

Interfaith Diversity Experiences & Attitudes Longitudinal Survey (IDEALS)

Time 1 Responses Fall 2015



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Introduction & Background

In the U.S., one of the most religiously diverse countries in the world, colleges and universities are uniquely situated to provide a context for constructive engagement across lines of religious and worldview difference. Countless campus leaders have risen to the challenge by designing educational initiatives intended to promote attitudes and skills that are necessary for productive global citizenship. However, while innovative practices have flourished, questions remain regarding the most effective ways to help students develop as citizens who are prepared to engage, serve, and lead with others in a religiously diverse society.

During the Fall 2015 semester, Oakland University in collaboration with North Carolina State University (NCSU), New York University (NYU), and the Interfaith Youth Core (IFYC) a longitudinal study directed by NCSU over a period of 4 years was launched. This longitudinal study will give precise data indicating the types of educational experiences most conducive to interfaith learning among all students, including student leaders.

The significance of this longitudinal study is to provide empirical evidence that specifically evaluates innovative educational initiatives in relationship to students' spiritual and interfaith development - data which have the potential to shape the direction of all campus-related interfaith work into the future. This research agenda provides a meaningful opportunity to both shape the direction of the field of interfaith cooperation on campus.

The survey explores student attitudes through the following content areas:

- Worldview identification
- Worldview influences
- Religion & community experience
- Attitudes
- Religion on campus
- Friend relationships
- Global citizenship
- Appreciation
- Goodwill & Acceptance
- Commitment
- Pluralism Orientation

This study has been reviewed by the Oakland University IRB# 772814-3

Executive Summary

It is well established that attitudes often change as a student is exposed to more influences (Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991). Of the experiences that were explored in this survey, participating in community service had a significant positive correlation with all of the scales: global citizenship, goodwill and acceptance, appreciating interreligious commonalities and differences, commitment to interfaith leadership and service, and pluralism orientation. Of all the influences, sexual orientation had a significant relationship with all of the scales as well. However, the strongest relationships and correlations were seen with those students who had discussed religious diversity with family or friends, with this having a significant relationship for all but one scale, appreciating interreligious commonalities and differences. These relationships give us insight in to the students who attend OU and how we, as a campus community can work to positively contribute to the development of their worldview by offering opportunities to expand their experiences. OIRA is working with the Department of Religious Studies to analyze the results in a meaningful way to best use and understand this valuable information to improve the student experience on OU's campus.

This survey summary report will first outline the demographics of the students who took the survey. Please note that these demographics are not indicative of the whole of the student population, rather just those who participated in the survey. Secondly, the questions & statements are reported as characterized and categorized by the IDEALS study originators. Lastly, a simple correlation analysis is conducted between demographic variables and the created scales as well as attitude questions and the created scales.

Please note: Throughout the report, language used by the IDEALS study originators is used as to not unnecessarily interpret meaning or intention of the student self-report answers of the survey. Language and verbiage may not be the same as what is commonly used at OU. For example, the survey uses the term 'not transfer student' while OU commonly categorizes students as FTLACs. Another example is the use of the term "not a student of color" and "student of color". OU primarily uses the phrases "white" and "URM" or grouped by race/ethnicity per IPEDS guidelines. Please contact OIRA if you have any questions regarding any of the terminology contained in this report.

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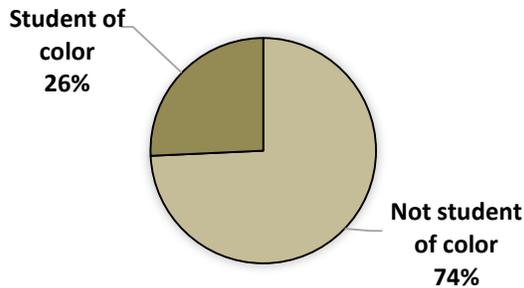
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Student Sample

The study is a longitudinal study with one cohort of students who were surveyed Fall 2015. Follow-up will occur Spring 2016 and Spring 2019. Students who are in their first semester at OU during the Fall 2015 semester were invited to complete an online survey. Those who participated in the Fall 2015 survey will receive follow-up surveys in Spring 2016 and Spring 2019. A total of 243 OU students were surveyed during the Fall 2015 semester.

Figure 1: Race & ethnicity (%)



70% of the sample was female; 29.2% male and 0.8% identify with another gender identity. The majority of students (68.2%) are not transfer students and 93.8% attend OU full-time. Most students were under the age of 21 (84.9%). 26% of students identify as being a student of color. Of this, 5% identify as Black, 2% as Latino, 3% as “other” and 8% as multiracial (figure 1).

Students tend to be very Moderate (42.8%) in their political beliefs and there is an expected distribution of all beliefs across campus (figure 2). There are slightly more students who identify with liberal political beliefs (27.2%) than conservative political beliefs (19.3%).

Figure 2: Political leaning (%)

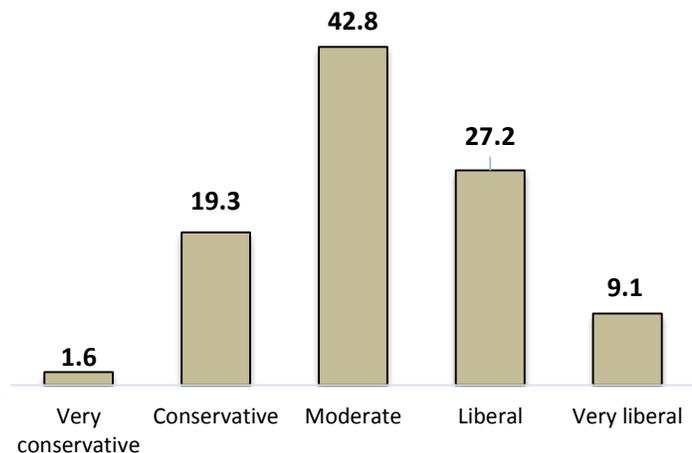
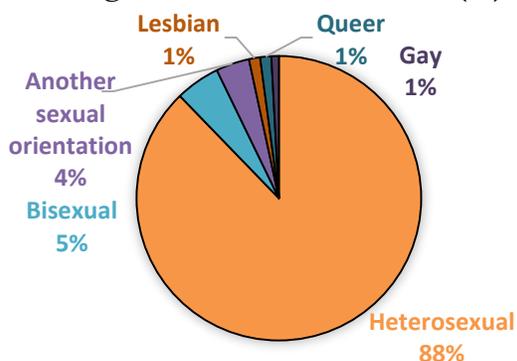


