



**For Immediate Release**  
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## **NEW RESEARCH TO DOCUMENT RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN CATHOLIC COLLEGES AND STUDENTS' FAITH**

What factors lead Catholics to choose Catholic colleges? And once they enroll, how does their faith evolve during the undergraduate years?

These are just two of the questions that will be answered through new research that will be conducted by Mark M. Gray and Melissa A. Cidade from the Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate (CARA) at Georgetown University. Gray and Cidade will undertake this research through further investigation of data from the first longitudinal study documenting changes in student attitudes about spirituality during the first three years of college. That research, conducted by The Higher Education Research Institute at UCLA, surveyed 14,527 students attending 136 colleges in the fall of 2004 and again in the late spring of 2007, at the end of the students' junior year.

The original findings from this longitudinal study showed that, while attendance at religious services declines, college students nationwide show significant growth in a wide spectrum of spiritual and ethical considerations during their first three years of college. To view full results of the data, and learn more about the project, please visit [www.gseis.ucla.edu/heri/spirituality.html](http://www.gseis.ucla.edu/heri/spirituality.html).

Gray and Cidade will conduct a further analysis of this research to identify the factors that lead men and women of the Catholic faith to choose Catholic institutions and the impact of attending a Catholic college on one's faith, as demonstrated by belief and practice. They will study potential changes in religious affiliation, spirituality, worship, and attitudes about social and political issues between the freshman and junior year among students attending Catholic colleges.

Gray notes, "Our research aims to identify the types of young adult Catholics who choose Catholic colleges and universities and how these Catholic students are affected by their college experience--specifically their faith and worship. We hope our research, with the assistance of the best data available from HERI, will provide a new portrait of understanding regarding the impact of Catholic higher education on its students."

The research will be conducted between May and December of 2009. Findings from the research will be presented to journals focusing on higher education and to the Catholic press.

The Higher Education Research Institute (HERI) at UCLA is widely regarded as one of the premiere research and policy organizations on postsecondary education in the

country. Along with the Cooperative Institutional Research Program (CIRP), HERI was co-founded by Alexander W. Astin and Helen S. Astin, and is housed at UCLA's Graduate School of Education & Information Studies. The Institute serves as an interdisciplinary center for research, evaluation, policy studies, and research training in post-secondary education.

For more details about the project, "Spirituality in Higher Education: Students' Search for Meaning and Purpose," visit: [www.spirituality.ucla.edu](http://www.spirituality.ucla.edu). To learn more about the research being undertaken at CARA, contact Dr. Gray – [mmg34@georgetown.edu](mailto:mmg34@georgetown.edu)/202-687-0885

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