intentional structures should be put in place to ensure relational connections to campus outliers and passive compliers. Ultimately, even the most difficult of disciplinary encounters are not to be shunned or viewed as antithetical to student spirituality. Those moments may, in fact, be the catalyst to transformation.

### Implications and Recommendations

Having invested time and research into the intersection of specific policies and spiritually formative goals, it is appropriate at the conclusion of this study to modestly propose an integrated model for the intersection of spiritual formation and student conduct codes at the Christian college or university. Given the research, it would be helpful for universities to more holistically integrate reflection on their conduct expectations into the education of their students. No policy or procedure appears to isolate only a single goal in a student's spiritual formation – indeed, none seem to be exclusively focused on the individual's benefit or the benefit of the broader community. There is an ongoing dialectic between the moral and spiritual formation of the individual student and the moral and spiritual fabric of the community – both shaped and reinforced by the university's conduct code.

### Implications for an Integrated Model

The model for a Christian university's conduct code, then, could be refined, developed, and communicated to students as fostering a community that is defined what it cultivates (spiritually beneficial influence and the integration of faith and learning) and what it prevents (morally detrimental influences) – both themes presented in Lau's

research (2005). The students joining the community are then to be encouraged and invited to contribute to the community by embracing their moral responsibility (Hoekema, 1994), in the process receiving moral guidance and developing spiritual disciplines (Lau). As they mature, these students will increase their capacity for wisdom (Guthrie, 1997a). The final piece of this integrated model is contributed by the new spiritually formative goal discovered in this study and most readily observed when individuals violate an aspect of their responsibility to the broader community.

It is an appropriate time for this new model, given the increasing calls for attention to student morality and spirituality reviewed earlier in this study. Effectively pursuing this model in the Christian college context will require universities to review and potentially revise their conduct codes, to creatively explore new means of communicating those policies and the rationale for them, and to embrace a wholeheartedly and consistently restorative model of conduct code enforcement.

#### Recommendations for Conduct Code Revision

With this integrated framework in mind, Christian colleges and universities could review their handbook policies, conducting an assessment to address the presence and effectiveness of spiritually formative goals. A review team, including students, student development personnel, and members of the faculty should regularly address both the wording and content of the policies for congruence with the university's goals for student spiritual formation. In particular, it would be wise for Christian colleges and universities to give attention to the developmental stages of students' morality and faith formation in the application and explanation of policies such as alcohol usage, chapel requirements, residence hall visitation hours, and curfew.

Institutionally, the methodology used in this study could be used to facilitate university level assessment of student conduct policies, perhaps as background research for an extensive handbook revision or to provide holistic review and assessment for the purposes of accreditation and institutional learning. Ideally, the assessment could be conducted by a trained external researcher to benefit from the transparency and honesty afforded by a level of participant anonymity.

It is possible that much of the discussion fostered through an institutional assessment will lead to clarity in rationale that incorporates spiritually formative language related to specific policies. It is vital, however, for universities seeking to effectively equip their students for wisdom and moral responsibility to review the actual policies, asking difficult but important questions about whether they are spiritually formative, in and of themselves, or spiritually detrimental. For the sake of the students and the campus community, these questions are worth asking.

#### Recommendations for Conduct Code Communication

Universities must also give attention to consistency, clarity, and creativity in the way handbook policies and the rationale behind them are communicated. As discussed earlier, this process must be ongoing, giving attention to the importance of students' understanding of the intersection of their own morality and the cultivation of a healthy community. A required chapel program at each of the universities studied provides a valuable venue for regular communication of the rationale behind these policies, as well as a means of highlighting the restorative and relational nature in which the policies are enforced. Student testimonies of restorative responses to conduct code infractions, if



applicable and appropriate, could serve to build trust and stimulate student self-disclosure.

The research undertaken in this study also suggests that additional time and attention be invested in recruiting, training, and building relational capital with resident assistants as a means of building trust with the student body. These student leaders must have a level of mentoring and support to sustain them through developmental changes and seasons of questioning and need to be adequately equipped to help other students understand the reasons behind the policies. They will benefit from an increased emphasis on the opportunities afforded in moments of conduct enforcement – opportunities for restoration and relationship.