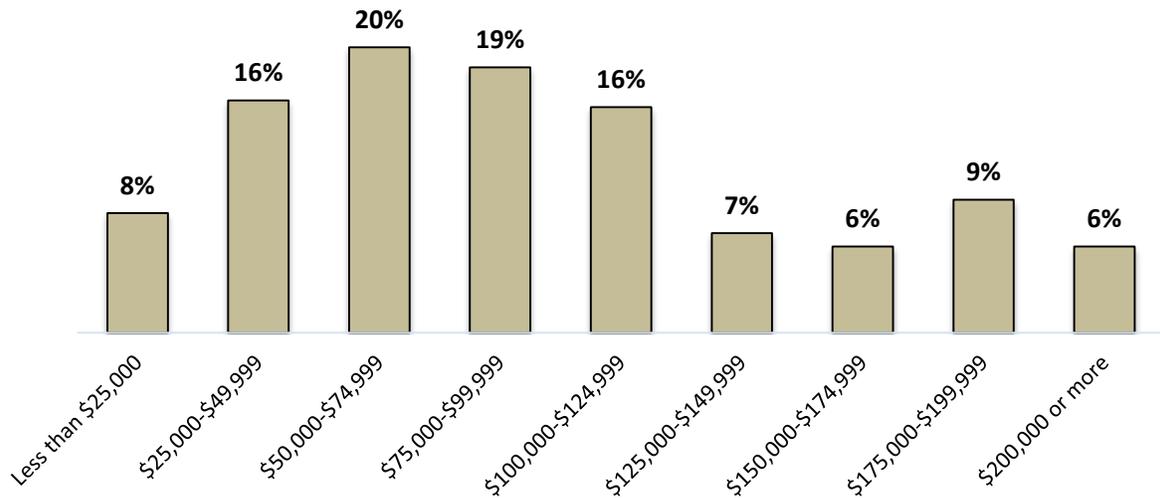
Figure 3: Sexual orientation (%)



The majority of students (88%) identify as Heterosexual while 12% identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, queer, or other (figure 3).

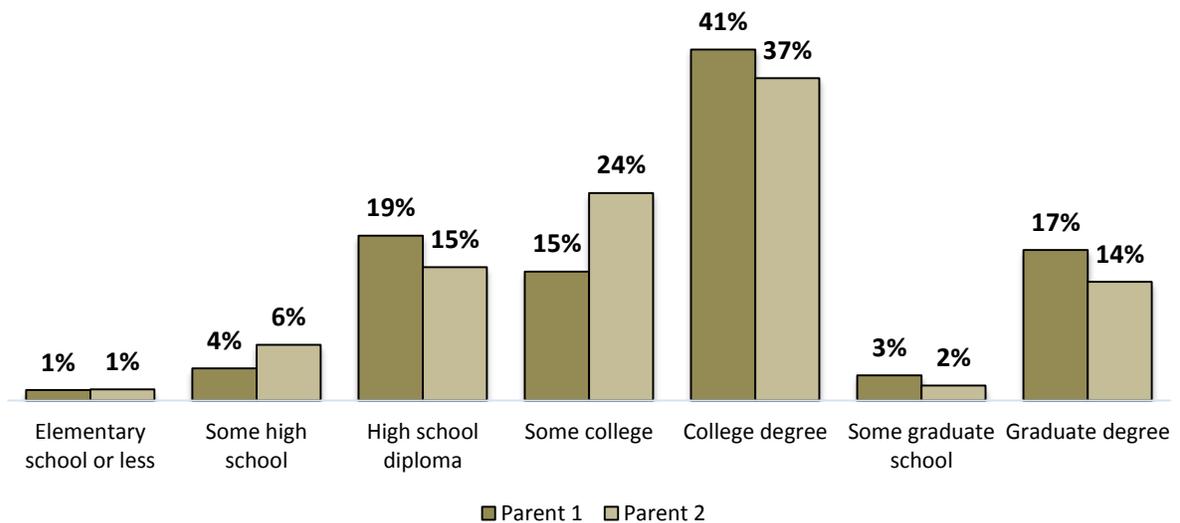
Additionally, 76% of students have participated in community service, 36% report having traveled outside of the United States, and 19% grew up in what they would consider a multi-faith family.

Figure 4: Family income (%)



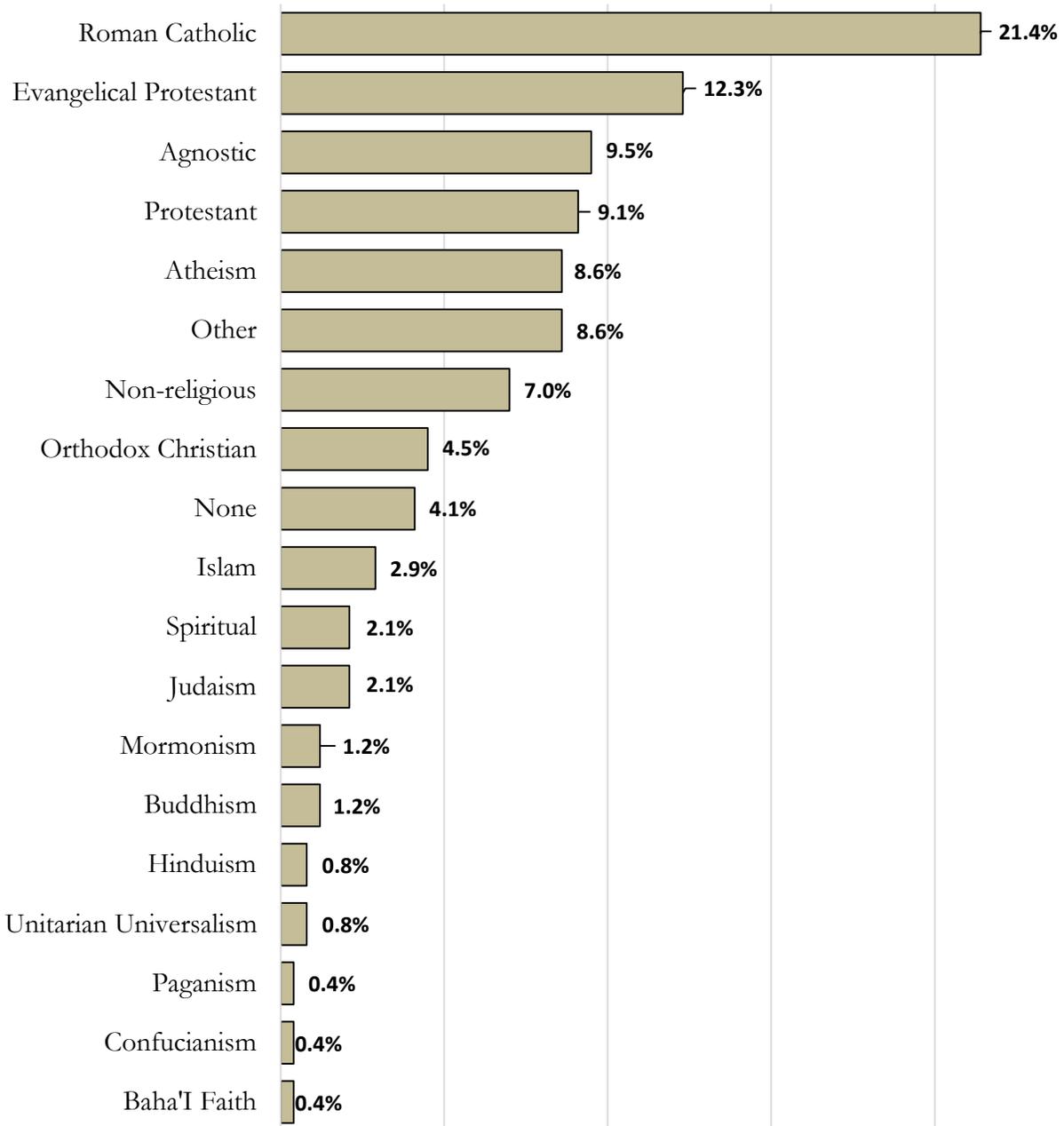
When asked about the education of their parents, 41% report their first parent and 37% report their second parent has a college degree. 58% of first parents have earned either a bachelor’s degree or higher while 51% report the same of their second parent. Of the student respondents, 39% of students report their first parent did not complete a college degree and 46% report their second parent has not completed a college degree. 37% report neither parent has earned a college degree.

