Spiritual Life Assessment, 2014-15
Executive Summary

The area in Student Life known as Spiritual Life ministers to and with the Baylor Community in tradition and innovative ways. This area, composed of four distinct but cooperating departments, is organized under the office of the University Chaplain.

Pastoral Care

Small group work is a part of the ongoing caring and formative ministry we offer through the office of the University Chaplain. Last year, a small group called Faith Forum engaged ten students who signed up for this experience as a chapel alternative. The responses to a ten-question survey were positive with regards to the stated outcome that the students would experience a level of conversation and community characterized by thoughtful engagement and convicted civility.

Missions

Our Missions Department assessed two educational events during the past academic year; The Missions Advocacy Dinner and The Fair Trade Brunch. Both events were focused on social justice and aimed at increasing awareness and convictions. The qualitative assessment revealed learning that was transformative.

Worship

Traditional chapel was assessed via focus groups this year to determine if “participation in Chapel helps shape students’ perceptions of themselves and the world regarding their calling, their understanding of wholeness, their recognition of community, and their participation as citizens?” The assessment work revealed, as was expected, that the impact of Baylor Chapel is not uniform among our students but is experienced in multiple ways. Some are challenged, some confirmed, some are refreshed, some are inspired... and, yes, some are angered and bored and bewildered, but the great majority report having a positive experience in chapel.

Formation

The Formation Department had record levels of participation in their fall retreat. Formal assessment of the retreat affirmed that our students are looking for and experiencing an opportunity to build community as they participate in this very well planned and intentional event, where nearly 300 freshmen registered and paid their fee.
Pastoral Care, Assessment Report 2015

Introduction to Department

Baylor understands it to be integral to our mission that our community be a place that is characterized by an active, compassionate, and personal response to those in need. While this work belongs to all those in the Baylor family, historically the Office of the University Chaplain has prompted and been central to the way the University cares for our students. There are many aspects to the Chaplain’s ministry, including leading the area of Spiritual Life and speaking frequently. However pastoral care, in most weeks, will consume the majority of the Chaplain’s time. The Chaplain’s office seeks to manifest the compassion of Christ to the Baylor family.

Reporting Structure

![Diagram of Reporting Structure]

Department Mission

In the area of Spiritual Life, it is our mission to nurture theological depth, spiritual wholeness and missional living in students, staff and faculty.

Department Vision [Where appropriate]

The University Chaplain, assisted by all those in Spiritual Life but especially joined in ministry by the Assistant to the Chaplain, the Director of Spiritual Formation, and the Resident Chaplains, offers support, spiritual direction, and pastoral counseling to individuals in the Baylor community. We also prompt and facilitate the compassionate response of the entire community to those in need.

Department Learning Goals

1. It is our goal to provide pastoral care through support, spiritual direction, and pastoral counseling to those in need.
2. It is our goal to create awareness throughout the Baylor community so that students, staff, faculty, and others will recognize the Chaplain’s office as the place to turn in times of need and crisis.
3. It is our goal to prompt the timely and compassionate care of the entire Baylor community for those in crises and difficulty.

Summary of Program Assessed

Faith Forum as a Chapel Alternative is a discussion-based class and is a significant commitment for the semester. This course is focused on examining the complex interactions between faith and social issues, and it is intended for those students who desire a level of engagement that exceeds traditional Chapel services. As such, each student is expected to participate fully in all discussions, class activities, and writing assignments. A high level of attendance is also expected.

Throughout the semester, we will gather to think and to talk together about significant theological, ethical, and social issues. Most weeks will involve a short reading that will prompt small and large group discussions. Students are expected to contribute to discussions, journal when assigned, and have a level of engagement beyond that of traditional Chapel.

Learning Outcomes for Program

Course Objectives

- Experience a level of conversation and community that is characterized by thoughtful engagement and convicted civility
- Deepen personal awareness and a sense of identity through the process of reading, reflecting, writing, and dialogue.
- Thoughtfully engage in formative discussions on pressing social issues.
- Develop skills for communicating redemptively around difficult issues.

Improvements over the past 3-5 years to help achieve outcomes

This was our second spring to offer Faith Forum. Both times Josh Ritter and I facilitated Faith Forum. In Spring 2014, we had a different professor/scholar each week join us, which was very informative but cut down on dialogue time. This year, in an effort to increase the experience of engagement around compelling issues, we did not bring in speakers. Instead, we spent the first month talking about how to create an environment where people can talk honestly and redemptively. We specifically explored the Christian concepts of hospitality and vulnerability in order to highlight with our students the responsibility we have to come together and reason together about important social issues. Then, we had students read an “Issue Guide” (from the National Issues Forum) each week regarding a particular social problem in order to be prepared to discuss the problem on Wednesday afternoon. Our discussions were guided by an Issue Guide “placemat,” which invited the students to consider the strengths and weaknesses of three positions on each problem. In our discussions, we also discussed the importance of listening to others, considering different value hierarchies, and examining “tradeoffs” for each option. Specifically, we used the “Public Deliberation Model,” and this provided the structure for the conversations each week.

Assessment Methodology

We had a simple ten question survey that the students (nine of ten were there) completed on the last day of class. Seven of the questions gave them a Likert scale response, and then, three short answer questions were offered in order to understand and to illustrate what we learned.

Analysis
We used frequency analysis to analyze the data. The qualitative questions were used as a source for quotations and support.

### Results

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Very/Mostly True</th>
<th>Somewhat True</th>
<th>Mostly/Not True</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. I felt my opinions were heard and valued during Faith Forum.</td>
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<td>1</td>
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<tr>
<td>2. I believe there are relationships developed in Faith Forum that will endure beyond class.</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
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<td>3. The social issues discussed in class were relevant to me or my beliefs.</td>
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<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
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<td>4. As a result of the readings and discussion during Faith Forum, I became more aware of pressing Social issues.</td>
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<td>3</td>
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<tr>
<td>5. As a result of the readings and discussion during Faith Forum, I became more aware of my convictions or beliefs about social issues.</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. I consider the discussions to Faith Forum to be thought-provoking.</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. I believe I can successfully navigate difficult conversations better due to Faith Forum.</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
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### Statement

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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</tr>
</thead>
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<td>44.4</td>
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<td>33.3</td>
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<td>22.2</td>
<td>44.4</td>
<td>33.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Question 1: "I felt my opinions were heard & valued"

- Very True - Mostly True: 89%
- Somewhat True: 0%
- Mostly Not True - Not True: 11%
Question 2: "I believe there are relationships that will endure beyond Faith Forum"

![Pie chart](chart1)

- **Very True - Mostly True**: 45%
- **Mostly True**: 33%
- **Somewhat True**: 22%
- **Mostly Not True - Not True**: 11%

Question 3: "The social issues discussed in class were relevant to me or my beliefs"

![Pie chart](chart2)

- **Very True - Mostly True**: 45%
- **Mostly True**: 44%
- **Somewhat True**: 11%
- **Mostly Not True - Not True**: 11%
Question 4: "After readings and discussions in Faith Forum, I became more aware of pressing social issues"

- Very True - Mostly True: 67%
- Somewhat True: 33%
- Mostly Not True - Not True: 0%

Question 5: "As a result of the readings and discussions in Faith Forum, I became more aware of my convictions or beliefs about pressing social issues"

- Very True - Mostly True: 45%
- Somewhat True: 33%
- Mostly Not True - Not True: 22%
Question 6: "I consider the discussions in Faith Forum to be thought-provoking"

- 56% Very True - Mostly True
- 44% Somewhat True
- 0% Mostly Not True - Not True

Question 7: "I believe I can successfully navigate difficult conversations better due to the Faith Forum"

- 45% Very True - Mostly True
- 22% Somewhat True
- 33% Mostly Not True - Not True

Interpretation
Course Objectives

1. Experience a level of conversation and community that is characterized by thoughtful engagement and convicted civility.

   The responses to statements 1 and 6 indicate that students in Faith Forum indeed did have an experience that was characterized by thoughtful engagement and convicted civility. 100% indicated that opinions were heard and valued. 100% said the discussions were thought provoking. One student said that Faith Forum has “made me more cognizant of the value of many viewpoints.” Another said, “You can still have a relationship of love with neighbor while still holding different beliefs.” In Faith Forum, “I learned how to welcome other people, discuss ideas, and listen to opinions.” “One of the key values discussed in faith forum is hospitality,” one wrote. “I believe that welcoming others and making them feel comfortable is of the utmost importance. To welcome others is to invite discussion, learning, and vulnerability.”

2. Deepen personal awareness and a sense of identity through the process of reading, reflecting, writing, and dialogue.

   Statements 4 and 5 related to this course objective. 67% reported being more aware of issues and 78% reported knowing more about their own convictions on social issues. Students wrote of Faith Forum, “It deepened my knowledge of some subjects;” “I was more confident in what I voiced to my peers;” “I’m reading more critically now;” and “My mind was expanded.”

3. Thoughtfully engage in formative discussions on pressing social issues.

   In addition to the interpretation offered above (#2), responses to statement 3 let us know that 89% believed the subjects discussed were relevant.

4. Develop skills for communicating redemptively around difficult issues.

   In addition to the interpretations offered above (#1), responses to statement 7 suggest that 2/3 of the students in faith forum had an experience of learning that will help them better “navigate difficult conversations.”

Plans for Future Improvement

We are not certain as to whether Faith Forum will be offered again next year. Our central observation is that there needs to be a balance between content shared and conversation nurtured. In the first iteration, the emphasis was on content shared. This past spring, we focused on conversation, which seemed to go well. The Public Deliberation model provided a solid structure to our conversations, and it enabled us to stay focused and informed about the issues at hand. It also modeled for our students a way of participating in difficult community conversations that moves beyond an “adversarial” political model.

There were several times that the discussion would have benefited from having an “expert” in the room who could offer responses to some of the questions that arose, but overall, the discussion with our students was lively and insightful. We think that perhaps hearing an expert present one week and then having a discussion about the issue the following week would provide the balance we seek. We also learned that having less in the class (10 this year) was much better.
Introduction to Department

The purpose of Baylor University Missions is to create tangible opportunities for students, faculty, and staff to integrate faith, learning and service with a broad Christian worldview.

Reporting Structure

Department Mission

The Department of Spiritual Life nurtures theological depth, spiritual wholeness and missional living in students, staff and faculty. We offer integrated formational programming, transformative missional experiences, competent pastoral care and worship that is responsive to the Christian Tradition and sensitive to the culture.

The purpose of Baylor Missions is to create tangible opportunities for students, faculty and staff to integrate faith, learning and practice within a broad Christian worldview.

Department Learning Goals

In fulfillment of its mission, Baylor Missions seeks to educate students about vocation as mission, Christian responsibility, and the practice of intentionality. We help students:

- Discuss the concept of *vocation as mission*.
• Practice intentionality within the context of their mission experiences.

• Apply the practice of Christian responsibility to their mission experiences.

**Summary of Program Assessed**

During the 2014-15 academic year, Baylor Missions has assessed our missions education program. While missions education is infused throughout all that we do as Baylor Missions, our missions education program consists of multiple events throughout the year that address specific learning outcomes. These events spread awareness among our Baylor family and constituents of our Baylor mission programs, current mission trends, missiology and mission opportunities with other agencies. During Fall 2014 we held four missions education events as part of this initiative. Our first event was a Missions Education Fair where students were able to meet representatives from many different missions organizations. We also held a Missions Education Luncheon in partnership with Texas Hunger Initiative and with Suzii Paynter, keynote speaker at the 2015 Together at the Table Conference. We held a Missions Advocacy Dinner also in partnership with Texas Hunger Initiative. Our last event during the fall semester was a Fair Trade Brunch at World Cup Café.

**Learning Outcomes for Program**

Students who participate in Baylor Missions’ Mission Education program will:

• Articulate the nature of the *Missio Dei* (mission of God).

• Discuss faith informed solutions to social inequalities

• Value the reciprocity of Christian hospitality and compassion.

• Express one specific way they can live missionally.