A concluding thought regarding conduct code communication is that in today's culture, monologue about the rationale behind campus codes of conduct, no matter how polished, is destined to be somewhat ineffective. The students interviewed at each of the campuses enjoyed discussing – and even debating – the rationale behind the policies. Several RAs expressed that this freedom to discuss the policies openly built their trust in the community. University administrators would be wise to engage in creative and regular dialogue with students about the policies in safe, transparent contexts.

#### Recommendations for Conduct Code Enforcement

The research provided by the current study and the best practices described by participating institutions suggests a simple but robust framework to navigate student discipline issues. A review of university disciplinary policies and practices could be undertaken to assess the extent to which restorative goals are integrated into the process. The processes should be assessed to ensure that a similar amount of relational capital is

fostered with students on the campus prior to disciplinary incidents occurring and that relational capital is preserved after a student has been through the disciplinary process.

These moments provide opportunities to reflect the character of God by pursuing restoration and relationship in the lives of students and this final spiritually formative goal completes a robust, holistic model for the integration of spiritually formative goals and student conduct codes. It describes the interplay between individual and community, tangibly expressing the ongoing focus of connecting the student back to the community, even when trust is breached. Christian universities, of all places, should provide numerous moments and examples of grace and restoration in their communities.

This concluding goal, from a Christian worldview standpoint, is deeply powerful, reflecting the very nature of the Christian gospel, which claims that no one is able to fully satisfy God's righteous requirements, leaving all in need of God's grace and mercy. It was deeply encouraging to note that the Christian universities studied were so passionately committed to reflecting God's character that the very nature of their policies and policy enforcement mirrored, albeit imperfectly, the truth of His redemptive and restorative work.

#### Recommendations for Additional Research

Additional research on the intersection of spiritually formative goals and student conduct codes is both warranted and necessary. This study could be replicated in different contexts, such as CCCU schools with policies that are different than the ones in this study (such as alcohol use by students and chapel requirements). Alternatively, the study could be replicated with the same criteria for participating universities, but in a different region of the country. Related studies could be conducted in greater depth at a single school,

perhaps giving greater attention to student perception and experience at varying developmental stages.

Additional qualitative studies could include research into the experience of resident assistants, addressing their role in the residence halls, investigating RA training models, or perhaps looking at their relationship with student development personnel and the development of institutional trust. This work could serve as valuable foundation for more effective RA training materials and methods.

This research, coupled with Lau's (2005) earlier work as well as the contributions of Guthrie (1997a) and Hoekema (1994) could provide a foundational basis for development of a scale assessing student perception and satisfaction with school discipline policies. This would necessitate significant investment to pursue a reliable and valid means of measurement, but would contribute an invaluable tool to Christian student development professionals seeking to better understand and serve their students.

An additional study of student perception, focused on outliers, students who have been through the disciplinary process, and students who are disgruntled with their university would provide a helpful balance to this discussion. While this type of study may present challenges relating to participant confidentiality, it would be meaningful and important to hear about how these students' have been affected spiritually by the context and actions of Christian colleges and universities.

#### A Final Word from a Colleague in the Field

This research project, both the process and the conclusions reached, served to academically sharpen, professionally equip, and personally refine the researcher. Personal journal notes captured the internal tension faced by the researcher when considering the

challenges of conduct code enforcement and student spiritual growth. That tension was both reinforced and relieved in conversations with colleagues at other universities and with students at those schools who viewed the researcher not as an administrator within the system but as a trusted external inquirer.

The research was accompanied by ongoing praxis in the field, merging the theoretical with the practical. Discussions on other campuses about the challenges faced by resident assistants were followed by the process of hiring new resident assistants at the researcher's home university. A growing awareness of the critically formative opportunities available in a student disciplinary meeting found ongoing application as the researcher continued to be fully immersed on conduct code enforcement as a student development professional. The refreshing and stimulating dynamic of discussing conduct codes and spiritual formation with students in a non-threatening, relaxed atmosphere fueled the researcher's craving to actually know the hearts and experiences of students on his home campus.

