

**STUDENT SPIRITUAL DEVELOPMENT A
FINAL FRONTIER IN HIGHER
EDUCATION**

Taos Mountain



Taos Mountain

Introduction

- ▣ Focusing on Student and Faculty Spiritual Development
 - Life's Meaning
 - Education
 - Community
 - Social Justice



It Begins With You!

- Spiritual Development and Student's Life Meaning?
- What does spirituality mean to students and other faculty members?
- Is there room in the curriculum for spirituality?
- Can spiritual dialogue help meet student's emotional and physical needs?
- Can a holistic education help students to better self understanding?
- What does spirituality look like in the classroom?



**Is there room for faith, hope & love
in higher education?**

Exploration

What does a student's spiritual development have on the meaning of their life in context to educational and vocational pursuits, and commitment to community and social justice?



Literature Review

The phenomenon of student increased interest in spiritual development:

- "People feel that there is something is missing from their lives, and are sensing an interconnectedness to life,"(Miller, 2000).
- "How we construct meaning in our lives," (Tisdell, 2003).
- "The once silenced passion of spiritual practice is becoming a norm as we break away from cultural taboos," (hooks, 2000).



Holistic Health Class UNM-Taos



Sacred Ceremony Class 2009

(Lit. Review continued)

- ▣ Student Spiritual Development & Higher Education:
 - “Students are people of the world, viewing themselves as international citizens, moral beings, with spiritual awareness and purpose,” (Institute for Studies in Global Prosperity, 1997).
 - “International and cultural awareness programs reveal collective human development across cultures,” (Scales, 2006).
 - “Higher education can offer new learning experiences needed to thrive in the competitive world,” (Freidman, 2006).

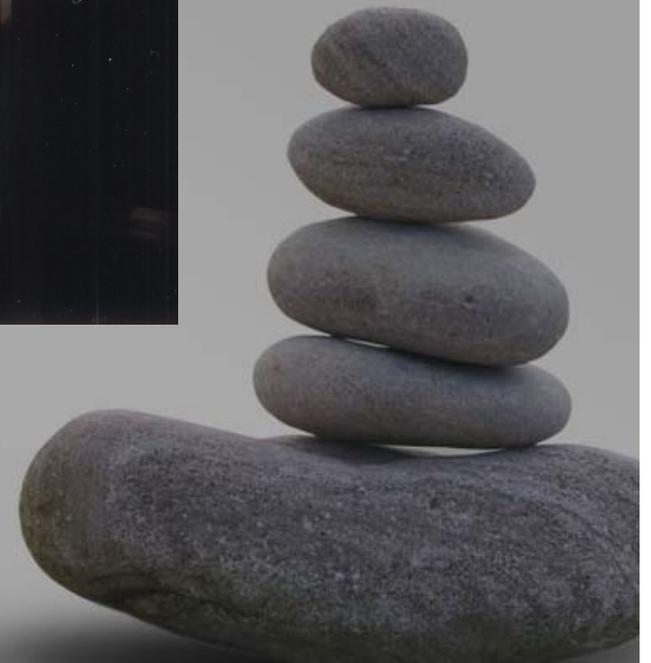


Development of Self Awareness



Discovering Your Deepest Identity

“It’s not that I’ve always known who I would be. It was very clear to me from an early age who I wouldn’t be.” – Oprah Winfrey



Open Mindedness

Having a Sense of Interconnectedness

Having significant relationships with others, the earth and the larger cosmos.

- "The integration of personal organization behavior and spirituality is also context for students developing strong leadership skills," (Pruzan, 2004).

The Integration of life experiences and developing self reflective processes.



Cosmos

Old Educational Views

- ❑ Do not teach people to question.
- ❑ In order to succeed in the outer world you must be first, the best, and fit in with what society dictates.
- ❑ Be the loudest voice in the crowd in order to stand out.