• Critically relate their choices to their understanding of living faithfully.

**Improvements over the past 3-5 years to help achieve outcomes**
We have worked to improve missions education over the past few years in several ways to support our learning outcomes. In recent years we have been intentional to partner with other departments and academic units on campus. This has allowed us to reach a broader audience, leverage our resources and network with a variety of stakeholders. Partnering across departments has allowed us to be involved in the education of students who are not currently involved in our Global Missions programs. Working with other departments allows us to share the cost of more expensive speakers. Furthermore, brainstorming and sharing ideas for these events has allowed us to create stronger programming for students and network with others of similar values. For example, partnering with Texas Hunger Initiative and their annual event allowed for a mutual exchange of ideas to create transformational educational experiences for students this year. We have worked to create a shared value with others on campus and by doing that we are able to reach more students.

In the last few years we have continued to work to improve the Missions Fair. This year we hosted nineteen organizations compared to eleven in 2013. We have increased the diversity of practitioners exposing students to a wider variety of opportunities. At the same time, we have worked to ensure that the organizations we invite are within the broad theological framework and values of Baylor University. We have also utilized this fair to let students know about opportunities to be involved in Baylor Missions through our Global and Urban Missions programming

Additionally, we have moved away from a one week missions education event to a wider model that supports year long multi-faceted programing. In the past Missions Week hosted several events over a four or five day period. We found this to be difficult for students as they were often too busy to attend so many events in one week, and it burdened our staff resources. Our hope is that by offering events throughout the year we can reach a wider range of students and that our own programs would not be competing with one another for student’s participation. It also allows our staff to create a more balanced workflow.

In the last few years our endowment for missions education has increased which has provided support for this programming. We have been able to plan great events for students without draining our operational budget.
Assessment Methodology

In order to assess our Missions Education program we chose to assess two different education events utilizing two different research tools. We created separate tools in order to tailor questions to the topic and type of event. First we assessed an event known as the Missions Advocacy Dinner through a focus group. We chose to do a qualitative study to answer the question, “How does an event about advocacy provide students with an opportunity to discuss faith informed solutions to social inequalities?” Then we assessed our Fair Trade Brunch at World Cup Cafe through a mixed methods survey. We utilized a mixed methods survey method using the Campus Labs Baseline program. The same Baseline survey was used as both a pre and post-test. The learning outcomes that we focused on include: [students will be able to ] 1. Discuss faith informed solutions to social inequalities and 2. Critically relate their choices to their understanding of living faithfully.

The survey was aimed at measuring the students’ abilities to critically relate their choices to their understanding of living faithfully and the focus group questions measured students ability to discuss faith informed solutions to social inequalities after their participation in the advocacy dinner.

Focus Group Questions:

• Prior to this event, what did you know about how individuals and/or churches can address social inequality?

• Prior to this event, what did you know about advocacy?

• How have you participated in advocacy prior to this activity?

• As a Christian, do you feel you have a responsibility to address social inequality?
  
  o Why or Why not?

• How do we as Christians address it?

• Do you think this event gave you more practical understanding of how you as an individual can address social inequality?
  
  o Why or Why not?
Do you feel the church has a role in addressing social inequality?
  - Yes/No
  - Why or Why not?
  - How?

Do you feel the government has a role in addressing social inequality?
  - Yes or No?
  - Why or Why not?

What do you feel your role is in bringing awareness about social inequality to the government?

What is the most important thing you learned during this event?

Survey Questions:

- Baylor ID number:
- How many semesters have you been involved with Baylor Missions (through Urban Missions, going on BUMission trips or attending other Missions Education Events)?
- How would you define fair trade?
- How often in the last month have you purchased a fair trade item?
- How do you know if something is fair trade?
- What is fair trade trying to address?
- What are the top three (3) factors that influence your purchasing choice?
  - Why these three
- Does your Christian faith influence your purchasing choices?
  - Why or Why not?
- How do the following passages of Scripture relate to your purchasing choices?
  - "He has shown you, O mortal, what is good. And what does the Lord require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God." - Micah 6:8
  - "Teacher, which is the greatest commandment in the Law?" Jesus replied: 'Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.' This is the first and
greatest commandment. And the second is like it: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.' - Matthew 22:36-39

Analysis

The data from the focus groups was to be recorded by the interviewer and then transcribed electronically by the interviewer. After the data was transcribed, coding was completed by hand by the lead research team. The researcher then assessed for common themes and included the results in a final written report that will be placed on file in the missions department. The data from the mixed methods surveys was collected via baseline. Then the research team assessed for common themes of learning through the use of coding. The results of the mixed methods survey were added to the final written report. The report will be used to inform decisions regarding the implementation of future missions education programs.

Results

Twelve students out of the sixty attendees participated in the focus groups providing helpful data for analysis. A full printout of the transcribed group interviews has been uploaded to baseline and can be provided upon request. Out of these twelve participants, three could refer to knowledge of churches addressing social inequality before this event. There were varied responses regarding the participants’ knowledge of advocacy prior to this event. These include an understanding that it involves fighting for other people who might not be able to fight for themselves, an awareness that you can be an advocate through CASA, an understanding that advocacy involved telling people about things, and even a negative connotation with advocates as people who are rude and outspoken. Four of the twelve participants named ways that they had participated in advocacy prior to this event. These included going on a mission trip, serving on a Baylor Urban Missions Team, advocating for Texas Hunger Initiative in Washington D.C. by conversing with representatives for the McLennan area, and fundraising for mission trips.

When reflecting on learning from the event, many of these students were able to provide input about a Christian’s responsibility to address social inequality and reasons for doing so. Eight individuals gave reasons for why they believe Christians are responsible to address social inequality. These included that advocacy is
part of loving others and we are called to love others as well as a belief that Christians are called to seek justice and addressing social inequality is a form of that. Other reasons included a belief that God calls Christians to speak for the basic things of life and loving everyone in that way, and that Christ came as an advocate for people and if we want to follow in Christ’s footsteps that we are called to advocate for others as well. No respondents reported that they did not feel as though it is a Christian’s responsibility to address social inequalities.

Seven participants reported reasons that the Missions Education Advocacy Dinner gave them a more practical understanding of how they can address social inequality as an individual. These include learning that you can make a difference only as one college student through political advocacy, praying for others, treating all individuals with respect, engaging in service with others through a church or organization. Other suggestions included serving through Urban Missions, voting, and speaking out on Twitter. Several participants provided reasons that the Church has a role in addressing social inequality. A couple of individuals indicted that they had already addressed that Christians had a role in addressing social inequality and that Christians make up the church and therefore the Church has a responsibility. A few respondents indicated that they have not seen churches respond to this responsibility in very many ways but that they saw its importance. Two participants stated a belief that that the Church needs to be involved in helping people be empowered to rise out of inequities rather than just looked upon as charity. No respondents voiced that they felt that the Church should not have a role in addressing social inequalities.

Three students provided reasons as to why they felt that the government has a role in addressing social inequality. These include a belief that our government’s role is to protect its people, a belief that the government should have a greater role in the Church than this because it has authority over the entire nation rather than a subset, and the belief that it is the government’s job to address every person equally. The participants continued in this interview to provide learning from the event about their role in bringing awareness about social inequality to the government. They included actions such as writing a letter, signing
petitions, letting people know that something needs to be done, educating self about issues, and speaking to their representatives.

Participants provided a myriad of answers to what they believed the most important thing that they learned during the advocacy event. Some of the answers include that they learned that advocacy is a Christian thing and that it is important, that college students can have a voice in advocacy, they were reminded that the political side of advocacy matters, the importance of being informed before voting, learning that no concern is too small to speak with a representative about, learning that not everyone has the same opportunities as one another, and learning that advocacy is part of what we are supposed to do as Christians. Other learning displayed through these interviews include that advocacy is something that can be done by a church and that advocacy can be done without polarizing people or opinions.

Twelve students participated in the pre-test survey about the Missions Education event involving Fair Trade, and nine students participated in the post-test survey. Only six respondents completed both surveys. Of the fourteen individuals that participated in the survey, nine of them have only been involved with missions programs for one year. The data is saved on baseline and a full print out of the responses from both the pre-test and post-test can be provided upon request.

Of the twelve respondents to the pre-test, five students were able to articulate that fair trade is connected to people being paid a fair wage to the products produced. Three participants stated that they did not know what fair trade is. One respondent connected fair trade to sustainability. One of these twelve respondents indicated that they bought a fair trade item more than once during the previous month. Half of the respondents indicated that they were unsure how to recognize an item that is Fair Trade. When students were asked for the top three factors that influenced their purchasing choice, the top three answers that were selected include affordable price, if it is on sale, and the brand of the product. Half of the respondents stated that their Christian faith does not have much of an influence on their purchasing choices. The final question of the survey asked respondents how two passages of Scripture, Micah 6:8 and Matthew 22:36-39, relate to their purchasing choices. Of the ten respondents, two suggested that they do not relate at all. A couple of people
related the passages to spending habits and giving money to others. Two respondents connected these passages to decisions to purchase from people who are working in fair and ethical conditions.

Of the nine participants to the post-test, five students completed the entire questionnaire. Of the nine who attempted to define fair trade, eight respondents were able to articulate that fair trade ensures that producers are being paid a fair trade and four of these were also able to connect fair trade to safer work environments. All nine respondents accurately reported that fair trade can be identified through symbols on the label. Of the seven respondents that articulated what fair trade is trying to address, all of them were able to provide at least one correct issue that is being addressed such as poverty, exploitation, fair wages, forced labor, and poor work conditions. Five participants of the post test responded to how the two passages of Scripture related to their purchasing choices. Of these five, three of these were able to relate these passages’ call to love others and living justly to having a concern for the makers of the purchasing items and seeking to only purchase items made in good conditions by people who are paid fair wages. The other two related these two passages to stewardship.

**Interpretation**

These results indicate several ways in which students were able to consider and discuss faith informed solutions to social inequalities through their participation in Missions Education events. This is evident by the respondents’ discussion of learning in the focus groups about advocacy and addressing social inequalities. One student stated, “I learned that the Church can be a unit for addressing bigger issues [of social inequalities] at a bigger level with the government and such.” Another student while reflecting on her learning from a Missions Education event stated, “I think as Christians that we are called to seek justice and defend people that cannot always defend themselves and addressing social inequality is definitely a form of that.” Through this event, students were able to begin understanding that Christians and the Church have a responsibility to address social inequalities because that is part of the call to love others and live justly. From this event students were able to give many ways that Christians can address social inequalities. They were able to
connect seeking justice to speaking out on others’ behalf. They expressed that prayer is an important part of
addressing social inequalities as well as advocacy through political and or informal means. One respondent
clearly articulated after this event that the Christian faith should shape the way that we seek to help people
who fall victim to these social inequalities. She states that “I think the Church needs to start moving the
direction of not [viewing] the poor as charity, but actually empowering them.” Another important faith
informed aspect of addressing social inequality that these respondents pointed out is recognizing all peoples’
humanity regardless of circumstance and teaching others to do the same.

Respondents to the fair trade survey also indicated learning about faith informed solutions to social
inequalities. After the fair trade missions education event, all respondents were able to articulate a clear
understanding of what fair trade it and how it seeks to address the social inequality of poor working
conditions and unfair wages. After this event, four of the five Christian respondents articulated that their
Christian faith does or should influence their purchasing choices. Three of five respondents articulated that
Scripture passages indicate a calling to care for all of God’s people, to love neighbor, and to ask justly and that
this should influence the way that these respondents spend money and what they decide to purchase.

The results from these studies also indicate ways in which students are able to critically relate their
choices to their understanding of living faithfully. After the advocacy dinner, a lot of the respondents reflected
on the importance of their awareness of and involvement with the political side of advocacy whether through
voting for the cause of speaking out for others or speaking to a representative about an issue of injustice.
They were able to connect that their choice to vote and speak with a representative does in fact matter and
that this choice can be used to love others. One respondent spoke to a major point of learning from the
advocacy dinner stating, “[I was reminded] of the importance of being an active and engaged citizen...it is
important that I participate in what is going on.”