The process was painful, tiring, and at times, lonely. At times, the researcher's journal recorded vivid moments of self-awareness and regret for lost opportunities for relationship and restoration in previous disciplinary situations. At the end of the research journey, the path led back to a familiar passage of Scripture, summing up the challenges and beauty of serving college students during this unique window in their moral, social, intellectual, and spiritual development.

Ultimately, the final recommendation for Christian student development professionals seeking to better serve and care for the students entrusted to them finds expression in the words of the apostle Paul as he writes to the Thessalonian church.

Ministering to college students is an investment of one's life and those engaging in this endeavor would do well to heed his example:

We loved you so much that we were delighted to share with you not only the gospel of God but our lives as well, because you had become so dear to us.

(1 Thessalonians 2:8, NIV1984)

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Appendix A  
SSI Scale Items

## SSI Scale Items Requested from Participating Universities

### Standard SSI Scale Items:

- 2. The campus staff are caring and helpful.
- 10. Administrators are approachable to students.
- 30. Residence hall staff are concerned about me as an individual.
- 40. Residence hall regulations are reasonable.
- 56. The student handbook provides helpful information about campus life.
- 63. Student disciplinary procedures are fair.
- 59. This institution shows concern for students as individuals.
- 71. Channels for expressing student complaints are readily available.

### Optional CCCU Scale Items:

- 74. Being on this campus is contributing to my spiritual growth.
- 75. My understanding of God is being strengthened by classroom and/or campus experiences.
- 76. Faculty, administration and/or staff are helpful to me in processing issues related to my faith.
- 79. Given where I am spiritually right now, this campus is a good “fit” for me.

Appendix B  
Site Selection Criteria

Table 1

*University Admissions Policies*

University Admissions Process	
College 1	No personal faith information asked
College 2	Asks about church attendance and applicant faith perspective
College 3	Asks for religious background but does not require faith commitment
College 4	Asks for personal statement of faith
College 5	Evaluates applicants' Christian commitment, including reference
College 6	Asks for personal statement of faith and personal recommendation
College 7	No statement of faith required
College 8	Requires personal statement of faith
College 9	Asks for faith experience
College 10	Asks for church info in the application process
College 11	No personal faith information asked
College 12	Asks for church information and relationship with Christ
College 13	Asks for church affiliation and personal belief
College 14	Asks for church attendance description in a recommendation
College 15	Asks for essay about personal commitment to Christ
College 16	No personal faith information asked
College 17	Faith commitment essay is required
College 18	No personal faith information asked
College 19	Conduct consistent with Christian values considered

Table 2

*University Handbook Policies (Part 1)*

	Smoking	Alcohol	Chapel	Academic Dishonesty
College 1	Prohibited	Prohibited	Required	Prohibited
College 2	Not on campus	Not on campus	Required	Prohibited
College 3	Not on campus	Not on campus	No information	Prohibited
College 4	Specified areas	Not on campus	Encouraged	Prohibited
College 5	Prohibited	Prohibited	Required	Prohibited
College 6	Prohibited	Prohibited	Required	Prohibited
College 7	Specified areas	Not on campus	No information	Prohibited
College 8	Prohibited	Prohibited	Required	Prohibited
College 9	Not on campus	Prohibited	Required	Prohibited
College 10	Prohibited	Prohibited	Required	Prohibited
College 11	Not on campus	Not on campus	Encouraged	Prohibited
College 12	Prohibited	Prohibited	Required	Prohibited
College 13	Not on campus	Prohibited	Required	Prohibited
College 14	Prohibited	Prohibited	Required	Prohibited
College 15	Prohibited	Prohibited	Required	Prohibited
College 16	Specified areas	Not on campus	No information	Prohibited
College 17	Prohibited	Prohibited	Required	Prohibited
College 18	Not on campus	Not on campus	Required	Prohibited
College 19	Prohibited	Prohibited	Required	Prohibited