Figure 5: Parent education (%)



The largest group of OU students (21.4%) identify as being of Roman Catholic faith followed by Evangelical Protestant (12.3%). 22.2% identify as either agnostic (9.5%), atheist (8.6%) or none (4.1%) while 7% of students in this survey consider themselves non-religious (figure 6).

Figure 6: Worldview identification (%)



Worldview Influences

Figure 7: I have thoughtfully considered other religious and nonreligious perspectives (%)

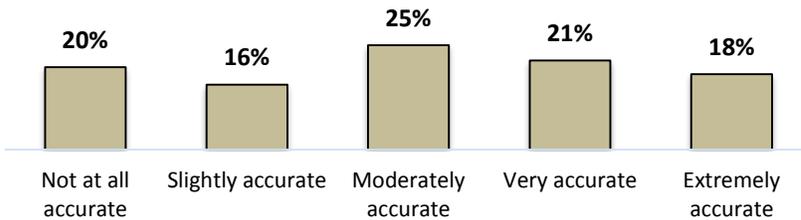


Figure 8: I have had to reconcile competing religious and nonreligious perspectives (%)

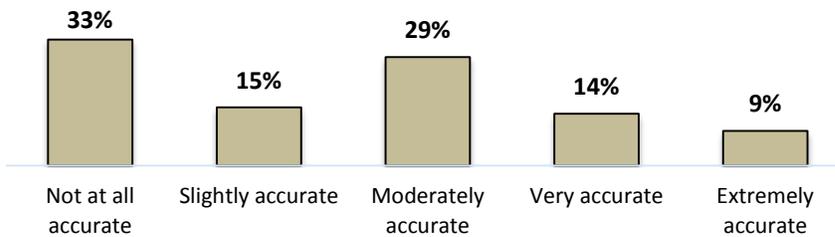


Figure 9: I talked and listened to people with points of view different than my own (%)

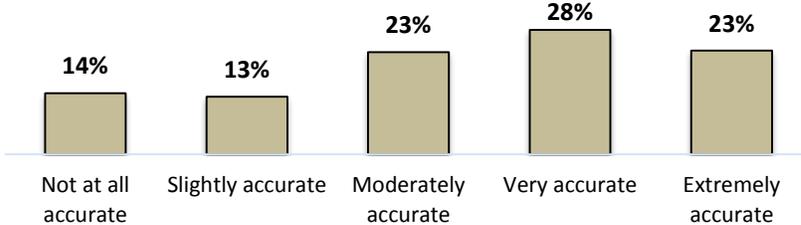
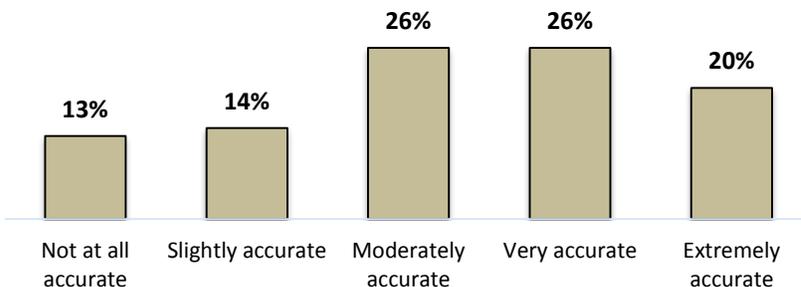


Figure 10: I integrated multiple points of view into my existing worldview (%)



Students were asked several questions regarding how they developed their worldview, and specifically if they had considered four particular areas before committing to their current worldview. The first perspective showed that 36% of students have not thoughtfully considered other religions and non-religious perspectives, while 39% have thoughtfully considered other perspectives, demonstrating on this particular issue, students are split (figure 7).

Balancing this finding, 23% of students report feeling as though they have had to reconcile competing religious and nonreligious perspectives in the formation of their worldview (figure 8). Through this process, over half (51%) of students have talked and listened to people who do not share their point of view (figure 9).

Even with the consideration of other perspectives and reconciliation of their own perspectives, 27% of students report they have not considered other perspectives in their existing worldview (figure 10).

Religious and Community Experiences

Students were asked about their various activities and experiences in the 12 months before coming to campus. While most of the students (65%) had attended a religious service of their own faith, 29% had also attended a service not of their faith (figure 11).

