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Faith Development in Higher Education: The Role of the Mentor

Abstract

We have been told, and have possibly learned through experience, that religion and politics are two subjects you should never discuss among polite company. Yet, the Christian College seeks to place religion and faith at the center of its ongoing conversations. This is especially true for a small Christian, religiously affiliated, liberal arts college in the northeast United States that seeks to engage and nurture a diverse student body in a Christ-centered, value oriented, liberal arts education. Recent literature certainly makes the case for matters of spirituality, faith, and religion to have a place in higher education. The literature has also revealed that there is no consensus among faculty as to the extent to which these concepts should be integrated into the academic setting and how exactly they, as mentors, can have an impact on students' continued spiritual development. A number of factors, including both institutional culture as well as the individual understanding of the faculty members, certainly play a role in determining the answers to these questions. This qualitative study contributes to the lingering questions concerning faith development of the college student and the role faculty mentorship can have on that development through in-depth, one-on-one interviews. It investigates faculty understanding of the institution's mission, as well as their perceived participation in it. More specifically, the study discovers what the faculty of a Christian college believe their role to be as it pertains to the spiritual development and growth of students. The data include information on both how the participants believe they can positively impact this growth as well as the hurdles and challenges that exist. Lastly, the study investigates the faculties' understanding of the spiritual development of their students.

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By

Roy W. Minnix

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