Table 3

*University Handbook Policies (Part 2)*

	Relationship w/ Opposite Sex	Theft	Sexual Harassment	Weapons
College 1	Moral Purity	Prohibited	Prohibited	Prohibited
College 2	Moral Purity	Prohibited	Prohibited	Prohibited
College 3	No Cohabitation	Prohibited	Prohibited	Prohibited
College 4	Moral Purity	Prohibited	Prohibited	Prohibited
College 5	Moral Purity	Prohibited	Prohibited	Prohibited
College 6	Moral Purity	Prohibited	Prohibited	Prohibited
College 7	Moral Purity	Prohibited	Prohibited	Prohibited
College 8	Moral Purity	Prohibited	Prohibited	Prohibited
College 9	Moral Purity	Prohibited	Prohibited	Prohibited
College 10	Moral Purity	Prohibited	Prohibited	Prohibited*
College 11	Moral Purity	Prohibited	Prohibited	Prohibited
College 12	Moral Purity	Prohibited	Prohibited	Prohibited
College 13	Moral Purity	Prohibited	Prohibited	Prohibited
College 14	Moral Purity	Prohibited	Prohibited	Prohibited
College 15	Moral Purity	Prohibited	Prohibited	Prohibited
College 16	Moral Purity	Prohibited	Prohibited	Prohibited
College 17	Moral Purity	Prohibited	Prohibited	Prohibited
College 18	Moral Purity	Prohibited	Prohibited	Prohibited
College 19	Moral Purity	Prohibited	Prohibited	Prohibited

Table 4

*University Handbook Policies (Part 3)*

	Discrimination	Sexual Assault	Altercations	Sunday Observance
College 1	Prohibited	Prohibited	Prohibited	Expected
College 2	Prohibited	Prohibited	Prohibited	No information
College 3	Prohibited	Prohibited	Prohibited	No information
College 4	Prohibited	Prohibited	Prohibited	Expected
College 5	Prohibited	Prohibited	Prohibited	Encouraged
College 6	Prohibited	Prohibited	Prohibited	Encouraged
College 7	Prohibited	Prohibited	Prohibited	Encouraged
College 8	Prohibited	Prohibited	Prohibited	Encouraged
College 9	Prohibited	Prohibited	Prohibited	Encouraged
College 10	Prohibited	Prohibited	Prohibited	Expected
College 11	Prohibited	Prohibited	Prohibited	No information
College 12	Not Referenced	Prohibited	Prohibited	Expected
College 13	Prohibited	Prohibited	Prohibited	Encouraged
College 14	Prohibited	Prohibited	Prohibited	Expected
College 15	Prohibited	Prohibited	Prohibited	Encouraged
College 16	Prohibited	Prohibited	Prohibited	Encouraged
College 17	Prohibited	Prohibited	Prohibited	Expected
College 18	Prohibited	Prohibited	Prohibited	Encouraged
College 19	Prohibited	Prohibited	Prohibited	Expected



Appendix C  
Random Invitation  
Student Participant Data

Table 5

*Random Invitation Student Participant Information (Galatia College)*

	Percentage of student body	No. of students invited	No. of unique participants	Percentage of participants
Freshmen	24%	8	1	14%
Sophomores	27%	12	2	29%
Juniors	23%	8	1	14%
Seniors	26%	12	3	43%
Total Students	100%	40	7	100%

Table 6

*Random Invitation Student Participant Information (Ephesus College)*

	Percentage of student body	No. of students invited	No. of unique participants	Percentage of participants
Freshmen	23%	8	2	67%
Sophomores	27%	12	0	0%
Juniors	23%	8	0	0%
Seniors	28%	12	1 <sup>b</sup>	33%
Total Students	100% <sup>a</sup>	40	3	100%

<sup>a</sup>Rounding calculation. <sup>b</sup>Student also participated in RA interview.