The results from the pre and post tests for the fair trade missions education event indicate that this
event helped students to realize that their purchasing choices directly relate to the ways that live out their
Christian faith. In the post–test, one student wrote “I should be more mindful and intentional about
supporting companies that treat their workers fairly, because people should be treated with dignity and respect as God sees us.” Another student wrote, “if I buy products by companies who support immoral actions, then I too am supporting those actions.”

It is evident that these events provided transformational learning opportunities for students in attendance. As a department (and division) that values excellence and continuous improvement we want to be mindful of areas of improvement. Since we have several learning outcomes, each event will not be focused on learning related to every learning outcome. It was difficult to establish an assessment methodology that would provide clear feedback on each of the learning outcomes related to missions education. In conjunction with our assessment team representative we decided it would be adequate to focus on two events and the learning outcomes they were seeking to meet. A gap in this project is that all of the outcomes were not measured and this is something that needs to be addressed in future

Plans for Future Improvement

As mentioned in preceding sections, in the last few years we have made changes to our missions education program to assist in meeting our learning outcomes. We have created cross-departmental partnerships and modified the structure of our traditional Missions Week to fit students’ schedules. This assessment helped verify that these partnerships and learning experiences provided our students with the learning expressed in this department’s goals. Since this has proved to be a successful model, in the future we seek to expand opportunities for further partnerships to create additional missions education events. We anticipate continuing to help students think through what it means to live missionally by critically relating their choices to their understanding of living faithfully and discussed faith informed solutions to social inequalities through providing reflective experiences through our Urban and Global missions programs as well as further events created for educational purposes. Partnering allowed us to provide high quality programs that led to meaningful learning for students this fall. A plan for future growth includes continuing to focus on offering high quality events that provide transformational education and increasing the frequency of these
opportunities within the confines of staff capacity and budgetary concerns. In the future we plan to continue current partnerships as well as identify new campus partners that would allow us to leverage resources and create shared value. This will allow us to reach a broader range of students as well as host a greater number of events in future years with our current staff capacity.
Spiritual Life: Department of Formation
Freshman Retreat Assessment Report 2015
Practicing Community: The Freshman Retreat Experience

Kristen Richardson, Director of the Department of Formation
Josh Ritter, Assistant Director of the Department of Formation
Allison Everett, Graduate Apprentice
Baylor University
Introduction to Department

The guiding action of the Formation Department is to be a resource of spiritual growth for all students, faculty and staff.

Reporting Structure

Department Mission

We nurture theological depth, spiritual wholeness and missional living in students, staff and faculty. We offer integrated formational programming, transformative missional experiences, competent pastoral care and worship that is responsive to the Christian Tradition and sensitive to the culture.

Department Learning Goals

In fulfillment of its mission, the Department of Formation nurtures students’ engagement with Christian responsibility, theological perspectives, vocation and calling, and spiritual practices. We help students:

- Relate Christian hospitality to Christian responsibility.
- Analyze how theological perspectives impact worldviews.
- Relate the concepts of vocation and calling.
- Apply spiritual practices to their faith development.

Summary of Program and Learning Outcomes Assessed
The Freshman Retreat is a two day, off-campus retreat experience designed to connect First-Year Students to meaningful ways of understanding their spiritual identity formation and development (in the context of their transition to college).

With this study, the Department for Formation seeks to discover the breadth and depth of learning first-year students experience on the Freshman Retreat in relation to spiritual practices, specifically highlighting the spiritual practice of building and sustaining community. Through the multi-year retreat model, Formation retreats are designed to foster holistic spiritual development in a way that is appropriate to students’ stages of faith, and the Freshman Retreat is the first attempt at teaching students spiritual practices and at emphasizing the importance that community has in their lives. Freshman Retreat is also pedagogically oriented towards the significant role sustained community can and does have in the life of a college student. In this study, we will use a qualitative assessment methodology, which focuses on the use of pre- and post-assessment questionnaires.

We will be examining three specific learning outcomes. Students will: 1) discuss how spiritual practices create a sense of belonging, 2) engage in spiritual practices that are meaningful to students, and 3) relate spiritual practices to self-awareness.

Overall, we hope to determine the extent to which students are learning spiritual practices, are incorporating them into their own lives, and are specifically engaging in the practice of intentional community.

**Improvements over the past 3-5 years to help achieve outcomes**

Since 2008, individual retreat surveys have been handed out, but a formal study of the overall Freshman Retreat program has never been completed. The following improvements/changes have been made to Freshman Retreat over the past few years:

- Widespread publicity of Freshman Retreat through Baylor Line Camp
- Continuity between Baylor Line Camp and the overall freshman experience
- Focus on moving from theory to practice, i.e., integration of abstract concepts such as, calling, community and wholeness into everyday spiritual practices
- Emphasis on training small group leaders
- Breakout sessions led by experts in their field
- Various worship experiences from different Christian traditions

**Assessment Methodology**

Qualitative surveys/questionnaires, both before and after the Freshman Retreat, were the best way for us to get honest and timely feedback from our approximately 200 retreat participants (not including student leaders and staff). As well, we received the greatest possible participation by proctoring the survey while participants were still with the retreat group.

In terms of our methodology, we used a qualitative analysis, in order to hear specific details from students regarding the felt impact from the Freshman Retreat. To this end, we were trying to gain answers to the following question:

• Research Question: To what extent does participation in the Freshman Retreat impact participants’ spiritual formation? To what extent are our outcomes reflected through the Freshman Retreat?
Qualitative research is the most effective tool for our purposes in the assessment of the Freshman Retreat. Specifically, a questionnaire is useful to understand spiritual formation. Moreover, the body of research surrounding spirituality and formation is overwhelmingly qualitative.

Furthermore, we are using a set of open-ended questions and Likert scaling that provide connections back to our outcomes. The answers explain what we are actually doing and how or where students are learning from our program. We are now in the process of using this data to make the necessary changes in our program in order to meet our outcomes in a more intentional manner.

**Analysis**

- Pre-assessment data was collected from 188 participants.
- Post-assessment data was collected from 175 participants.
- Hand coding of our qualitative data was completed by Allison Everett for both the pre-assessment and post-assessment.
- A final report of the results will be written and placed on file in the Formation Department. This report will be used to inform decisions regarding the implementation of future freshman retreats and overall assessment of subsequent retreats.

**Results/Interpretations – Pre-Assessment**

Participants were given a pre-retreat assessment with five open-ended questions at the retreat registration. Participants had the opportunity to express their thoughts coming into the retreat based on advertising and personal expectations. Two of the questions were logistical in nature and the other questions were intended to allow for an understanding of student expectations, and the effectiveness of our advertising process in its portrayal of the Freshman Retreat. The results from these three questions allow us to better understand what the student is wanting in an experience as well as gain a general understanding as to whether or not our presentation of the retreat materials is an adequate representation of what actually occurs/what we intend to occur on the Freshman Retreat. These three open-ended questions are listed below:

- **Question 1:** What interests you about the retreat?
- **Question 2:** What do you hope to learn on the retreat?
- **Question 3:** What do you hope to experience?

**Question 1:** What interests you about the retreat?

Responses for Question 1 clustered around the words: *meeting new people, God, spiritual, Freshmen*, and *Pine Cove*.

Each of these words links closely to the advertising and recruitment that was done for the Freshman Retreat. Students were introduced to the Freshman Retreat through Baylor Orientation, Baylor Line Camp, emails, fliers, chapel announcements, chapel tables, and personal connections with former retreat participants.

These responses highlight the learning outcomes we associate with the Freshman Retreat, specifically the practice of intentional community. Student interest in *meeting new people* is the foremost answer to this question, and it reflects the desire students feel to form connection with their new community at Baylor. The Freshman Retreat took place Friday, September 12, through Saturday, September 13, 2014. This was the third weekend of the semester and was a time when
students were continuing to establish initial connections and friendships. By signing up for the Freshman Retreat and voicing this interest in meeting new people, first-year students used our retreat to establish a community, as is one of the clear intentions of the retreat and a divisional goal. Whether or not students responded positively regarding the formation of this community will be discussed within the Post-Assessment section.

Additional emphasis on the words God, spiritual, freshman, and Pine Cove indicate that the intentions of the Freshman Retreat are communicated clearly. This is a spiritual program with a focus on connecting with God and community, and it is oriented towards the freshman experience. Thus, these are interests to the students that are attracted to and attend the retreat. The location at Pine Cove is also a draw for students due to students already having experiences related to the camp ground either through summer camp and/or other experiences facilitated by Pine Cove. It can be inferred that name draw for a location may be important in subsequent retreat planning; however, this is not definitive. Pine Cove is an established location and experience in certain spheres. In future planning, then, additional research of a location may be beneficial in our recruiting practices.

Here we have included meaningful quotes from the responses to pre-assessment Question 1 to further highlight the student interest and perhaps intentionality in signing up for and attending the Freshman Retreat.

**Meaningful Quotes:**

- “Meeting new people” was a response from multiple retreat participants.
- “The community that will take place and a weekend to relax through activities”
- “A chance to get away and learn more about God; A place to focus with less distractions, and connect with Jesus”
- “I heard Pine Cove was beautiful and the opportunity to make fun memories and get out of my comfort zone will help me.”
- “I want to get involved in spiritual life here at Baylor and I want to make more friends in a spiritual setting”
- “opportunity of refreshing my faith and making God glorifying friendships”
- “I love retreats. They are such a great way to unwind and put all my focus on the lord and his great works. And meeting new people who I share my faith with. Getting to worship with community.”

**Question 2:** What do you hope to learn on the retreat?

Responses for Question 2 clustered around the words: God, learn, college, faith, hope, relationship, grow, closer, people, friends, life, spiritual, and Baylor.

Each of the words emphasized in response to Question 2 highlight student intention and expectation in signing up for the retreat. Words such as, relationship, closer, people, and friends align with our intention for the Freshman Retreat to be a place of intentional community. Whereas words like, Baylor, spiritual, and life are direct reflections of our advertising flyer and department. Compared to the data collected in the post-assessment response on what students learned in breakout sessions, this list of words is more generalized and encompassing. The responses to Question 1 on the post-assessment (breakout learning question) are much more program and session specific. In the future, assessment of the retreat might be best served by providing the retreat participants with the same questions before and after the retreat and conducting an intervention study.
Meaningful Quotes:
- “I guess I just want to fall deeper in love with God and my class/school; There is no specific lesson I want to learn”
- “How to hear God’s direction; What do I do in specific situations when I’m discouraged”
- “How to further pursue my relationship with Christ and feel closer to knowing my calling”
- “I hope to learn more about the faith/community at Baylor and getting a chance to tap into God”
- “Worshiping the Lord in a new community at Baylor and maybe how my spiritual growth will differ at college.”

Question 3: What do you hope to experience?

Responses for Question 3 clustered around the words: fun, God, new, friendships, experience, community, friends, hope, worship, connection, fellowship, faith, and relationships.

Question 3 of the pre-assessment highlights student expectations for their experiences. Like the other pre-assessment responses, an emphasis on community and relationship building are prevalent. Fun was the most common response and expectation of the Freshman Retreat experience. Responses to this question will be helpful in continual intentionality in retreat planning and awareness of what students hope to experience.

Meaningful Quotes:
- “I hope to feel that God is with me and that I am in a community of believers”
- “A sense of community with my class”
- “I hope to make lasting friendships!”
- “Deeper connection with God and I want to understand my calling. I also want to meet new people.”
- “Jesus and friendship and community”
- “I hope to build new solid relationships”

Results/Interpretations- Post-Assessment

Participants were given a post-retreat assessment to complete on the bus ride back from the Freshman Retreat. The assessment addressed logistical, programmatic, and learning outcome focused questions. Students were asked a variety of question types including open-ended response and Likert scaling questions. Four key questions were utilized for analysis in relation to the outcomes being assessed in this project. Also, an additional comments section was utilized as a place for participants to further add to our understanding of their experience. Responses from this section are included as well. Listed below are the questions as they appeared on the post-retreat assessment:

- **Question 1:** What did you learn from your breakout session?
- **Question 2:** On the Freshman Retreat, I established relationships that I intend to invest in throughout the semester? (1=Least True, 6=Most True)
  
- **Question 3:** The activities and practices on the Freshman Retreat contributed to building community. (1=Least True, 6=Most True)
Question 1: What did you learn from your breakout session?