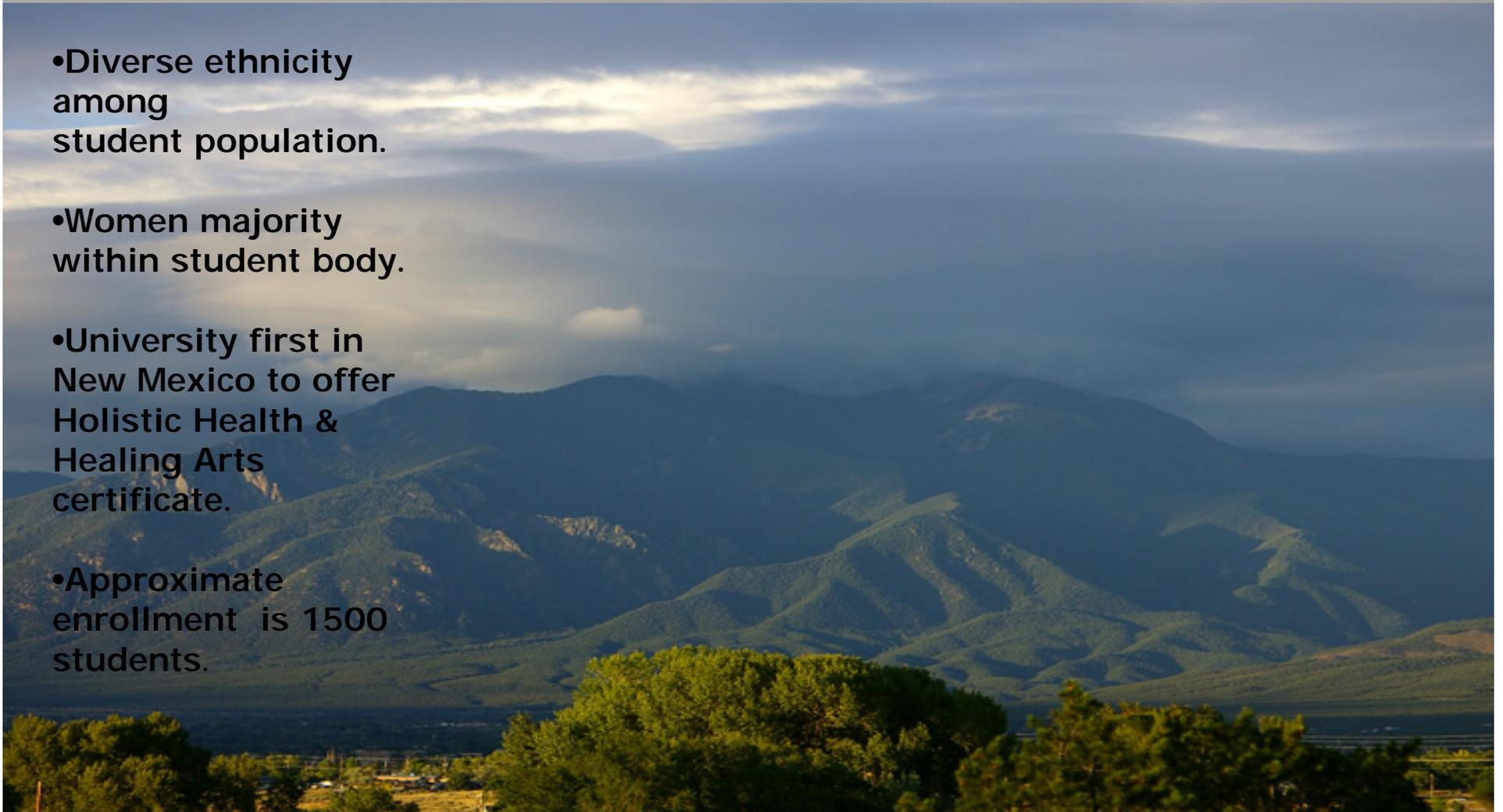
Site of study – small rural university campus nestled in the northern New Mexico Sangre de Cristo mountains

- Diverse ethnicity among student population.