Table 7

*Random Invitation Student Participant Information (Philippi College)*

	Percentage of student body	No. of students invited	No. of unique participants	Percentage of participants
Freshmen <sup>a</sup>	25%	12	2	33%
Sophomores <sup>a</sup>	25%	12	3	50%
Juniors <sup>a</sup>	25%	18	1	17%
Seniors <sup>a</sup>	26%	18	0	0%
Total Students	101% <sup>b</sup>	60	6 <sup>c</sup>	100%

<sup>a</sup>Class status calculated by cohort year. <sup>b</sup>Rounded percentages (freshmen and sophomores slightly less than 25%, juniors and seniors slightly higher than 25%). <sup>c</sup>Four participants represent a convenience sample.

Table 8

*Random Invitation Student Participant Information (Colosse College)*

	Percentage of student body	No. of students invited	No. of unique participants	Percentage of participants
Freshmen <sup>a</sup>	<i>information not available</i>		1	33%
Sophomores <sup>a</sup>	<i>information not available</i>		0	0%
Juniors <sup>a</sup>	<i>information not available</i>		0	0%
Seniors <sup>a</sup>	<i>information not available</i>		2	67%
Total Students	100%	40	3	100%

<sup>a</sup>Information provided from Colosse College did not include class status; invitations were sent to randomly selected students from the overall traditional undergraduate population.

## Appendix D

### Documents Submitted for Content Analysis

## Documents Submitted for Content Analysis

### Galatia College

- 2012-2013 Student Handbook
- Accountability Statement
- Disciplinary Incident Report
- Growth Initiative Contract
- PA Training 1
- PA Training 2

### Ephesus College

- 2012-2013 Student Handbook
- 2012-2013 Residence Life Handbook
- Lifestyle Covenant
- Community Life Covenant
- RA Training Manual 2012
- Discipline Letter 1
- Discipline Letter 2
- Discipline Letter 3
- Discipline Letter 4

### Colosse College

- 2012-2013 Student Handbook
- RA in Restorative Discipline
- Restorative Discipline Training 2012-2013
- Incident Report Instructions
- Discipline Letter – Open House Violation
- Discipline Letter – Sexual Misconduct

## Philippi College

- 2011-2012 Student Handbook
- Discipline in Student Handbook
- Biblical, Philosophical and Practical Considerations
- Disciplinary Flow Chart
- Loving Acts of Confrontation
- Procedures for the Administration of Student Discipline
- Residence Life Handbook Information
- Discipline Letter – Construction Site
- Discipline Letter – Internet 2nd Conversation
- Discipline Letter – Open Floor
- Discipline Letter – Probation 2
- Discipline Letter – Probation 3
- Discipline Letter – Probation Alcohol
- Discipline Letter – Probation Public Safety
- Discipline Letter – Probation Sex
- Discipline Letter – Self Report
- Discipline Letter – Self Report 2
- Discipline Letter – Self Report 3
- Discipline Letter – Suspension 1
- Discipline Letter – Suspension 2
- Discipline Letter – Suspension 3

Appendix E

Campus Interview Schedules

## Schedule for Campus Visits

### **Galatia College**

Visit 1 – Wednesday, October 17, 2012

- Student Development Administrators and Resident Directors (6 participants)
- Chief Student Development Officer (1 participant)
- Resident Assistants (3 participants)
- Students from random invitation list (7 participants)

Visit 2 – Wednesday, November 7, 2012

*Participants assumed to be previous interviewees unless otherwise noted.*

- Student Development Administrators and Resident Directors (6 participants)
- Chief Student Development Officer (1 participant)
- Resident Assistants (3 participants – 1 new, 1 did not return from the previous interview)
- Students from random invitation list (6 participants)

### **Ephesus College**

Visit 1 – Tuesday, October 23, 2012

- Chief Student Development Officer (1 participant)
- Chief Student Development Officer and Administrators (3 participants)
- Resident Directors (8 participants)
- Resident Assistants (4 participants)
- Students from random invitation list (3 participants, including 1 RA who was on the invitation list)