Responses for Question 1 clustered around the words: *community, God, prayer, yoga, calling, importance, discipleship, faith, church, worship,* and *creative.* The majority of these words relate to the titles of the breakout sessions that were offered on the Freshman Retreat.

Breakout sessions were self-elected groups that students were able to choose from on Friday, September 12, 2014, the day we left for Pine Cove. Unlike small groups, which were randomly assigned ahead of time, students had complete agency in the selection of their breakout session. Sessions were led by Baylor Staff, Resident Chaplains, and additional graduate/seminary students. Groups ranged in number because of individual selection, but groups were capped typically at 20 participants in order to maintain a healthy and engaged group dynamic.

The foremost takeaway from the breakout sessions from the students was the *importance of community.* Just as students expressed an interest in the retreat because of the *community* element and expected to experience *community,* this expectation tended to be positively learned about and experienced in our breakout sessions. One student said that they learned, “Community is one of the most important things.” Therefore, the breakout sessions reinforced our intent and goal for the practice of intentional *community* through the expression of self-reported student learning.

Additionally, through their breakout session of choice, a student was introduced to a new spiritual practice. For example, *Prayer & Yoga* was one of our most popular breakout sessions, and students responded positively in learning about mindful meditation and *prayer* while doing *yoga.* One student responded to Question 1 that they learned, “Yoga is a great way to be calm and focus your energy on God.” The quote exemplifies that the spiritual practice of *yoga* was meaningful to this student and allowed for a sense of focus.

Another breakout session introduced the spiritual practice of *creative* arts and crafts as *worship.* A student that attended this breakout session stated that they learned, “We all have some form of creativity in us because we were created in the image of a creative God.” This quote highlights the meaningful spiritual practice experienced by the student as well as a sense of self-awareness in relationship to *God.* Through the conversation in the breakout session and the spiritual practice of art, the student learned more about themselves and gained an awareness of self in the image of *God.*

Other breakout sessions built upon *calling, discipleship, church, worship, and faith.* These terms were likely experienced by students in other areas of life and/or through other programming efforts, but their impact was felt by students through their breakout sessions and included as places of learning. *Calling,* in particular, is an emphasis in spiritual formation and emphasized throughout Baylor. One student said they learned of calling, “God has a plan and a purpose for each of us. My calling will be relevant to me in time.”

Learning by students in the breakout sessions also strongly related to a sense of belonging and self-awareness through the spiritual practices experienced. A student who attended the *Prayer & Yoga* breakout stated, “[I learned about] the importance of being in tune with yourself to really have a successful prayer life.” Through this student’s practice of yoga, a greater sense of self was experienced. A student who attended the *Faith* and the Arts session learned, “I am not my
downfalls and I am not alone.” The spiritual practice of creating art and the conversations that took place during that session built upon this student’s sense of belonging and awareness of self. Several other students remarked on the different ways that people may pray as a point of learning. In those comments, prayer provides a place of belonging and understanding that not everyone practices in the same way.

An addition to the majority of positive comments regarding learning in the breakout sessions, a few students expressed learning “nothing new,” but having a “good conversation” and/or learning things through other programming. With these comments in mind, it will be important to better define our breakout sessions and their content moving forward and/or to provide clear expectations for breakout session leaders. Because each student attended a different breakout session overall generalizations may be difficult to make, but we do have data indicating which breakout session each student attended. We can decide which breakout sessions may be repetitive programming and/or may need more direction based on these connections. As we continue to strive for the practice of intentional community, being aware and addressing these negative comments will be important.

**Additional Meaningful Quotes from Question 1:**
- “Spiritual practices are actual practices for when we need to use fruits of the spirit in real life.”
- “That we need to take time to take care of ourselves.”
- “Having a relationship with God in college requires intentional, consistent effort”
- “As we are on our own, we need to take care of ourselves and trust God in our journey through college.”

**Question 2:** On the Freshman Retreat, I established relationships that I intend to invest in throughout the semester? (1=Least True, 6=Most True)

Responses for Question 2 provided a mean score of 4.81, a mode of 6, and a median of 5. Question 2 addresses the spiritual practice of community that we want both to practice and to establish on the Freshman Retreat. With 88% of students responding favorably to this general question, we can assume that relationships were established on the Freshman Retreat that lasted beyond the retreat experience. Student responses to the open-ended questions expound upon this generalization with the specifics on how and where these relationships were established during the retreat experience.
Question 3: The activities and practices on the Freshman Retreat contributed to building community. (1=Least True, 6=Most True)

Responses for Question 3 provided a mean score of 5.02, a mode of 6, and a median of 5. Like Question 2, Question 3 also provides a general response that links directly to the spiritual practice of community. Establishing community was a core purpose for the Freshman Retreat as well as a student expectation. With 92% of students responding favorably to this question, we can feel confident in the overall community practiced on the Freshman Retreat while simultaneously being aware of the individualized experiences of each student. As an extension of this question, open-ended questions provide a place for the individual student experience to be expressed.

Question 4: My favorite part of Freshman Retreat was?

Responses to Question 4 clustered around the words: small group, free time, worship, people, box, breakout, meeting, and friends.

Small Groups were a community that we worked to create on the Freshman Retreat. Groups were randomly assigned as students signed up. Groups were different sizes depending on attendance; groups were capped at ten members. Small group leaders were selected from former retreat participants and other campus student leaders. Small group leaders attended a group training, were given guidelines for conversations to have whilst on the retreat, and they were encouraged to connect with their group members via email or social media before the actual retreat. Small groups were a significant part of the schedule on the Freshman Retreat. Groups met four times during the retreat, and were intended to be a place for meaningful and formative conversation. One student said, “I liked meeting my small group leader and getting to grow in community with friends!” Small groups illustrated the intentional community that we wanted students to experience at the retreat. Additional students commented on the “depth of conversation” in small groups and the “fast connection” that some experienced. One student commented “my leader was really invested in each of us and knew how to connect to us personally.” The spiritual practice of intentional formative conversation assisted in allowing students to feel a sense of belonging, and it was meaningful based on it being the “favorite part” of the retreat as reported by students.

Some students did comment on the small size and/or lack of gender diversity within their group, so their sense of community and connection came from other activities, such as free time or breakout sessions, but these negatives could be remedied by putting into place a procedure for reorganizing.
Free time was provided to students on both Friday and Saturday. Structured activities such as a movie and recreation were available during these times, but students had the choice of what to do. One student remarked that free time was their favorite part of the retreat “because I got to know people with similar interests”. The intention of free time was to allow for students to have that time to retreat and to focus on practices that were meaningful to them outside of the more structured small group or breakout session time.

Group worship occurred three times throughout the course of the retreat and was a favorite for many students. Worship involved a variety of music and time for reflection. Specifically, a worship session was held with a box activity. The box activity engaged all three learning outcomes associated with the Freshman Retreat; it was a meaningful spiritual practice that created a sense of belonging and self-awareness. Students built a paper box, wrote things of importance e.g. struggles, fears, etc., on the outside of the box, and were given the opportunity to pray for themselves and others throughout the experience. One student said, “I found [the boxes] a great time to reflect on my relationship with God. I cried a little because I found it very emotional and the experience really helped me see God’s role in my life.” Another student said, “I absolutely loved the box activity. Praying for my classmates was really awesome.” The box activity provided a potentially new type of worship experience and/or spiritual practice for students that we plan to utilize in subsequent retreats.

Clusters of meeting, people, and friends continue to reinforce the importance of community established on the retreat. Positive student response regarding these words are in alignment with our overall intention for community.

Additional Meaningful Quotes:

- “My leader was really invested in each of us and knew how to connect to us personally.”
- “Worship sessions! And people sharing their freshman experiences.”
- “Just relaxing and talking with other people with like minds, being spiritually fed”
- “Making new friends and being pushed outside my comfort zone.”
- “Getting to know small group and others whether it was during meetings or free time.”

Additional Comments: Please add any additional comments:

Responses in the Additional Comments section clustered around: great, retreat, worship, thank, small group, longer, movie, time, songs. Participants utilized this question as a suggestions section: raising our attention to positive points and meaningful experiences on the retreat as well as areas that may need improvement.

Student responses reinforced the importance of community and the small group that they established on the Freshman Retreat. A few specifically called out their small group leader in regards to their greatness in forming connections within their group. The majority of students responded positively to the community established whereas a few had different experiences. One student said, “We didn’t do any activities to get close to each other and it wasn’t what I expected.” This specific student responded to other open-ended questions in the survey asking for more structure and direction with regards to the entire retreat experience, such as, providing a theme. We recognize that each student receives an individualized experience based on many factors, and along with the majority opinion, individual suggestions will be taken under advisement for future Freshman Retreats.
Additional student critiques addressed movie choices, worship song choice, and a desire for a longer time. These suggestions will be taken under advisement for future retreat planning, and we will continue to reach out to freshman regarding subsequent-year retreats, which are longer and more in depth.

Overall, it might be beneficial to speak more intentionally through retreat promotion about what to expect out of the Freshman Retreat. Although the majority of student expectations were in line with our intent, the post-assessment response leaves some room for improvement.

Meaningful Quotes:

- “This was a great experience. I met wonderful people and I feel so much more connected to the Baylor community. Keep up the good work. :)”
- “Fun Retreat! Wish it had been longer.”
- “Great time! AMAZING FOOD, worship might be nice if used more contemporary songs we know really well.”
- “In regards to small group leader: She was the BEST!!”
- “Maybe incorporate more biblical application into the sessions, worship, etc.”
- “I think a morning quiet time would be awesome. Maybe even Friday-Sunday. I love Lindsay (small group leader)! Thank you!!”

Overall Interpretations

Overall, building community is the focus and the outcome of the Freshman Retreat experience. Through analysis of student responses, community is their expectation coming into the retreat and what they ultimately learn and experience on the retreat. We recognize that this is an overall feeling and not what is expressed by every individual, which leaves us a place of growth for continued retreats. Spiritual practices were not necessarily the student expectation coming into the retreat, but they were experienced throughout small groups, breakout sessions, worship, and free time. Through our assessment of student responses, the following learning outcomes are happening during the Freshman Retreat:

1. Discuss how spiritual practices create a sense of belonging
2. Engage in spiritual practices that are meaningful to them
3. Relate spiritual practices to self-awareness

In addition, our intention of addressing these specific outcomes and the broader focus of practicing intentional community, are evident in both our programming materials and student responses. Based on overall student responses, the small group experience on the Freshman Retreat was and will continue to be paramount in continuing to reach toward our learning outcomes for this program.

Plans for Future Improvement

- Continue to enhance small group experiences
- Continue to improve small group leader training
- Help students in realization of variety of spiritual practices
- Ongoing connection with students
- Follow up opportunities to Freshman Retreat attendees
REFERENCES

A list of current literature is presented below, as a means of gathering a body of knowledge helpful to the practice of spiritual life departments on university campuses:


APPENDICES

Pre-Assessment Questions:

Freshman Retreat Preliminary Questionnaire!

- How did you hear about the Spiritual Life Freshman Retreat?
- What about the retreat interests you?
- What do you hope for learn from the retreat?
- What do you hope to experience on the retreat?
- Does the website provide helpful information?
- Please add any other comments about your experience learning about, signing up, and receiving updates on the Freshman Retreat:

Post Assessment Questions:

Freshman Retreat Post Assessment
Tell Us Your Thoughts!!
How did you hear about Freshman Retreat? ____________________________

Please Rate the Following! (1 = Poor, 6 = Excellent)

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What breakout session did you attend? ____________________________

Please rate your level of satisfaction (1=Poor, 6=Excellent) with the variety of breakout session offered on the Freshman Retreat.