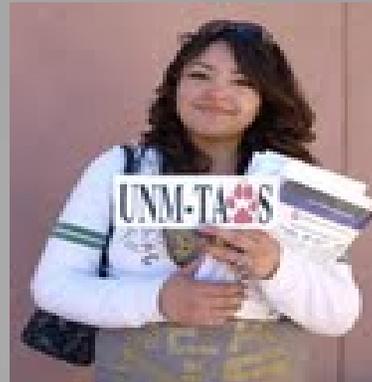
- Women majority within student body.

- University first in New Mexico to offer Holistic Health & Healing Arts certificate.

- Approximate enrollment is 1500 students.



UNM - TAOS



Bringing People Together

Participants in the Study

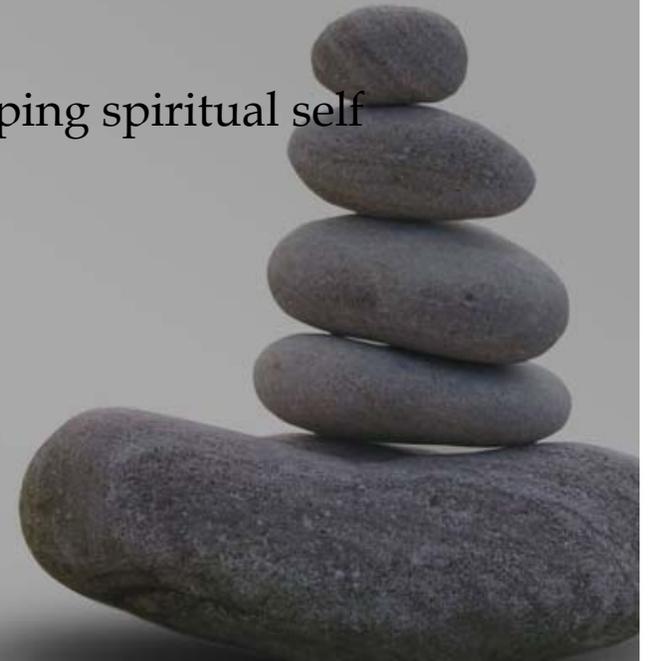
Representative women of different ethnic, socioeconomic classes and age groups

- ▣ Three female students:
 - Jane – recent business degree graduate, currently directs community after school program.
 - Linda – continuing student involved in developing English conscious raising degree programs.
 - Margaret – Social work graduate student, participating in youth development programs.



Faculty Participants

- ▣ Three female faculty
 - Ms. Xian – teaches peaceful martial arts and international studies.
 - Mary – an internationally renowned speaker and teacher of world religions and contemplative mystic practices.
 - Self – teaches holistic health courses in developing spiritual self awareness.



your name

Data Collection

- ▣ Six face to face student and faculty interviews
 - Open ended questions revealed life experience and perspectives on spiritual phenomenon.
- ▣ Three classroom observations
 - Unbiased observer
 - Observation of larger sampling
 - Field notation & recordings
- ▣ Document Analysis
 - Determination of emphasis & patterns from collected data.
 - Establishment of historical context.



Findings

- ▣ Observation of five themes:
 - Definition of Spirituality
 - Challenges
 - Nurturing
 - Reconnection
 - Giving of self