Visit 2 – Tuesday, November 6, 2012

*Participants assumed to be previous interviewees unless otherwise noted.*

- Chief Student Development Officer (1 participant)
- Chief Student Development Officer and Administrators (3 participants)
- Resident Directors (6 participants)
- Resident Assistants (4 participants)
- Students from random invitation list (2 participants, including 1 RA who was on the invitation list)



## **Philippi College**

Visit 1 –Monday, October 29, 2012

- Chief Student Development Officer and Administrator A (2 participants)
- Administrator B and Resident Directors (5 participants)
- Administrator B (1 participant)
- Graduate Assistants (6 participants)
- Resident Assistants (5 participants)
- Student from random invitation list (1 participant)

Visit 2 – Monday, November 12, 2012

*Participants assumed to be previous interviewees unless otherwise noted.*

- Chief Student Development Officer (1 participant)
- Administrator B and Resident Directors (5 participants)
- Administrator B (1 participant)
- Graduate Assistants (6 participants)
- Resident Assistants (3 participants, including 1 new participant)
- Students from random invitation list (6 participants, including 1 additional randomly invited student, and 4 additional students invited by the previous interviewee)

## **Colosse College**

Visit 1 – Friday, November 2, 2012

- Administrators and Resident Directors (12 participants)
- Resident Assistants (5 participants)
- Administrator A (1 participant)
- Student A from random invitation list (1 participant)
- Students B & C from random invitation list (2 participants)

Visit 2 – Friday, November 16, 2012

*Participants assumed to be previous interviewees unless otherwise noted.*

- Administrators and Resident Directors (11 participants)
- Administrators B & C (2 participants)
- Resident Assistants (5 participants)
- Students B & C from random invitation list (2 participants)

Skype Interview –Tuesday, November 20, 2012

- Chief Student Development Officer (1 participant)

Appendix F

Focus Group Questions

## Focus Group Questions

### Staff Focus Group Questions

- How are students introduced to the student conduct code at your university?
- What are some of your goals as the conduct code is introduced to students?
- How familiar with the student conduct code are students at your university?
- What is their general attitude toward the student conduct code?
- Describe the process of training RAs and other staff members for conduct code enforcement. Who's involved in the training and what are some of your goals in the process?
- Describe some typical discipline conversations with students. Do spiritual issues surface in the discussion, and if so, how?
- Has your university made any changes to the student conduct code (or discipline process) over the last four years? What goals have motivated those changes?

### Student Leader/Resident Assistant Focus Group Questions

- How are students introduced to the student conduct code at your university?
- What do you perceive as being some of the goals as the conduct code is introduced?
- How familiar with the student conduct code are students at your university?
- What is their general attitude toward the student conduct code?
- Describe the process of how you are trained for conduct code enforcement. Who's involved in the training and what do you perceive are some of the goals in the process?
- Describe some typical discipline conversations with students. Do spiritual issues surface in the discussion, and if so, how?

### Student Focus Group Questions

- How familiar are you and other students with your university's student handbook?
- How is your university's student conduct code communicated to you (beyond the student handbook)?
- How are the reasons for conduct code policies explained to you?
- Describe, if possible, a typical process for students who have violated an aspect of the student conduct code.
- What goals seem to be communicated to students during that process?
- What changes, if any, have you seen in the conduct code or the discipline process over the last four years?
- Why do you think those changes have taken place?
- What impact have those changes had on the overall campus spiritual climate? On your personal spiritual life?

## Appendix G

### NVivo Coding Comparison Data

Table 9

*NVivo Coding Comparison Data for Selected Nodes*

	Average (unweighted)	Average (weighted by source size)
Kappa Coefficient	0.2518	0.3357
Agreement (%)	96.19%	96.79%
A and B (%)	0.70%	0.86%
Not A and Not B (%)	95.49%	95.92%
Disagreement (%)	3.81%	3.21%
A and Not B (%)	2.97%	2.52%
B and Not A (%)	0.85%	0.69%

*Note.* A = coding by the primary researcher; B = coding by the research assistant.