Figure 11: Have attended... (%)

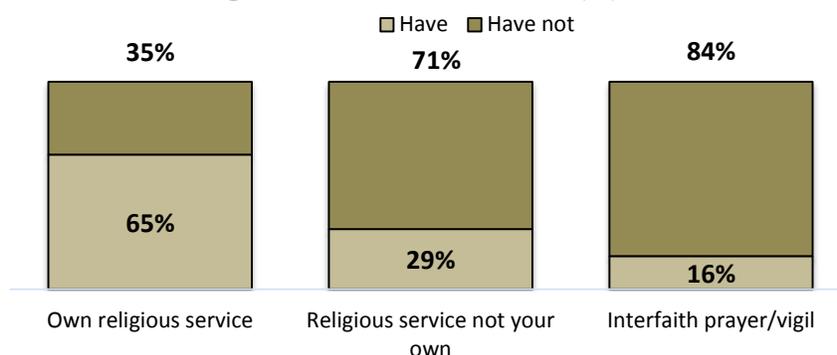
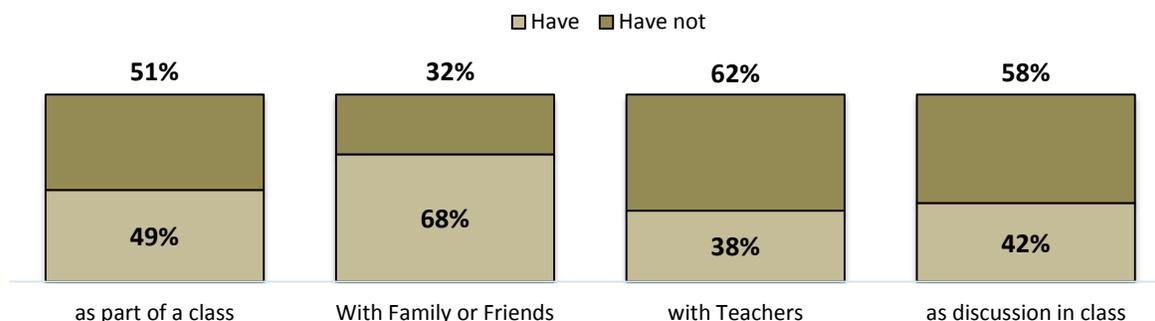
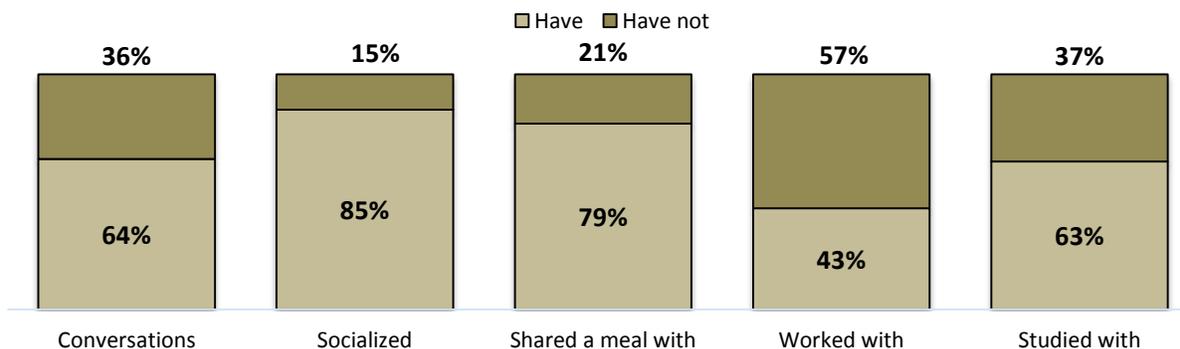


Figure 12: Have discussed religious diversity or my worldview... (%)



About half of the students surveyed discussed diversity or worldviews as part of a class while 42% report sharing their own personal worldview as part of a discussion in class. A majority (68%) of students have discussed these topics with family or friends and just 38% have had discussions about diversity and/or their worldview with teachers (figure 12). In regards to activities, most students have socialized (85%) or shared a meal with (79%) of someone with a different perspective (religious or non-religious) than their own. Only 43% know of working with someone who has a different perspective and about the same percentage of students have studied with (63%) or had a conversation with (64%) someone with different religious or non-religious perspective (figure 13).

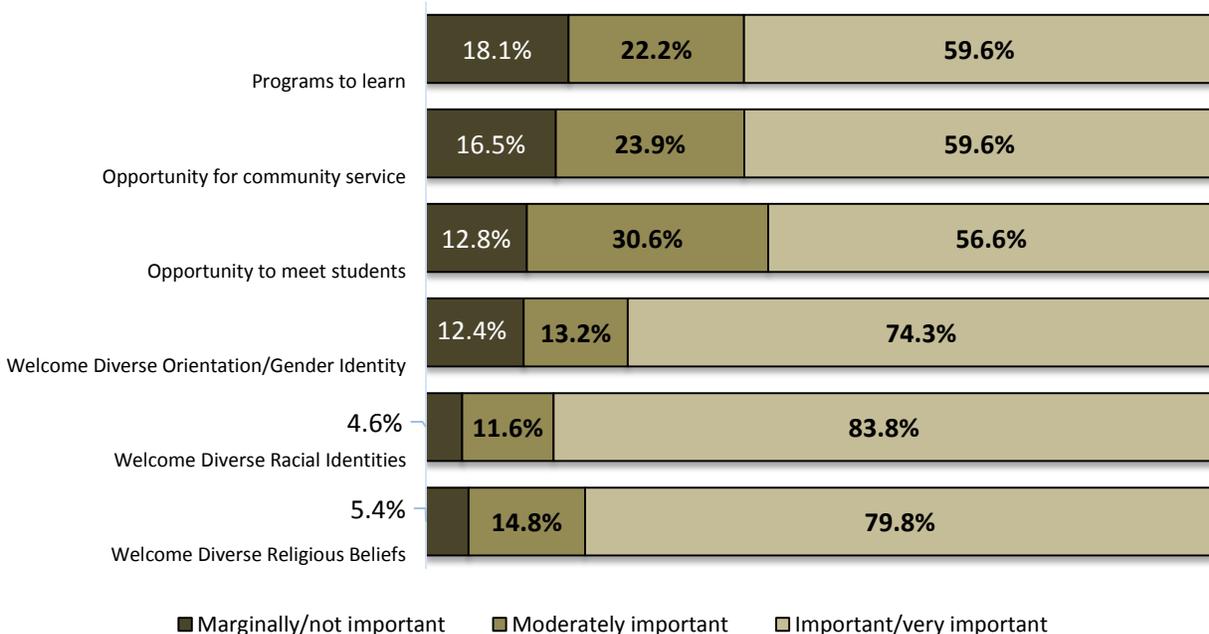
Figure 13: Have ever done these things with someone of a different religious or nonreligious perspective (%)



What's Important on Campus

In an effort to better understand how student perceptions and expectations impact their view of Oakland University, respondents were asked pointed questions regarding what their expectations were of their university in relation to facilitating religious diversity and understanding. This survey asked about how important it was to them that their university provide the following six things: 1) Courses and other educational programs to help learn about different religious traditions around the world; 2) Opportunities to participate in community service with students of diverse religious and nonreligious perspectives; 3) Opportunities to get to know students of other religious and nonreligious perspectives; 4) A welcoming environment for people of diverse sexual orientations and gender identities; 5) A welcoming environment for people of diverse racial identities; and 6) A welcoming environment for people of diverse religious and nonreligious perspectives.