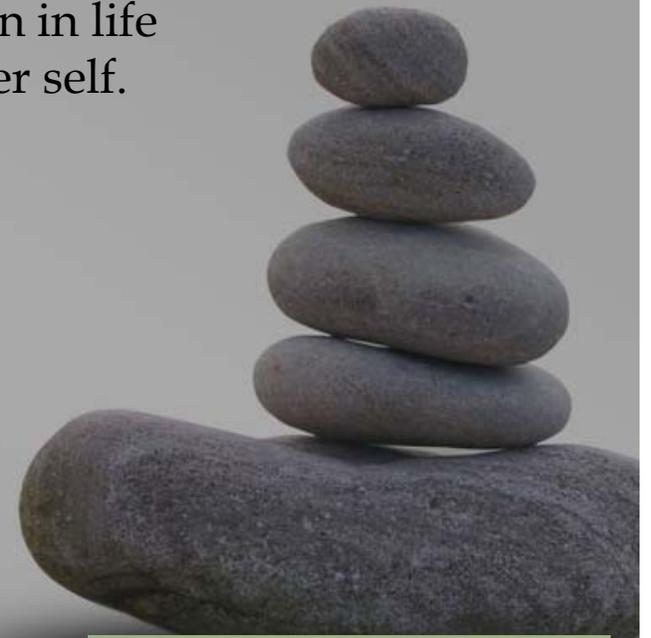


Defining Spirituality

“It is an essential feature within us that is lost when we get busy with the world of accomplishment and acquiring of knowledge.” - Ms. Xian

“I define spirituality as a process of seeking personal authenticity by gaining meaning, purpose and direction in life through an open exploration of relationship with higher self.
Self

“A moving towards the meaning of my life.” - Linda



No Common Definitions

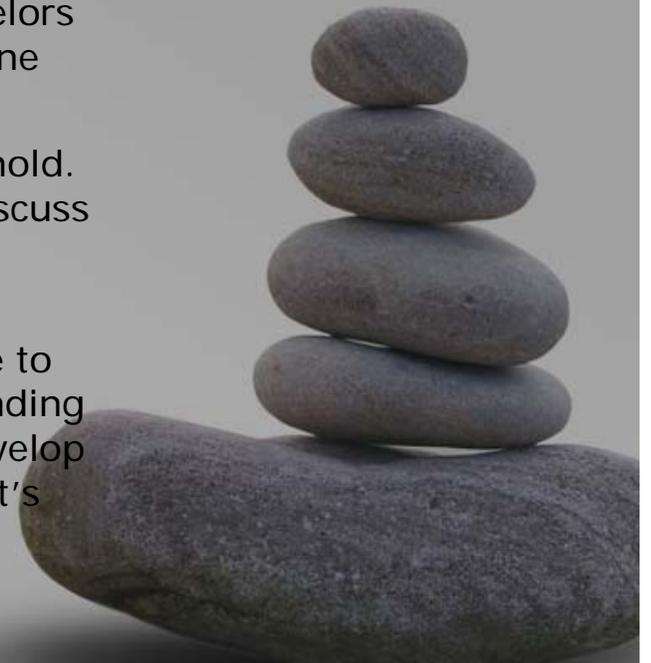
Challenges

- Experiencing a tumultuous childhood
- Feeling apart, not knowing of self

"I was made aware that I was adopted and that always brought feelings of abandonment that I did not face until my adult years. I used my addictions to hide my pain for many years. Through the grace of God and my cry for help I discovered an anonymous program that has helped me to be in sobriety. Obtaining clarity lead me to enter and complete the Bachelors program with a desire to help our community youth." – Jane

"My father would not allow the mention of God in our household. When I took holistic health classes, I am able to openly discuss the presence of spirituality with others."- Linda

"The struggles of the participants gave them an innate desire to search for their purpose and personal development. Attending and teaching university classes offers me new ways to develop self and to share in the knowledge that enlarges a student's horizons in wholeness with school, work, family, and community." - Self