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Please rate your level of satisfaction with the quality of your breakout session. (1=Poor, 6=Excellent)

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What did you learn from your breakout session?
______________________________________________________________________

Any suggestions for future breakout sessions?
______________________________________________________________________

I was satisfied with the number of people in my small group. Please rate (1=Least True, 6=Most True)

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My small group leader was prepared for the Freshman Retreat and facilitated our conversations well. (1=Least True, 6=Most True)

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My small group leader made an effort to get to know me and encouraged me to participate. (1=Least True, 6=Most True)
After attending the Freshman Retreat, I want to participate in other retreat opportunities in the future. (1=Least True, 6=Most True)

What might keep you from participating in future retreats with Spiritual Life? Please Explain: __________________________________________________________

_____________________________________________________________________

After attending the Freshman Retreat, I would direct someone to the Bobo Spiritual Life Center? (1=Least True, 6=Most True)  

After attending the Freshman Retreat, I can explain Spiritual Life’s role on the Baylor campus? (1=Least True, 6=Most True)  

After attending the Freshman Retreat, I can name two members of the Spiritual Life Staff? (Please Circle)

Yes 

No

On the Freshman Retreat, I established relationships that intend to invest in throughout the semester? (1=Least True, 6=Most True)  

The activities and practices on the Freshman Retreat contributed to building community. (1=Least True, 6=Most True)  

My favorite part of Freshman Retreat was?

_________________________________________________________________________________________________________________

Please add any additional comments:

_____________________________________________________________________

______________________________________________________________________
What about the retreat interests you?

What do you hope to learn on the retreat?

What do you hope to experience on the retreat?
What did you learn from your breakout session?

What was your favorite part of the retreat?
Additional Comments:

Freshman Retreat Flyer:
BAYLOR FRESHMAN RETREAT
SEPTEMBER 12TH-SEPTEMBER 13TH
PINE COVE, OUTBACK
COST: $85
OVERNIGHT STAY, RETREAT T-SHIRT, 4 MEALS, TRANSPORTATION, & MORE
WWW.BAYLOR.EDU/SPRITUALLIFE/FORMATION
HOSTED BY THE DEPARTMENT FOR FORMATION

RAY_SMALL@BAYLOR.EDU
The Degree to Which Chapel Inspires and Equips Students to Transform the World

Baylor University Chapel
Worship & Chapel Assessment Report 2015

Ryan G. Richardson
Director of the Department of Worship & Chapel
Baylor University
The Degree to Which Chapel Inspires and Equips Students to Transform the World

University Chapel is a singularly unique program in the Student Life context. Dating back to Baylor’s beginnings, chapel is a place where the values and vision of our University are “broad-cast”… they are cast in a broad way. As Jesus envisions in “The Parable of the Sower,” chapel leaders are throwing seeds about every Monday and Wednesday to 4,000 students, with 4,000 stories, with 4,000 different capacities to allow the seeds to take root. Understanding this, we have come to believe that our goals and outcomes must remain somewhat broad.

Department of Worship Structure

Department Mission

The Worship and Chapel department understands the overall mission of Spiritual Life as integral to our own programming. Our mission is to nurture theological depth, spiritual wholeness, and missional living in the students, staff, and faculty of Baylor University. We do this by offering thoughtful worship experiences that are responsive to the Christian Tradition and sensitive to the culture.

Department Learning Goals

In fulfillment of its mission, the Department of Worship & Chapel nurtures students’ theological understanding of Baylor’s historic identity, as well as students’ spiritual awareness of themselves and their community. As a result of participating in Baylor Chapel, enrolled students will experience a variety of programs shaped by the Divisional Goals of Student Life: calling, wholeness, community, and citizenship.
Moreover, as a result of participating in Baylor Chapel, students’ spiritual formation will be positively impacted by worship and programs that nurture theological depth, spiritual wholeness, and missional living.

**Summary of Program and Learning Outcomes**

- The purpose of this project is to assess the Chapel program at Baylor University. Specifically, this project is assessing the degree to which Chapel is accomplishing the four goals of the Student Life division concerning citizenship. The goals read explain that the Division of Student Life:
  - 1. Supports students as they discern God’s paths, plans, and purposes.
     - We help students discover calling.
  - 2. Fosters healthy living, joyful experience, passionate scholarship, and depth of faith.
     - We develop the whole student.
  - 3. Encourages meaningful relationships, Christian hospitality, and charity in all things.
     - We build community.
  - 4. Inspires and equips students to transform the world.
     - We cultivate global citizenship.

The corresponding outcomes in the Worship department state that students and others who participate in Chapel will:

1. Share in a common experience that is over 165 years old. More specifically, students will report feeling connected to a “common experience” in Chapel that has been shared by students since the founding of Baylor.

2. Be challenged to use their gifts and resources to bless God’s world. This component includes a personal awareness of their own unique giftedness.

3. Feel nurtured towards growth, healing, balance of life, and depth of faith. More tangibly, students will report an increase in their knowledge regarding their own spiritual well-being.
4. Become more mindful of the world’s need. For the purposes of this study, a student’s mindfulness refers to the ability to see beyond oneself—to be able to consider the needs of others and to actively do so. Mindfulness carries with it elements of selflessness, humility, and care for others.

Primary Research Question

Does participation in Chapel help shape students’ perceptions of themselves and the world regarding their calling, their understanding of wholeness, their recognition of community, and their participation as citizens? If so, how?

Improvements over the past 3-5 years to help achieve outcomes

There have been continual efforts to improve Baylor Chapel over the past 3-5 years. One of the most relevant and obvious changes has been the emphasis on diversity. The staff has worked diligently to not only ensure diversity within programming formats and the gender, ethnicity, and theology of the guests who are invited but also to create diverse worship experiences that connect with students from varying backgrounds, ethnicities, and Christian traditions and which expose all our students to the broader Tradition.

Assessment Methodology

We will be using two instruments for this project. The first instrument will be 3 separate focus groups. Groups will be separated into their individual class times (9:05, 10:10, 11:15). We will utilize the attached protocol in order to mine meaningful narrative that will help us answer the research question.

The second instrument is a survey that is completed by the Chapel Student Leaders each week. They are asked the fill out the following questionnaire:

1. What is your perception of today’s chapel service?
2. What might you do differently?
3. How do you think students in your section perceive today’s chapel service?
4. Would you repeat this service next year?
Analysis

- Hand coding of our qualitative data was completed by Ryan G. Richardson. This process identified themes that existed within the data. Within each theme, various “nodes” were identified to help better understand the content of the data.

- A line graph illustrating the CSL data will be created for each semester.

- A final report of the results will be written and placed on file with the Worship Department. This report will be used to inform decisions regarding the implementation of future chapel sessions.

Results/Interpretations:

**Calling Theme:**

In terms of calling, students tended to focus on future career aspirations. Many students discussed ways in which Chapel informed their decisions about calling and vocation.

Another theme that came to light in the focus groups was that of the theological understanding of calling. Several students mentioned their understanding of God’s will and the ways in which that understanding changed throughout the semester.

Social issues such as poverty and homelessness came across as areas that seem to be important to God. Some students felt that calling was related to the world’s greatest needs. Others called this simply being the hands and feet of Jesus.

**Meaningful Quotes:**

- “I knew I wanted to pursue a medical track and I came from a Catholic home so I Christian school sounded good to my family”

- “Before I came to Baylor, I had a different idea of calling. I thought it was a loud voice from heaven telling me what to do. Experiencing Baylor and the ministry here I feel like calling is just a willingness to serve and devote myself to my work.”

- “I think we are all called to do the hands and feet of Jesus Christ. So I’m trying to figure out what that looks like for me.”
• “I feel that a *calling* is the purpose that you have in your life and that God would want you to go and fulfill that purpose.”

**Wholeness Theme:**

Topics concerning *wholeness* came up the least in our conversations. Students did mention practices within the chapel context that promoted their own sense of rest, contemplation, and worship. However, we schedule approximately two services person semester specifically directed toward mental, physical, or spiritual wholeness. None of these particular services came to light in these interviews.

Two students made mention of the **Lenten services** being especially “touching” and helpful allowing them to feel at peace.

The most prolific theme regarding wholeness was that of **finding comfort amidst uncertainty**. Student made reference to many occasions during the services during which the guest or worship leader shared their own doubts or fears. Students felt encouraged that their own personal questions were not too big for God.

**Meaningful Quotes:**

• “The Lenten services come to mind [when thinking about wholeness]. We thought of the various names of God and we confess our sins. It was touching I guess.”
• “I enjoy chapel and I know that many other people do because they find it encouraging part of their day.”

**Community Theme:**

It’s consistently referenced themes related to community during our focus groups. Hey prominent theme was that of the **Christian** Baylor environment. Students mentioned over and
over the importance of faith on the Baylor campus. They expressed the level of integrity and accountability that exists among the student body as a positive aspect of their time at Baylor.

Specifically regarding chapel, three students suggested that it is important to feel challenged in a corporate environment like Waco Hall. When the entire group is challenged at once it offers time to reflect and converse together.

The other prominent theme in the community conversation is that of acceptance of various opinions. Within the student culture, our participants suggested that acceptance is a key part of the Baylor culture; different people can believe different things and will not be ostracized from the greater community. With that said, one student did express some hesitation with too much openness. He suggested that if we are to open as a culture that we will not have a definitive belief system.

Meaningful Quotes:

- “We are so fortunate to be in a community like Baylor. If we all lend a hand, anything can be accomplished.”
- “I chose to come to Baylor because of the Christian environment and faith focus.”
- “I feel like our culture pushes you toward a change. It lets you know what you believe. Because chapel and our other classes are sometimes more liturgical they seem to challenge our beliefs.”

Citizenship Theme:

Many students commented on the needs that surround our world and the responsibility we all have to support others as a part of our calling. For many, their understanding of citizenship revolves around volunteering their time and giving of their other resources.
There were participants who recognized that citizenship meant owning the process. The students expressed some level of challenge to learn more about the needs of the world, as well as remorse that they are not ready to be true citizens of the world yet.

One participant was a veteran who was unable to go to Iraq. Although the student was disappointed, they expressed in their interview appreciation for one chapel in particular. He referred to the chapel for which we brought a missionary from Iraq to speak. This participant appreciated our guest illustrating the people of Iraq as humans who need care. He felt that to be citizens of the world means to recognize that there are mothers and fathers and children, all good people who need help.

Meaningful Quotes:

- “I volunteered for Habitat for Humanity and stepping out here at Baylor.”
- “I volunteered with my brother’s keeper through Kappa Chi Alpha and we lead Bible study and that was a really good experience. I feel like that is what we were called to do, serve the poor.”
- “I want to know more about poverty and religious persecution in freedom issues.”
- “I’ve gotten into a lot of volunteer programs over the years[…] but chapel helped me understand why these things are important.”
- “I feel like the work that we are doing [in Iraq] is important because a lot of people just think of that land now as a throwaway in that all people are horrible. But there are mothers and fathers and children and there are good people still there that need help. That guy in chapel encouraged us to go and stand up for them.”

Chapel Student Leader Data
Overall Interpretations & Plans for Future Improvement
Does participation in Chapel help shape students’ perceptions of themselves and the world regarding their calling, their understanding of wholeness, their recognition of community, and their participation as citizens? If so, how?

This study revealed that some students are impacted by their experience in Baylor chapel. Although the data is limited, there is evidence regarding the learning process of students that suggests some internal processing of calling, wholeness, community, and citizenship. One problematic component is the varying levels of understanding regarding “faith” that students bring with them to college. One student may experience an unfamiliar worship experience as helpful and illustrative of the greater body of Christ. A different student may experience that same service as boring, irrelevant, or awkward. The incongruence that exists among terminology and prior experience was evident throughout the focus groups. The fact that this disconnect still exists at the end of the second semester of chapel reveals a need to better educate our students as a part of Chapel.