Figure 14: How important it is for Oakland University to provide the following (%):

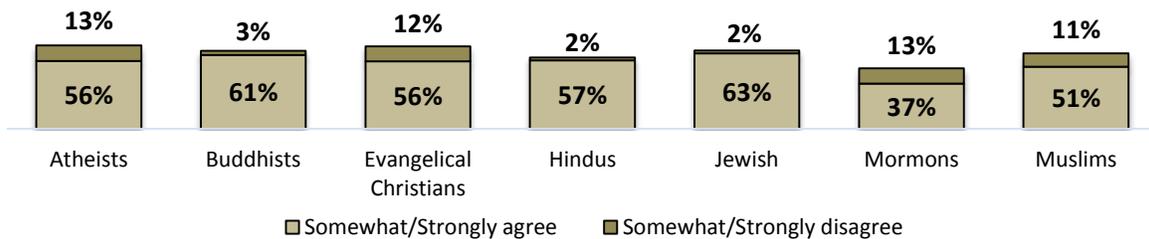


Oakland University students overwhelmingly report they feel it is important or very important (79.8%) that their university provide a welcoming environment for people of religious and non-religious perspectives. The student respondents also feel strongly that it is important or very important their university provide opportunities to get to know students with different perspectives that their own (56.6%); courses and other educational programs to help them learn about different religions (59.6%); and opportunities to participate in community service with students of diverse religions (59.6%).

Positive Contribution, Attitude & Perception of Ethics

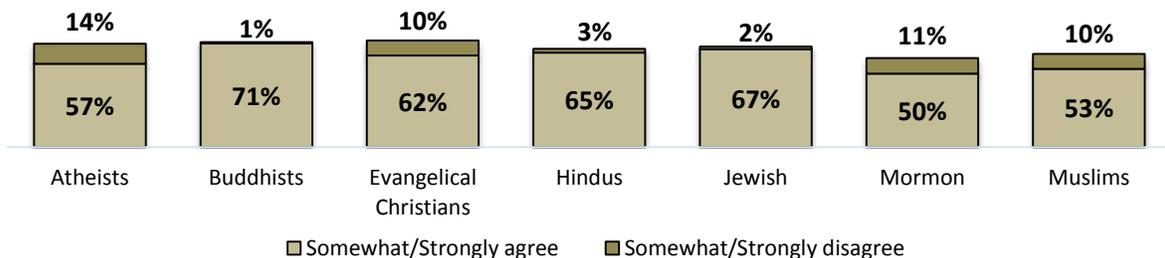
Students were asked several questions regarding their attitude towards groups other than the one they belong to as well as their perception of ethics of different groups and their positive contribution towards society in general (figures 15, 16, & 17). Comparisons show that students mostly have positive feelings (76%) towards those of Jewish faith and feel they have made positive contributions to society (63%) and that they are ethical (67%). More than half of students feel Buddhists (61%), Hindus (57%), Atheists (56%), Evangelical Christians (56%), and Muslims (51%) all have made positive contributions to society.

Figure 15: These religions have made positive contributions to society (%)



When students are asked to consider whether or not they consider people from different religious groups as ethical, Buddhists (71%) and Jewish (67%) are perceived as the most ethical and Muslim (53%) and Mormon (50%) with the lowest percentage as somewhat or strongly agreeing.

Figure 16: People from these religions are ethical people (%)



When considering whether or not students somewhat or strongly agreed that they have a positive attitude towards people from different religions, Buddhists (79%) and Hindus (74%) had the strongest response while Muslims (65%) and Mormons (57%) had the lowest in agreement.

Figure 17: I have a positive attitude towards the following groups (%)

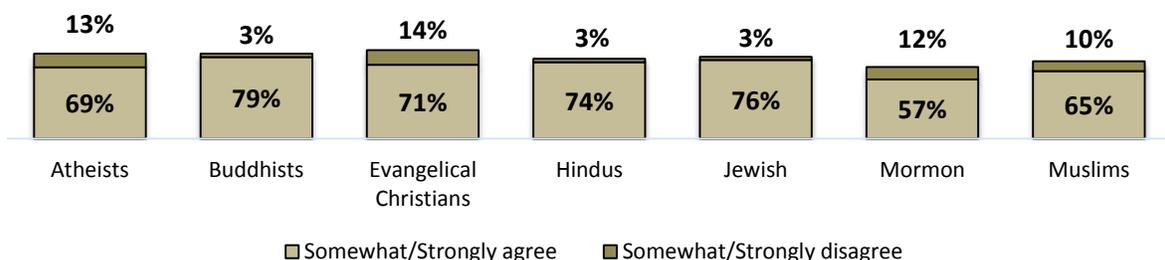


Figure 18: People with these political stances are ethical people (%)

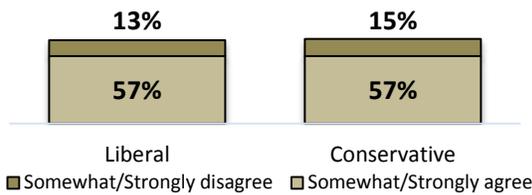
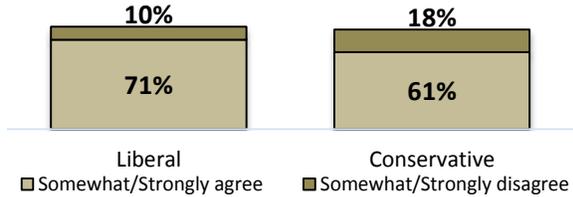
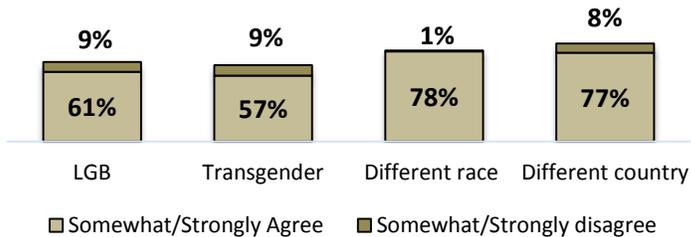


Figure 19: I have a positive attitude towards people with these political stances (%)



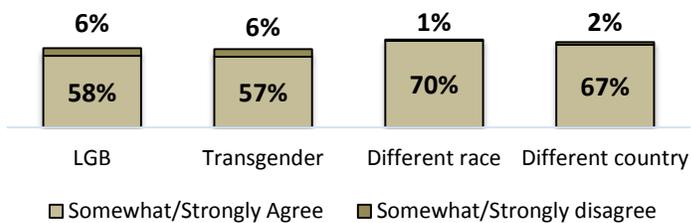
When students consider political affiliation, there is no difference between those who feel there is a positive contribution to society with 59.4% of both Liberals and Conservatives viewing the other party as making positive contributions to society. There is a difference however that 15% of students view those with Conservative views as not ethical people and 18% disagreeing that they have a positive attitude towards that same group (figures 18 & 19).