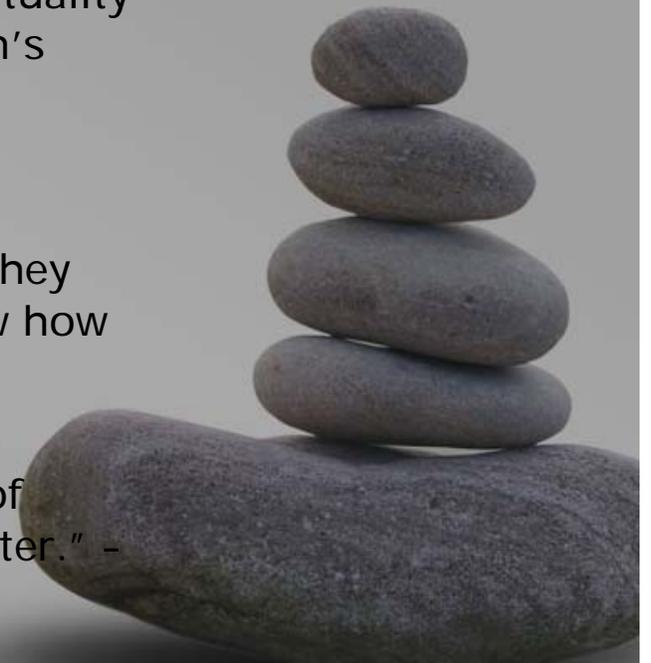
Nurturing

- Cultural traditions passed down through family.
- Teachers create safe environment for developing trust, intimacy, & sharing of beliefs.

“Connection with the past helps with maintenance of spirituality on a certain level; it works simultaneously with the person’s growth.” - Ms. Xian

“There is something special about the professors at this university, they care, they don’t treat you like a number, they want to hear what you have to say, and they want to know how they can help.” - Margaret

“Through my own teaching observations, the awakening of spiritual awareness helps the student focus and study better.” - Mary



Reconnection

- Clarity in decision making – from the heart, spiritual intuition and personal growth.
- Cultivating the essence of true self
- Holistic well being to overcome life's obstacles

"I make pertinent decisions that are guided by my spiritual connection and growth. I listen to my heart versus the mind." – Margaret

"In class, I am able to openly discuss the presence of spirituality with others; I am not in fear that I will be criticized." – Jane

"Students can overcome obstacles in life due to the understanding that their spiritual, emotional, and physical health must be maintained". – Ms. Xian



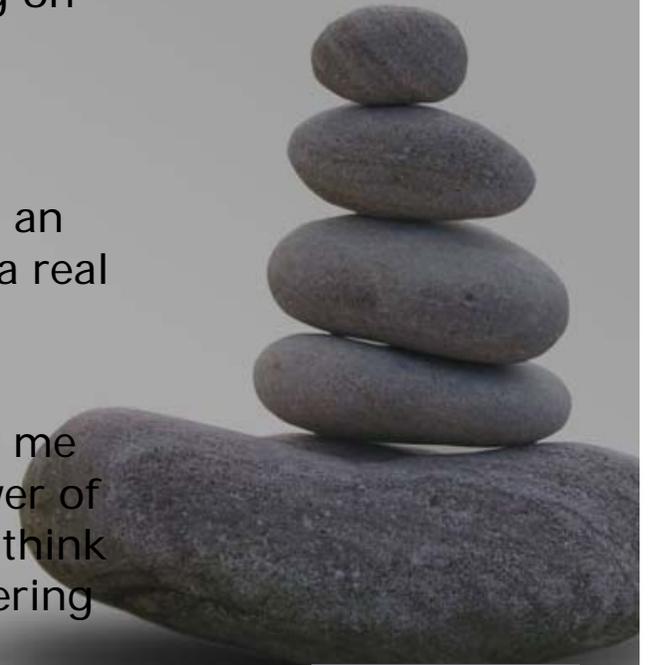
Giving of Self

- Social justice – an innate desire to help others
- Bringing spiritual development into academia
- Creating sustainable opportunities for youth to remain in their communities

“After graduation, I found a employment in a youth development program. Now, Each day I awake wanting to get out of bed because there are children depending on me to keep the program going.” – Jane

“When I came here I noticed that there were many students that never left this small town, I offer them an opportunity to be taught peaceful martial arts from a real Asian person.” – Ms. Xian

“Teaching spiritual awareness in the university gives me opportunities to share in the understanding the power of our creative faculties of thought and feeling, and to think positively to manifest in our lives instead of empowering our fears,.” – Miriam