Chapel is a unique facet of a Baylor education in that it is an intentionally faith-inspired experience that exists to help students proactively relate to God. However, within this notion of connecting with God, some education can be helpful and sometimes necessary to the holistic experience. It is worth considering to set aside one or two services that are expressly intended to “get everyone up to speed” regarding liturgy, the unique brand of worship here at Baylor, and expectations regarding participation in the worship elements.

The theme that received the least attention in the focus group was wholeness. It is unclear if the questions just simply did not elude to wholeness answers or if wholeness is a weak part of the chapel programming. It will be necessary to take some time in the summer to go back over the chapel services from this year and make notes regarding each theme and how it was extrapolated within the service. We will need to pay special attention to the idea of wholeness.

Questions that arise:
It is the mission of Chapel to shape, nurture, and impact students spiritually. The hope is that this “shaping” is focused on the student and their calling, their ability to experience wholeness, their recognition of their community, and their beliefs about citizenship. However, to what degree is it the role of chapel to clearly define these terms for the student? In other words, students need not understand these specific terms in order to experience the impact of programming directed by these concepts. Would it be helpful to discuss these ideas early in the semester prior to programming created to be transformative?

We have successfully assessed chapel utilizing the evaluation forms for Chapel Student Leaders. Would it be possible and/or prudent to find a way to survey a small sample of students following each chapel service either through email communication or written paper survey? This idea would need to ensure no student gets over-surveyed. The Institute for Research and Testing will be able to determine best practices in surveying such a large group in a way that offers us a better snapshot of the semester on the whole.

This study is helpful in that we asked about our capacity to “shape perceptions” through a year of chapel services. I believe the study reveals what our intuition is… “somewhat.” University Chapel is more often, and for most students, a place of introduction… to Baylor… to the Faith… the Breadth of the faith… to the worship, witness, and work of the Church. As we often say, “we’re casting seeds” and for some there’s a perception “shaped.” More likely, it’s a perception nudged or encouraged or questioned or confirmed or recalled. It’s important to remember that sacred practice is not primarily an educational experience…. It first and foremost is an experience with the Divine and hopefully one that inspires and encourages and re-centers and delights and heals and empowers, even if just for a moment or a Monday.

Thoughts from the University Chaplain on the Study.

REFERENCES


**APPENDIX A**
Worship Focus Group Protocol:

1. What is your classification at Baylor? First year, second year, etc?
2. Would you characterize the culture at Baylor?
3. Why did you choose to come to Baylor?
4. What sort of needs do you see in Waco?
   a. Were there similar needs in your hometown?
5. Have you ever volunteered for anything? If so, what was that like?
6. Have you volunteered anywhere this semester?
7. Say the first thing that comes to your mind when I say “Chapel”.
8. Have you ever followed up on a slide you’ve seen during the announcements in Chapel? If so, what was that?
9. Was there a particular chapel presentation that you found meaningful?
   a. What about that chapel did you find helpful?
10. Do you feel that you are aware of needs throughout the world?
    a. What do you think about when you think about needs in the world?
11. If you were starting a Christian university, would you require chapel? Why or why not?
12. What is one moment in chapel this semester that you remember well?
13. What does “calling” mean to you? Do you feel like you have a sense of calling?
14. Has any presentation in chapel directly related to your calling?
15. If you could invite any guest to chapel, who would you bring?
16. If you could plan one day of chapel, what would that look like?
17. If you could share your overall experience in chapel with just a few words, what would those words be?

APPENDIX B
FOCUS GROUP #1

Jessica: Hey, my name is Jessica Kemp. Today is March 23rd and I'm speaking with students for focus group for a Chapel and worship. Is it okay if I record you today, you know this recording will be completely anonymous. We're going to ask you questions, you don't have to reveal anything about yourself just answer the questions. Is that okay?

Male: Yes.

Female: Yes.

Jessica: Okay, great. So first question is what is your classification at Baylor?

Male: I'm a freshman.

Female: Freshman

Jessica: Is this your first year, second year?

Male: First year.

Female: First year.

Jessica: Okay, okay. Would you characterize the culture at Baylor, what would you characterize it as?

Male: Christian.

Female: Christian and very friendly.

Jessica: Okay, why did you choose to come to Baylor?

Male: I knew I wanted to pursue a medical track and I came from a Catholic home, so a Christian school sounded good to my family.

Female: My major is only here at Baylor and I really like the family feeling here at Baylor.

Jessica: What sort of needs do you see in Waco?

Male: More volunteer work and care for the city around us. Definitely believe in the Baylor Bubble.

Female: There's a lot of less fortunate people around us that we could help more.

Jessica: Okay, were there a similar needs in your home town?

Male: No, I came from a pretty suburban city.

Female: I came from Houston, so definitely.
Jessica: Okay, have you ever volunteered for anything and if so what was that like?

Male: I volunteered for habitat humanity and for stepping out here at Baylor as well and it was really nice getting to see the smiles on their faces whenever we painted their houses or fixed the fence or anything.

Female: I volunteered a lot in high and during the summer and I do some volunteer work here now too, it's very fulfilling.

Jessica: Okay, have you volunteered anywhere in this semester?

Male: No, not yet.

Female: I volunteered at the humane society.

Jessica: Okay, say the first thing that comes to your mind when I say Chapel.

Male: Worship.

Female: Prayer.

Jessica: Okay, have you ever followed up on a slide you've seen during the announcements in Chapel, if so what was it?

Male: I think it was to follow the information on Instagram or some Social Media and it was just to keep track of their updates.

Female: I did it for active minds.

Jessica: Okay, was there a particular Chapel presentation that you found to be meaningful and what about that Chapel did you find helpful?

Male: [whispering] That's what we're saying.

Female: I don't remember the name of the speaker, but it was the Australian speaker this semester. His message was just very, I feel it was very relate-able, very moving.

Jessica: Okay

Male: I think I really liked today's speaker. I think [inaudible 3:51] as well, but her sign poetry and her testimony was very moving.

Jessica: Okay, do you feel that you are aware of the needs throughout the world and what do you think about when you think about the needs in the world?

Male: Yes, I do feel aware especially with Chapel since there are a lot of speakers coming from mission on communities. Sorry what was the second?

Jessica: The second was what do you think about when you think about the needs?
Male: Well, their needs and they should be fulfilled and I feel like especially in this community like Baylor where we are pretty fortunate. If we all lend a hand, it can definitely be accomplished.

Female: I feel that I do know about the needs around the world. Second part?

Jessica: What do you think about when you think about the needs?

Female: I just think that there are a lot of need and that we don't really have to look around the world to really help out. We can just look across our 35 and help out people.

Jessica: If you were starting a Christian University, would you require Chapel? Why or why not?

Male: Yes, so I know some of my friends aren't really that excited about Chapel, but I think regardless of religion or nomination, it's a pretty fulfilling class or I guess. But there are some really good speakers that come out and perform and says that, I think, are really beneficial.

Female: I would say no because even though I enjoy Chapel and I know many other people do when they find it like encouraging part of their day. There are a lot of people that wish they didn't have to put up with it and I feel like already having religion classes is enough to share the Gospel in a way and basically just forcing God through people's throats isn't really helping those that are non-believers that are here on campus.

Jessica: Okay, what is one moment in Chapel this semester that you remember well?

Male: The first that comes to my mind is the lenten service. It was very down, it was like the names of God and like the [inaudible 6:28] of our sins. It was just touching I guess.

Female: I have to agree.

Jessica: What does calling mean to you? Do you feel like you have a sense of calling?

Male: Calling? Well, before I came to Baylor, I have a very different meaning, I thought it'd be like a really loud voice from Heaven telling me to like believe, but definitely coming to Baylor and finding a University here, a Ministry. I feel that it's just this willingness to serve and to really devote myself into the work and that's something I felt coming on to campus.

Female: I believe calling is just finding something in the sense that you love that God gives you passion for to do and help out in the world to do for Him and just to be able to bring people to Him and help those people. And I do believe that I have a sense of calling and that Baylor is part of it.

Jessica: Okay, has any presentation in Chapel directly related to your calling?

Male: No.

Female: I wouldn't say directly related, but the plenty of the speakers that come and tell us how they're helping change the world and just by helping those that need help across seas would relate to what I wish to.

Jessica: If you could invite any guest to Chapel, who would you bring?
Male: [Inaudible 8:16].

Female: I don't remember.

Jessica: If you could plan one day of Chapel, what would it look like?

Male: I think it'll look a lot like a service a lot, some worship music and a really influential speaker.

Female: I think it would be more relaxed like not so structural and I really love worship in Chapel, but I noticed that a lot of people don't like it when people have to stand up and it's more natural when, you know, they choose to stand and worship on their own, so there'd be that and just less of a motivational speaker type thing and more of a like let's hear God's word kind of situation.

Jessica: Okay, if you could share your overall experience with Chapel with just a few words, what would those words be?

Male: Mostly worthwhile even if some of the speakers don't directly apply you, it's definitely worth hearing.

Female: I would say relate-able to some sense, yeah.

Jessica: Okay, that's everything. Thank you guys.
FOCUS GROUP #2

Jessica: Okay, like I said before, this is a completely anonymous recording. We are recording this information. Are you okay with being recorded today?

Female: Yes.

Jessica: Okay, great. So I’m going to ask you some questions, give us your honest feedback and then we’ll conclude, okay?

Female: Okay.

Jessica: All right then. So what is your classification at Baylor?

Female: I’m a freshman.

Jessica: You are a freshman, are you a first year?

Female: Yes.

Jessica: Okay, great. Would you characterize the culture at Baylor?

Female: Like the student culture?

Jessica: Yes, what do you think the environment is like for the students?

Female: I think it's like any other college, just like young environment.

Jessica: Young environment? When you look around, what do you see when you look out on-campus?

Female: I see a variety of students with different ideas and like, stances on things.

Jessica: Okay, why did you choose to come to Baylor?

Female: I chose to come to Baylor because I was under the impression that it would be a majority, like Christian environment and faith-focused environment.

Jessica: Okay, what sort of needs do you see in Waco?

Female: I think poverty is a serious need and homelessness and I think that’s the most need.

Jessica: Are these needs similar to your hometown?

Female: No.

Jessica: Okay, have you ever volunteered for anything and if so, what was that like?
Female: I volunteered with “My brother’s keeper” through Kappa Chi Alpha and we led Bible study and that was a really good experience. I feel like that is, like we were called to serve the poor and I think that that is, the cracks of that.

Jessica: Okay, have you volunteered anywhere this semester?

Female: This semester it was when I did “My brother’s keeper”.

Jessica: Okay, say the first thing that comes to your mind when I say, “Chapel”.

Female: Boring.

Jessica: Okay, have you ever followed up on a slide you’ve seen during the announcements in Chapel and if so, what was that?

Female: Yes, that’s the focus group I saw on a slide, and I think that might be it.

Jessica: That might be it? Okay, was there a particular Chapel presentation that you found meaningful?

Female: I don’t recall his name, but the man who is living in Iraq with the refugees, I felt like...

Jessica: Okay, and what about that Chapel did you find helpful?

Female: I thought he was a really good example of what we’re called to do, so I thought it was really inspiring.

Jessica: Do you feel that you’re aware of needs throughout the world?

Female: Not as much as I should be.

Jessica: What do you think about, when you think about the needs of the world?

Female: I think poverty and I think of religious persecution and I think of freedom issues.

Jessica: Okay, if you were starting a Christian University, would you require a Chapel? Why or why not?

Female: I would require a Chapel because in founding a Christian University, I feel like the majority of my students would have the desire to go to Chapel, so I think it should just be a part of who we are.

Jessica: Okay, what is one moment in Chapel this semester that you remember well?

Female: I mean, I remember last Chapel on Wednesday, not because it was recent, but because it was really serious and it was talking about religious persecution and that really hit me hard. So I think that would be the most memorable moment.

Jessica: Okay, what does Calling mean to you?