Figure 20: The following groups make positive contributions to society (%)



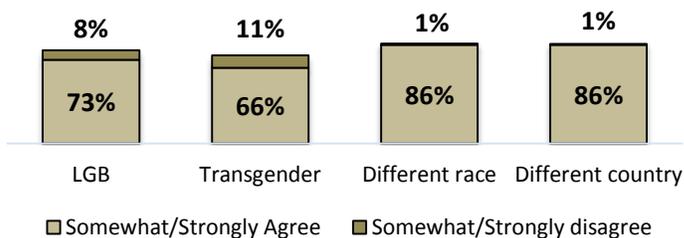
Respondents somewhat or strongly agreed the LGB community makes positive contributions to society (61%); are ethical people (58%) and that they have a positive attitude (73%) towards this group. 30% are undecided about their opinion of the LGB community having a positive contribution to society.

Figure 21: The following groups are ethical people (%)



When referring to the Transgender community, the perceptions are not as positive with 57% somewhat or strongly agreeing that this population makes positive contributions to society and/or are ethical people and 66% agree they have a positive attitude towards the transgender community. However, 37% are undecided regarding their perspective of Transgender individuals being ethical people.

Figure 22: I have a positive attitude towards the following groups (%)

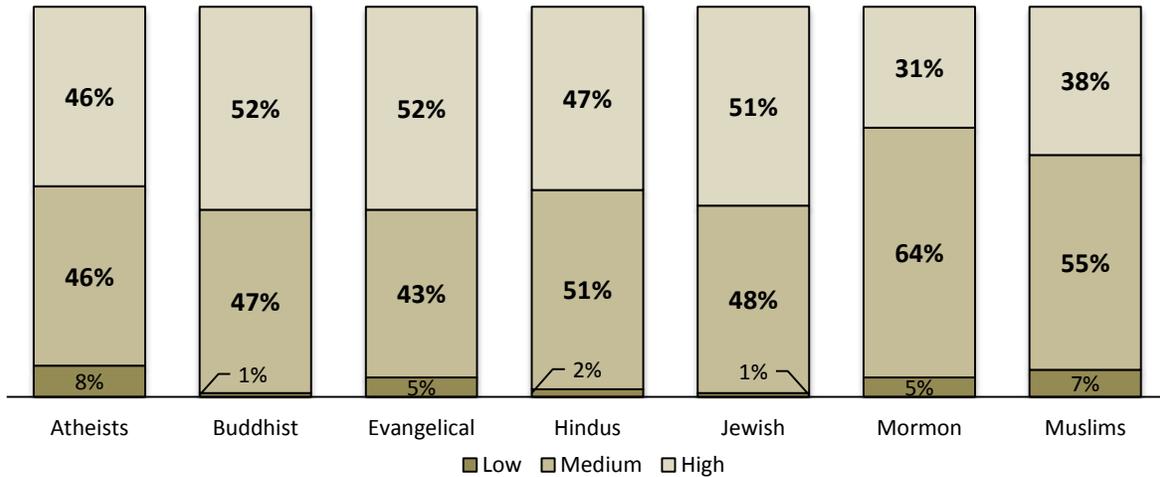


However, 78% somewhat or strongly agree those who are of a different race make positive contributions to society and 77% have this perspective of those who come from a different country. 86% of respondents somewhat or strongly agree that they have a positive attitude towards those of a different race and/or those from a different country (figures 20, 21, & 22).

Appreciative Attitudes

A series of questions measured how students view those who belong to different groups based on religion, political belief, sexual orientation, race, and country of origin.

Figure 23: Appreciative attitudes of religious groups (%)



Over half of respondents report having a high appreciative attitude for Buddhists (52%), Evangelical Christians (52%), and those of Jewish faith (51%). The lowest appreciative attitudes were for those of Muslim (38%) and Mormon (31%) faith (figure 23). Regarding a high appreciative attitude towards those in the LGB and Transgender communities, respondents were split with 50% and 45% respectively (figure 25), which also closely reflects the perspective of each political affiliation with liberal at 51% and conservative at 41% (figure 24).

Figure 24: Appreciative attitudes of political affiliation (%)

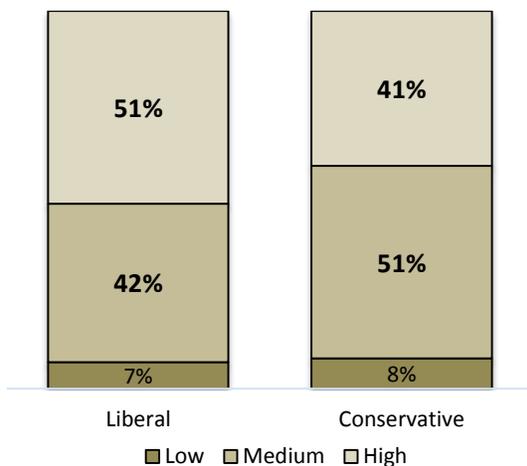
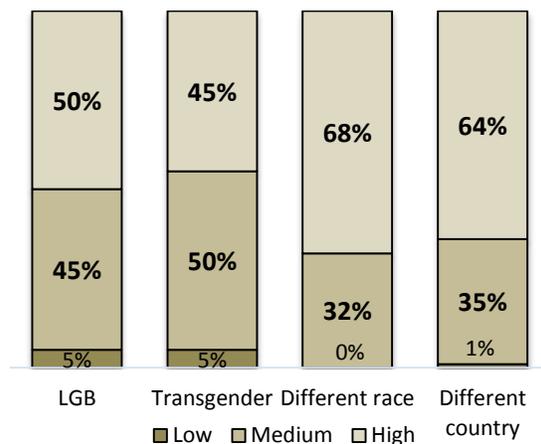


Figure 25: Appreciative attitudes of LGB, transgender, different race & different country (%)



Religious competency

A portion of this survey tested students on their knowledge of religious information, or their religious competency. All responses are displayed with the response rates by percentage and the correct answer in **bold** (figure 26).