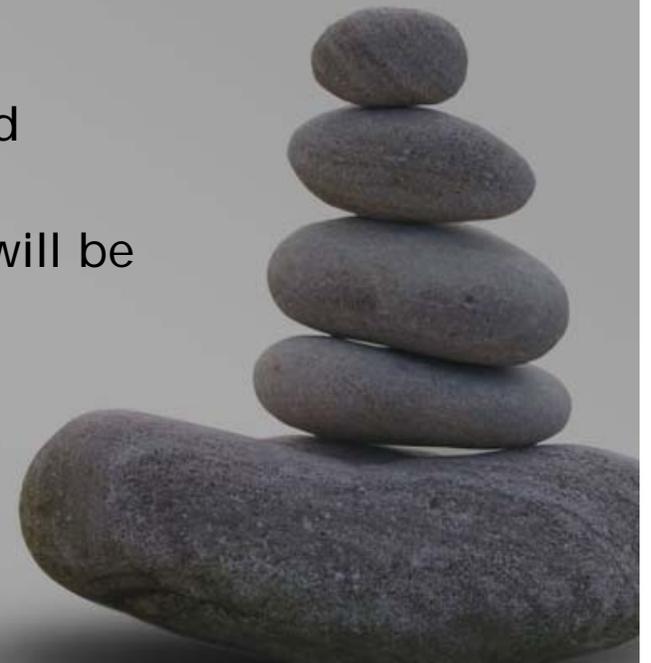


Significant Statements of Participants' and Related Formulated Meanings

Significant Statement	Formulated Meaning
Who am I in this world, and how I function in this world.	Spirituality is an essential feature within everyone that is lost when we get busy with the world of accomplishment and knowledge.
There is less of a chance to tap into spirituality when a person does not know himself or herself. The background speaks for the person themselves.	Spiritual development occurs with acknowledgement and acceptance of self
If you don't give yourself permission to have a spiritual experience you won't have one.	Spiritual development comes from a "wanting" of feeling, belonging and giving permission to wanting to live a spiritual life.
Teachers can nurture students by sharing/rekindling in them an understanding that their primordial life force has always been their within them.	Spiritual development in educational institutions, have the ability to nurture, inspire and encourage students to learn about themselves and to share their beliefs.
Feeling connections to spirit (higher self) made deeper connections to others.	Reconnecting to Spirit awakens a new awareness of a connection to others and all of life.
Like myself, this innate desire to help others evolves with each new experience.	Embracing spirituality and spiritual growth leads to conscious response to work with and help others, a coming to action.

Implications

- ▣ When the university becomes a key player in the promotion of student and community well being:
 - Faculty and staff mentoring impact student's lifestyle choices.
 - Curriculum design combines traditional methodologies and spiritual wisdom.
 - Spiritual development enhances learning and success
 - As students develop their authenticity they will be better prepared for the outside world.
 - Modeling respect for differences.



Recommendations

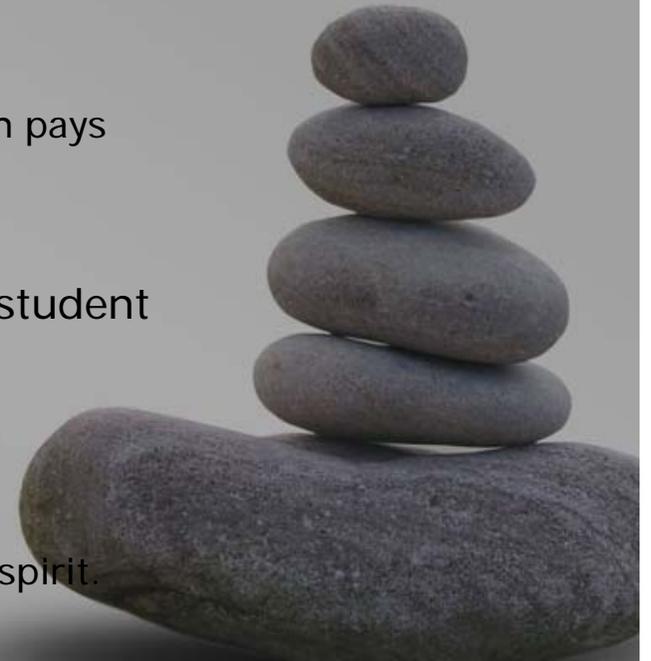
▣ Visionary Leadership

■ Student

- ▣ Develop courses for personal development and growth where:
 - Learning is shared and supported by the whole community
 - Healthier ways to manage stress
 - Developing self compassion
 - Awareness and commitment to social justice
 - Integration of academics with spiritual beliefs which pays attention to the "whole" student