Female: Calling?
Jessica: Mm-hmm.

Female: I guess when the Holy Spirit calls you and moves you and leads you in a direction that you feel, you're called to go.

Jessica: Do you feel like you have a sense of calling?

Female: I feel like I do. I think we’re all called to be the hands and feet of Jesus Christ. So I’m trying to figure out what that looks like for me, but...

Jessica: Has any presentation in Chapel directly related to your calling? Or made you feel closer to your calling?

Female: I think quite a few. Like the Iraq Chapel really connected with me and the religious persecution one and some of the sex trafficking ones last semester.

Jessica: Okay, if you could invite any guest to Chapel, who would you bring?

Female: I don’t know who particularly, but probably someone who is trained and has a practice of like preaching to youth, like younger generations.

Jessica: Okay, if you could plan one day of Chapel, what would that look like?

Female: My one day of Chapel would just probably include some kind of singing with, it doesn't even matter what kind of instrument, but it would probably be more of an explanation of the Christian faith, clarifying what it is that we believe, because I feel like there is a lot of misconceptions, with even people that come to Baylor. And kind of present the Gospel, like in its core.

Jessica: Okay, if you could share your overall experience in Chapel, with a just few words, what would those be?

Female: Disappointing and relate-able in some aspects.

Jessica: Okay, all right. Thanks. I now conclude our interview for today.

APPENDIX D
Male Interviewer: Again, as I’ve said before were recording, your answers will be anonymous. They’re not gonna type anything that you’ve given me, information… etc. But… they need to opt other descriptive what’s happening. So, thank you for coming. First of all, I guess, I’m just gonna ask questions. We’re just gonna talk. Not every… we don’t wanna really go down the line or whatever, you just answer when you feel like you have something to say.

Male Interviewer: I guess, first question, kinda, what’s your classification of your tailor? Which is kinda what kind of question is that [inaudible]? Are you a sophomore?

Female Interviewee 2: Sophomore.

Male Interviewer: So you’re a sophomore?

Male Interviewee: Freshman

Female Interviewee 1: Freshman

Male Interviewer: Okay, so you are a freshman and sophomore. How would you characterize the culture in Veil?

Female Interviewee 1: The religious culture?

Male Interviewer: That can be part of it, you could just, yeah… or I could stress in general, the culture in general. Is there a religious aspect that is fused into it? How heavily does it affect you into the overall, I guess span of experience?

Female Interviewee 1: I feel like there is a religious aspect it was sort of its southern culture, and so, there are several cultures that we kind of,

[microphone noise]

Female Interviewee 1: Sort of, like this is inherited we kinda, do something that is necessary for it.

Male Interviewer: Okay.

Female Interviewee 1: So, I think it’s part of their characteristic.

Male Interviewer: Okay. What, so, you mean inherited like it just came from, that’s what you were taught in the beginning so you kinda always go with it?

Female Interviewee 1: It’s not necessarily something that is they have chosen for themselves.

Male Interviewer: Okay. Cool. And how do you think that impacts, I guess the rest, your overall experience with that in mind?

Female Interviewee 1: A failure?

Male Interviewer: Yeah. Okay.
Male Interviewer: Would you say that it kinda pushes you towards… I guess, would you say various culture, encourages you to just kinda stay on that path that you were put up on no matter what it is, or does it encourages you to try and change roads or whatever?

Female Interviewee 1: I feel like, the culture pushes you toward… a change, to let you know what you believe in, because chapel and other things are just more lethargical, and so… they seem to challenge beliefs a little bit.

Male Interviewer: Okay. Sorry, I’m trying to guess what these labels are. Cool.

Male Interviewee: I feel the culture of Veil is more accepting and open whatever religion or beliefs you have. And so, it gives you opportunity to change your beliefs and experience other systems of, beliefs but you stick with… that’s what you’ve decided. It’s a mix of all the entailments, all of the things.

Male Interviewer: Okay. Cool.

Female Interviewee 2: You do maybe pay back on what he says, I think that helps. They will work more Christian league as you can say… is they are more accepting of everybody. So that’s nice.

Male Interviewer: Cool.

Female Interviewee 1: I think there’s a lot of different opinion and standpoints, and… in one sense, yeah there is a lot of acceptance of what different people believe, and… I think that for some people, we don’t push them to change what they believe. But I almost feel like maybe they learn itself as the authority, could be like be more particular about their stands on things ‘cause it’s almost a little too open, not in the- The openness is good enough, they won’t hear other perspectives but it’s too open that they don’t define their own perspective enough.

Male Interviewer: Okay. Cool. Why did you guys choose to come to Veil?

Female Interviewee 1: I chose to come because I’m new as a Christian School, but also very well respected. That accommodation is very rare.

Male Interviewer: Well respected in which regards?

Female Interviewee 1: Academically speaking.

Male Interviewer: Okay.

Male Interviewee: I don’t really know exactly what put Veil on my radar, it was on my law school, and they were attached. But, when I came here, for a vacation excellence, I toured the place and I heard it’s a beautiful campus. All the talk about the service veil does, all the focus on religion and helping others and I all the draw of the acceptance just probably brought me in stuffs of others and stuff.

Female Interviewee 2: My specific program is about journey here really means this school’s social work, because it’s pretty unique compared to others, mainly because it has a Christian foundation. And that was important to me, so, and that it is well respected, and so…

Male Interviewer: Cool.
Female Interviewee 1: Yeah. I guess I’ll re-iterate what they said, the Christian environment and the religious aspect together is unique for such a good academic school. I guess, my program, the university scholars… It’s really good deal for me.

Male Interviewer: Okay. Cool. What sort of needs do you see in Wayco I guess for the city itself?

Female Interviewee 1: There seems to be a lot of poverty, and basically, yeah, there’s a lot of poverty… money-wise, and the education doesn’t seem to be very good in helping people get out of the mess that they’re in. And it’s a weird contrast on how people are affluent in Veil and in outside link, it could be offset.

Male Interviewer: You have it to us?

Male Interviewee: Pretty much.

Male Interviewer: Where there similar needs on your own personal towns, I guess? Like how are the needs of Wayco compared to the needs of wherever you guys are from?

Male Interviewee: Well, in my hometown, there's a population of five thousand.

Male Interviewer: What town is that?

Male Interviewee: Livingston, Texas, it's about an hour from Houston. And, it’s very similar to Wayco where there’s a lot of poverty, and its educational system is on a grave but it’s on such a smaller scale. And it’s about an issue, the one with I could balance that out more, than there I could seem bad in my hometown. But probably it was on a much larger scale here.

Male Interviewer: Okay.

Female Interviewee 1: I’m from Dallas, so it was... I mean there were definitely people who were poor there, and I don’t know necessarily that I saw… It maybe that was to the same extent, but I wasn't... I wasn't much surrounded much in it... what I saw was to the four of us. We were underclassmen but not really poor.

Female Interviewee 2: I've lived all over, I guess, the place that I would compare to Wayco mostly that I’ve lived would be National Tennessee. Where there is a lot of poverty, people live on housing projects… Drug and alcohol abuse, and just homelessness and stuff like that. And I would say it’s pretty similar than we missed smaller scale. But, yeah, there’s a lot of people in need.

Male Interviewer: Is it a smaller scale in Wayco, or it’s a National figure?

Female Interviewee 2: It’s a National figure.

Male Interviewer: Okay. Cool. Have you ever volunteered for anything, and if so, what was that like?

Female Interviewee: Here, or anywhere?

Male Interviewer: Anywhere.

Female Interviewee 2: I used to volunteer as a foster mother for animals, mostly cats and stuff, but this was one of the soldier stations in Portland, Georgia, so I did that, and those were really rewarding. Placed a lot of the animals and moms [inaudible] love. I’ve done a lot of volunteer work issues that was like, my major one that I did.
Male Interviewer: Okay.

Female Interviewee 1: I volunteered on helping homeless people helping build houses and that was when I was really young… with my family. It was a good experience, because it was good to do something about problems. It’s good to help people.

Male Interviewer: Okay.

Male Interviewee: I’ve got into a lot of volunteer programs over the years. In here Veil , we have some kind of business. And in interpret class, and one of our requirements is thirty hours of service at a young housing. After school I had…to help the kids with their homework, and we just play to keep them entertained. And that was a lot of fun. I’ve really enjoyed that and the kids. And the special olympics is really great, when they can accomplish stuff. I do a lot of services everywhere.

Female Interviewee 1: I’ve… My mom was a singer, so we used to go around in nursing homes a couple of times a week and… we sing for the people and talk to them. At times I was really sad, because those were the people who… their families don’t really care about them, or are taking good care of them, for all of the places that we went. But then… it feels sad and also be good to be able to be there, and for us to be with them.

Male Interviewer: Some of you touched this slowly, but have you volunteered anywhere this semester?

[silence]

Female Interviewee 1: Honestly, no.

Male Interviewee: I did the special olympics but…

Male Interviewer: Cool. What is the first thing that comes into your mind when I say “chapel”?

Male Interviewer: Chapel?

Female Interviewee 1: Will I be honest?

Male Interviewee: Yeah. Actually I want you to be completely honest.

Female Interviewee 1: At the first thing I think it was heresy. Honestly.

Male Interviewer: Okay. Can you stand on that? That’s kind of a big word.

Female Interviewee 1: Yeah, for sure. A lot of things that are being said, I mean that theories are obviously depending on the speaker, but a lot of times, some things that are said are so broad and so universal that they compromise what the Bible teaches. So, they have in here, conflicting messages.

Male Interviewer: Okay. Can you give us a more specific example, maybe?

Female Interviewee 1: Sure. Let’s see. You’ll help me bring this do you?

Female Interviewee 2: What it means to be Jesus?

Female Interviewee 1: Yeah. Jesus went to the desert to find himself. What it means to be Jesus?

Male Interviewee: It’s kind of on the ends of that but the opposite or the more broadness of the chapel. Because I know everyone in the audience are from different faith experiences. I’ve grown invisible, but I’ve been to a lot of those churches and I mix all the teachings and practices along the denominations into one service. I know they don’t have to be perfect, but they have to accommodate for every one audience. I think they do a good job on that.

Male Interviewer: Okay. Cool.

Female Interviewee 1: They get to be very accommodating.

Female Interviewee 2: Here, I think, wishy-washy kind of semi-religious. Which, honestly, a lot of it is easy to kind of, tune out. But that’s not good. I would rather them say things in chapel that I disagree with, that I know that they really believe and teach and practice. Say controversial stuff if that’s what you think, rather than just trying to…

Female Interviewee 1: Make everyone happy.

Female Interviewee 2: Yeah, exactly.

Male Interviewer: So you think that, just so I can clarify, it sounds like you said, it’s easy for you to tune it up because they’re not saying anything with purpose?

Female Interviewee 1: With substance.


Female Interviewee 1: Yeah. It’s like they’re trying to please everyone so they don’t really say anything that they would disagree with.

Male Interviewer: Okay.

Male Interviewee: That they don’t get deep enough in anything. It’s all surface level. And so, you can’t really invest it in any chapels. Just…

Female Interviewee 2: Yeah.

Male Interviewee: …I’m here getting my credit, I’m sitting to what you are saying and I believe.

Male Interviewer: Okay. Cool. Have you ever followed up on a sled that you have seen during the announcements in chapel, if so, what was that?

Female Interviewee 2: This one.

Female Interviewee 1: … was not confirmed. [laughs]

Male Interviewer: Awesome.

Male Interviewee: We have followed the V-formation.

Male Interviewer: The V-formation? And we won on it.
Female Interviewee 1: And the leader…

Male Interviewer: I’m sorry?

Female Interviewee 1: World leader. We applaud.

Female Interviewee 2: That… and also the world orphans, I call it on mountain.

Male Interviewer: Okay. Cool. Was there a particular chapel presentation that you found meaningful?

Female Interviewee 1: I don’t remember what his name is… but the guy from Australia…

Female Interviewee 2: Oh, yeah.

Female Interviewee 1: He was really great!