Students were able to overwhelmingly correctly name the difference between Atheists and Agnostics (91.4%), fasting as the spiritual practice during the month of Ramadan (91.3%), a state of enlightenment free from suffering as the notion of Nirvana in the Buddhist tradition (89%), and the Torah as the foundational text in the Jewish tradition (87.7%). While 55.7% of students could identify Hindu as the religion practiced by Ghandi, 43.8% incorrectly thought he was of Buddhist faith. While Christian faith was the largest representation in this survey at 47.3%, more students incorrectly identified The Bible (47.6%) as the 'gospel' in the Christian tradition, than the correct answer, good news shared by Jesus Christ (44.7%).

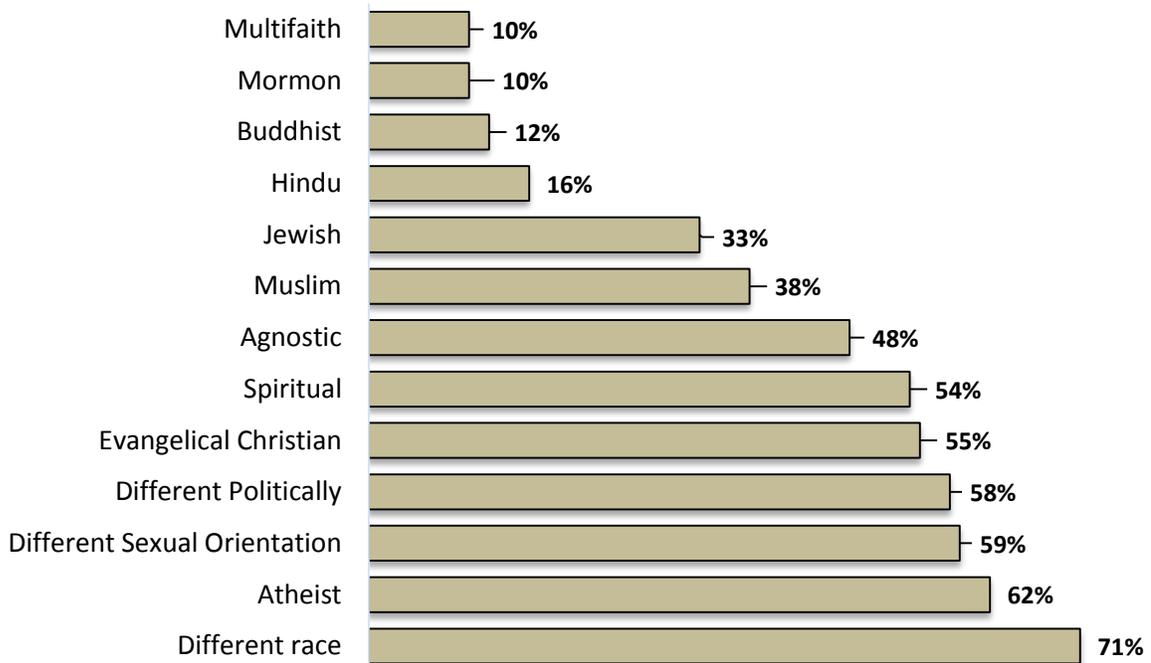
Figure 26: Religious competency questions

<p>What is the foundational text in the Jewish tradition?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •The Synagogue (3.9%) •The Qur'an (8.4%) •The Torah (87.7%) 	<p>The Social Activist who is Catholic is:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. (78.2%) •Valerie Kaur (1.1%) •Dorothy Day (14.9%) •Malala Yousafzai (2.3%) •Christ Stedman (3.4%) 	<p>Name the religious identity of Ghandi.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Buddhist (43.8%) •Hindu (55.7%) •Muslim (0.5%) 	<p>The LDS movement was founded by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Elhanan Winchester (0.9%) •Joseph Smith (75%) •Martin Luther (8.9%) •John Calvin (12.5%) •Cotton Mather (2.7%)
<p>The notion of Nirvana in the Buddhist tradition refers to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Meditation (2.7%) •Good deeds resulting in (+) consequences (2.7%) •State of enlightenment free from suffering (89%) •Rebirth of a living being after death (4.4%) •Adherence to the Four Noble Truths (1.1%) 	<p>The difference between atheists & agnostics is:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Atheists are uncertain about God while Agnostics do not believe in God (2.7%) •Atheists do not believe in God while Agnostics are uncertain God exists (91.4%) •Atheists do not believe in God, Agnostics are certain God exists (5.0%) •They share the same beliefs (0.9%) 	<p>The spiritual practice during the month of Ramadan</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Meditation (4.3%) •Fasting (91.3%) •Pilgrimage (2.9%) •Service to those in need(0.5%) •None of the above (1%) 	<p>In the Christian tradition, the 'gospel' refers to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •The Bible (47.6%) •Good news shared by Jesus Christ (44.7%) •Style of worship (3.4%) •Moral guidelines (2.9%) •None of the above (1.4%)

Friend Relationships

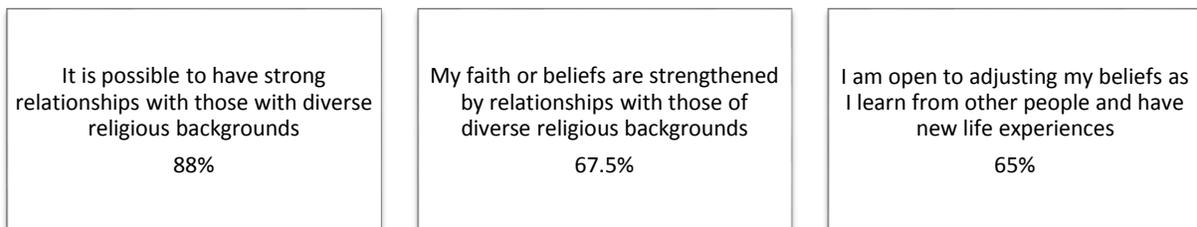
Part of understanding how worldviews are formed and perceptions developed includes learning about how students interact with those around them and the relationships they form (figure 27). Almost $\frac{3}{4}$ of students report having at least one close friend who is a different race than they are (71%) and over half have friends that are of a different sexual orientation (59%) and/or different from them politically (58%). Fewer students have friends who are Hindu (16%), Buddhist (12%), Mormon (10%) or multifaith (10%).

Figure 27: I have at least one close friend who is (%):



For the most part, respondents report having an open mind regarding the ability to have strong relationships with people different than them (88%), that they find strength in their faith by the religious diversity in their relationships (67.5%), and that they are open to adjusting their beliefs as they experience new things (65%).