■ Faculty

- ▣ Establish discussion groups to engage faculty/student dialogue:
 - Sharing stories
 - Exploring deeper purpose
 - Understanding connectedness
 - Advising on student's well being – mind, body and spirit.



Personal and Professional Leadership

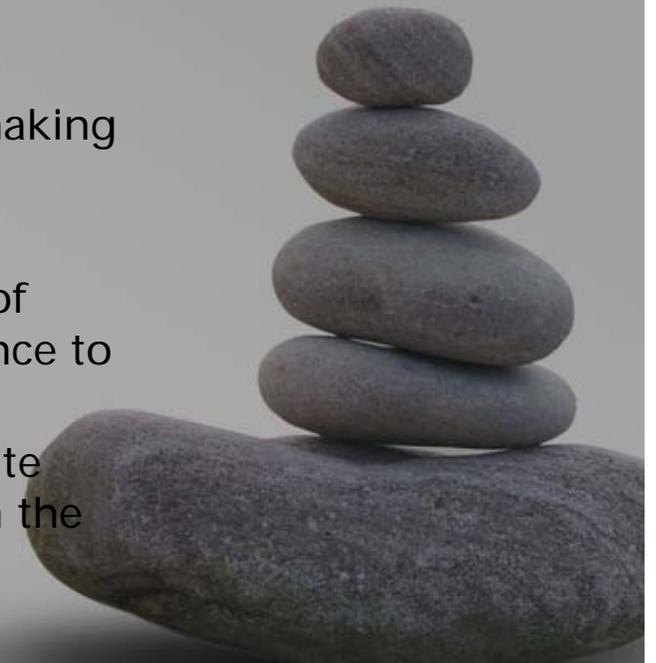
- ▣ Understanding that all students come from rich backgrounds
 - Different aspects of learning
 - Culturally and linguistically diverse
 - Students bring valuable information
 - Knowing who you are in the world
 - Making sense of others in order to aid in student development
 - Continuance of studies for professional development to meet the demands of 21st century global students.



Value

▣ Leadership in Community Relations

- Developing program of studies to respond to the needs of the diverse community.
- Understanding intercultural relationships and spiritual ideologies.
- Inviting community resources to university events that promote opportunities for spiritual development and well being.
- Creating space for:
 - ▣ Spiritual dialogue without judgments
 - ▣ Spiritual support to students and faculty mean making questions:
 - “How to give back to the community?”
 - How do I see ways to honor the full spectrum of religion and spirituality without giving preference to any one tradition?
 - How can we create campus cultures that validate and support religious and spiritual elements in the lives of students?



▣ Ethical Leadership

- Acting with integrity and fairness
 - Promotes student overall well being
- Developing conscious raising curriculums
 - To address challenges of students and community
- Meeting with challenges with:
 - Equanimity
 - Pursuit of personal development
 - Endorsement of student development and pedagogies



Equanimity

Ethical Leadership

Endorse student spiritual development and student centered pedagogies.

Continual pursuit of personal spiritual development and reflection to strengthen self efficacy and optimism.



CONCLUSION

Given the present devastating economic and social ramifications of the recession in American society, the well-being of our citizens will determine the prosperity of our nation. I believe that meeting the needs of student development in the pursuit of authenticity will prepare students to meet the demands of a pluralistic society and stresses of the 21st century in shaping moral and spiritual character.

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Spirituality in education is about transformation



IT BEGINS WITH YOU