Male Interviewer: From Australia? Was it this semester, or last?

Female Interviewee 1: Yeah, this semester.

Female Interviewee 2: Is he in Australia, or New Zealand?

Female Interviewee 1: No, he was in Australia, he was an apologist. He was excellent.

Female Interviewee 2: And I like that the soul for people, they danced and sang. Well, it wasn’t like preaching and stuff, but it was fun to watch.

Male Interviewee: There was one speaker who was from the school of the Priests or group of Episcopal Church or something.

Male Interviewer: Is it this semester?

Male Interviewee: This semester. Is it early on this semester, or first week, I don’t remember his name, but he’s like…

Male Interviewer: Do you remember what he’s talking about?

Male Interviewee: It was probably Episcopal School.

Female Interviewee 2: I liked that singer, Sandy…

Male Interviewer: Sandy McGuire?

Female Interviewee 2: Yeah, she was good, I liked her. And… I guess the guy that I was asking, for his name?

Male Interviewee and Female Interviewee 1: Billie Ray.

Female Interviewee 2: I really appreciated that.

Female Interviewee 1: Yeah. That was good.

Male Interviewee: And I also like the painting today.
Male Interviewer: Okay. So, really quick, there is a follow-up question, which is, what was the chapel that you found helpful? So let's start, you guys said that apologists from Australia. So what about that specifically that you found helpful?

Female Interviewee 1: I liked that he engaged with tough questions that would people, the things that would actually matter to us, and offered a Biblical response to them, and, said, there’s an answer to this question.

Male Interviewer: And then, that so for, what was that so for, did you find helpful or meaningful, specifically?

Female Interviewee 1: They were entertaining, but also, their music was good, it was Christian, and they were just one of the ones that kept me paying attention. No heresy.

[laughs]

Male Interviewer: I’m sorry. You said that… which one was it?

Male Interviewee: I said that I don’t really know his name.

Male Interviewer: Oh? The Episcopalian …

Male Interviewee: One thing that was on me is that I grew up in a school church, and he talked about his first experience in Episcopal Church, like how accepting they were and stuff. And it just kinda explained what was church to me, and I like that.

Male Interviewer: Billie Ray, what was that Billie Ray, that guy from Iraq that he’s found helpful?

Female Interviewee 2: Well, my major requirement was a soldier. And I don’t really get to go to Iraq, but I don’t really disappoint everything, I just feel that the work that he was doing there is… really important because a lot of people just think of that land now is just thorough way and all the people is horrible, but it’s just that there’s mothers and fathers, and children, and there’s good people still there that need help. And he’s actually… he was encouraged to go and stand up for them. Especially those who ask for… I don’t really say ask for money, but the other people are in this situation, and he is able to bring in what exactly they need, and that’s pretty amazing.

Male Interviewer: Okay. Cool. Do you feel that you are aware of needs throughout the world?

Female Interviewee 1: I think this helps, but I’m sure that there are things that we just don’t pay attention to.

Male Interviewee: I think it is definitely, I think more needs up, than you think it is covered in all the chapels.

Female Interviewee 2: It’s completely overloading.

Male Interviewer: I think it’s more of a generic statement in general, I think here is a better question. What do you think about, when you think about the needs in the world? Like, if I would say to you, what are the needs in the world?

Female Interviewee 2: People are starving.

Male Interviewee: Yeah. Hunger is the first thing that came out line.
Female Interviewee 1: I just think it’s really big so, at once it makes you feel hopeless like you can’t… even if you tried to, you can’t fix it. But… you could do something if you would try to do what you can.

Male Interviewer: Specifically, what? If you would try and tackle any subject, what would you try to tackle?

Female Interviewee 2: Sustainable Agriculture.

Male Interviewer: Okay. It’s a big question.

Female Interviewee 1: [sighs] Yeah.

Male Interviewee: Probably, education, like training for those college kids.

Female Interviewee 1: That’s… I think that would probably where I would aim towards to… probably with education. But I guess when I think with the needs of the world, it’s in two categories: in physical and needs and all that. But then, one thing that I think that needs the world is Gospels. Education would be good, because you could use it for both.

Male Interviewer: Okay, so we’re playing a head-to-tackle game, you guys will just start your own Christian University, and you have to come up with the requirements for graduation. Would you require chapel? Why, or why not?

[silence]

Male Interviewer: And by the way, this doesn’t have to be our chapel.

Female Interviewee 1: Yeah.

Male Interviewer: If you would say not our chapel, you should probably say how do you change it.

Female Interviewee 1: I think, I would require chapel, and the reason of not with chapel is… I would, probably have a chapel similar to this. So, maybe with some entertainment at times, but I would make sure there was a clear gospel presentation, warning people about what prophecy is, about sin, but also hope for forgiveness… and… yes, that’s what I would do.

Male Interviewee: I would have a chapel. ‘Cause I feel like, here in August University, it’s very hard to keep up with worship. And if they have a set time to go worship, it helps you, maybe less of a big thing, have a more like smaller chapels… to smaller chapels where you are closer to individuals whom you are worshiping with is better. But now that we have big chapel, it skips all.

Male Interviewer: Let’s see. Okay. It says this semester, but I’m getting clear. Were you all in chapel on the Fall?

Male Interviewee: I was in the Mainland Chapel.

Female Interviewee 1: Yeah, me too.

Male Interviewer: Okay. Then I think this pertains to this semester then. What is one moment in chapel that you remembered well? Good or bad.

[silence]
Female Interviewee 1: This morning, the Brit girls said that the gospel is all about you. That’s bad. [laughs]

Female Interviewee 1: So… I remember that.

[silence]

Female Interviewee 1: Sorry, I’m just being honest.

Male Interviewer: So you’re completely honest. You’re not hurting anybody’s feelings.

Male Interviewee: What I just said earlier was that, I’m having a hard time getting invested on chapels because it’s all surface level. And so, nothing comes down. I had to remember that they were particularly on one stage, singing similar songs, or talking about the same, similar things. It’s all so resilient.

Male Interviewer: Cool.

Female Interviewee 1: I guess when the apologist guy came.

Male Interviewee: I do remember him and those things.

Female Interviewee 2: There’s… I don’t think I can point out a particular moment, but just his presentation generally stuck with me.

Female Interviewee 1: It’s engaging.

Male Interviewee: I do remember his thing about his son.

Female Interviewee 2: Oh, yeah! [laughs]

Male Interviewee: I remember that, that was funny. So, his humor helps remember.

Female Interviewee 2: Yeah, I don’t like the… when they were doing their reading, they’re just behind with the reading… I don’t know.

Male Interviewee: It’s the doing in the church, like, I connect with that.

Female Interviewee 2: I feel that it’s too much realistic. I don’t feel like it’s a discipline to meet. Meaning…

Male Interviewer: What does “calling” mean to you, and do you feel that you have a sense of a “calling”?

Female Interviewee 2: I think that a “calling” is something… that you wouldn’t necessarily be born with. Something that would call you to be… I’m away. It makes you good but it don’t mean that you wouldn’t be successful. If you do what you are “called”, you would be the most successful that you could be.

Male Interviewer: And do you feel that you have a sense of “calling”?

Female Interviewee 2: Yes.

Male Interviewer: Okay.
Male Interviewee: I feel that “calling” is kinda like, the purpose that you have in your life, and that he want you to go and fulfill that purpose… called to go and fulfill it. Like certain jobs, or certain ministries. I definitely feel I’m “called” especially that I work with children, so…

Female Interviewee 1: Yeah. I feel that it is something that God has me to do, and I think that there are two senses of it where everyone has… every Christian has a “calling” to preach the gospel, with his people… but there were not any more specific link. You know, maybe you are called to do that in a specific place, or you are called to join a specific ministry. I do have a sense of calling, but I never really show what my specific thing, so… maybe that help.

Male Interviewer: Alright. Let me follow with that really quick. You guys are using this action where it’s a sense of doing, it’s a sense of something I need to do, or this happened… thing. Do you feel that your calling is tied to specifically and necessarily to your occupation or job, or is it something broader than that?

Female Interviewee 2: I think “calling” is… if there is a doing aspect, but there is also a being, I guess I gonna go with the general than the specific “calling”. Specifically, maybe there is… I feel “called” to be a History professor. That’s what I’ll do, that’s what I feel that God has given for me to do. There is also a call in which God calls me to be in a certain way and to image him through my life and actions; Even if that… even if my life takes a different path.

Male Interviewer: Cool. Has any presentation in chapel directly related to your calling?

Female Interviewee 1: I guess the apologist, he talked about answering people’s questions, and… that might be something that I… wanna end up doing. I mean, just doing the apologist’s questions. So,

Female Interviewee 2: I’m sorry, what was that?

Female Interviewee 1: Billie Ray.

Female Interviewee 2: My calling to work as a civil worker, and taking care of the homeless, and I don’t mean just the people that I knew, but for the most part, the homeless veterans, but… But these people who will think that… it was because of the war.

Male Interviewer: If you could invite any guest to the chapel, who would you bring? Anybody at all.

Female Interviewee 1: There is a speaker… his name is Emil Zwayne, he is very funny, and just a great teacher.

Male Interviewer: Zwayne?

Female Interviewee 1: Emil Zwayne.

Male Interviewer: How do you spell Zwayne?

Female Interviewee 1: Z-W-A-Y-N-E, like Wayne with a z. He goes with a z because that’s easier.

Male Interviewer: That’s a lot easier.

Female Interviewee 2: Does it have to be a speaker? Or,

Male Interviewer: It says any guest. In this school, we had Gino Flares.

Female Interviewee 2: How about Todd Acne?

Female Interviewee 2: Sings like… “Rays Like Rain”, “My Jesus”?

Male Interviewee: I would like to invite, Christian rappers.

Male Interviewer: Okay. Like who?

Male Interviewee: Like McCray or Triple Ear, Tadashi is available grad. It was in the eighth football game, it was like, front row seats.

Female Interviewee 1: Doctor Albert Walner, he is present with the seminary.

Male Interviewer: Okay. Oh, sorry… of truth?

Female Interviewee 1: No. Of, it’s called Son of Baptist, the All Three Zonary.


[Laughter]

Female Interviewee 1: He’s already there.

Male Interviewer: Okay. If you could plan one day in the chapel… so not just the speaker, but obviously, the guest, it’s included. But I’m saying the entire talked about experience… What would it look like? Till we stop with the video?

Female Interviewee 2: Food.

[laughter]

Male Interviewer: So that will be in the lobby. I like this.

Female Interviewee 1: Like a good one at school.

Male Interviewer: Okay. What else?

Male Interviewer: So you’ve done this, and you make a hall, and then?

Female Interviewee 2: There’s worship?

Female Interviewee 1: Maybe some songs that people actually know. I think that people don’t know a lot of songs.

Male Interviewer: Okay.

Female Interviewee 1: Like they could be hymns, or modern. Just not obscure ones.

Male Interviewer: Okay.

Male Interviewee: That would be ministry songs.
Female Interviewee 1: I would probably have a video that would either introduce the topic, that they would be speaking on, so maybe something serious, or maybe something funny depending on what topic it’s gonna be.

Male Interviewee: Yeah. Definitely more like multi-media things, like, especially in this modern age, a lot of people’s attention span is not well when people are talking to you, unlike when you have pictures and videos and stuff, it helps.

Male Interviewer: Okay. Would you include any lethargic elements in your magic chapel?

Female Interviewee 1: No, I won’t. If I would have some, I would not have the made-up readings, but maybe I would have some scriptural readings.

Female Interviewee 2: Yeah, I agree, I can get something like that.

Male Interviewee: I can get some responsive songs.

Male Interviewer: Okay. If you could share your experience with chapel with just a few words, what would those words be?

Female Interviewee 2: I appreciate that it’s there.

Female Interviewee 1: I like the theory but not the practice. It’s sort of… it’s frustrating, it’s fun, it’s a love-hate relationship.

Male Interviewee: I feel like it’s a good thought, it just needs more to it. More work into it, more depth.


[End]