Figure 28: % of students who somewhat or strongly agree with the statement:



Global Citizenship, Appreciation, Goodwill & Acceptance & Commitment

Figure 29: Global citizenship scale

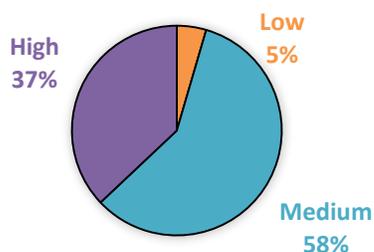


Figure 30: Appreciation of interreligious commonalities and differences scale

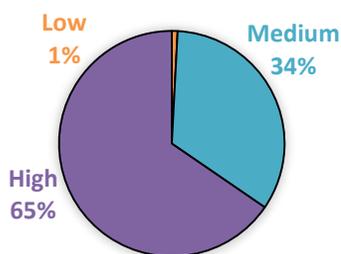


Figure 31: Goodwill/acceptance scale

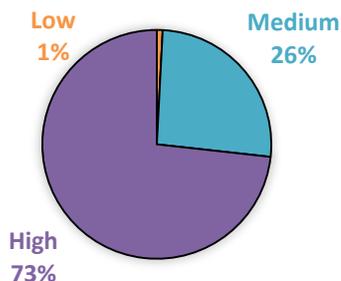
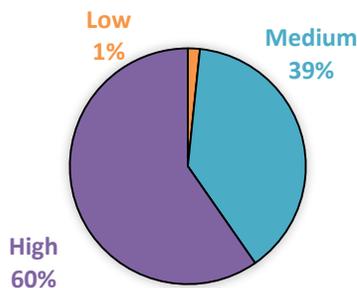


Figure 32: Commitment to interfaith leadership & service scale



A series of statements (detailed below) were asked of students. Students were asked to what degree they agree or disagree with each statement. (1=strong disagreement; 5=strong agreement). These statements were then summed to create four scales. Each scale has three categories: High (summed value 16 or greater), Medium (summed values of 9 to 15), and Low (summed values 8 or below). Each scale is detailed as follows:

A **Global Citizenship scale** (figure 29) was created by summing the totals of the following 4 statements: I am actively working to foster justice in the world (figure 33:18), I frequently think about the global problems of our time and how I will contribute to resolving them (figure 33:14), I am currently taking steps to improve the lives of people around the world (figure 33:19), and I am actively learning about people across the globe who have different religious and cultural ways of life than I do (figure 33:16).

An **Appreciation scale** (figure 30) was created by summing the totals of the following 4 statements: Love is a value that is core to most of the world's religions (figure 33:10); There are essential differences in beliefs that distinguish world religions (figure 33:9); There are essential differences in spiritual practices that distinguish world religions (figure 33:5); and world religions share many common values (figure 33:4).

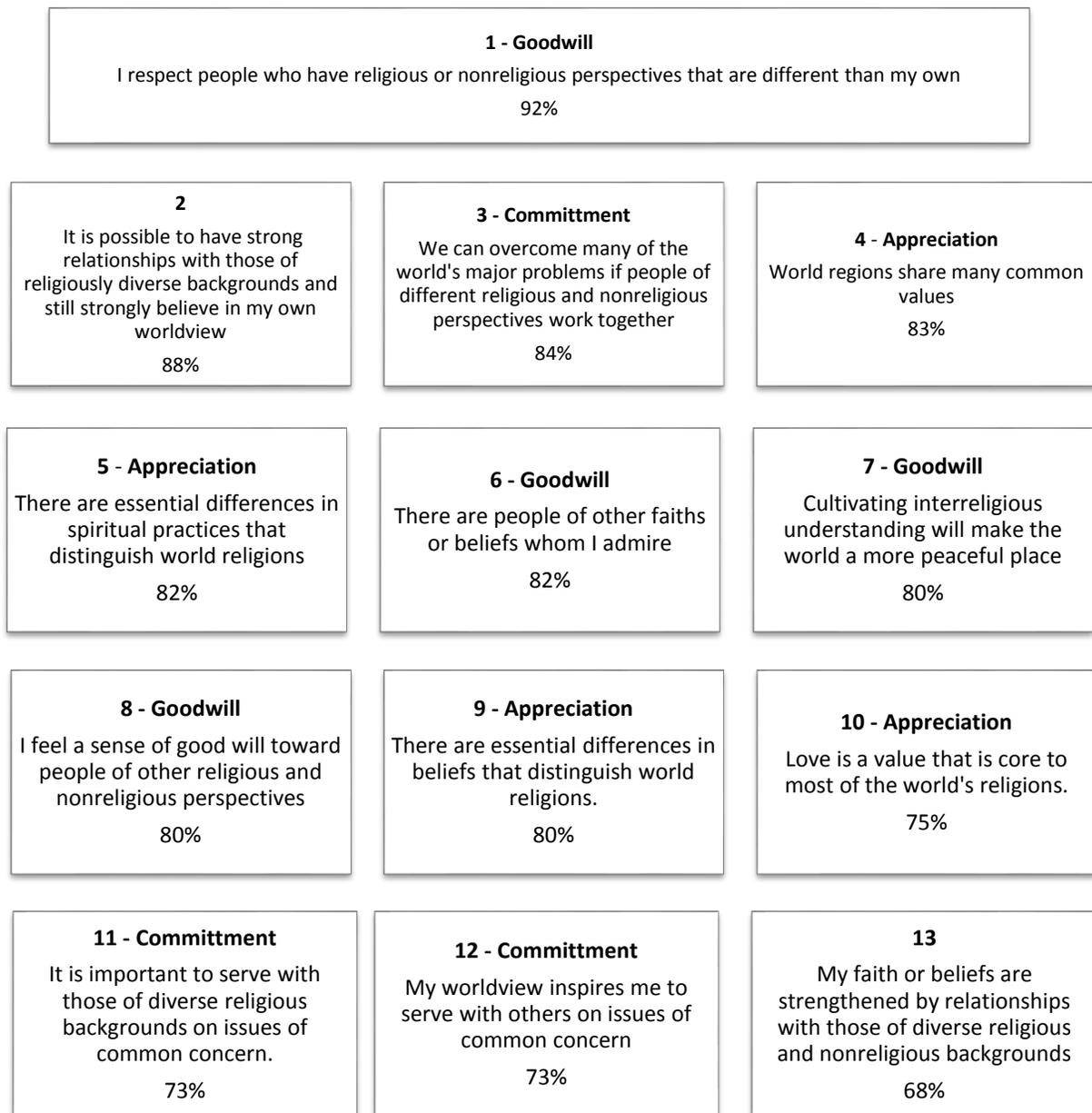
A **Goodwill & Acceptance scale** (figure 31) was created by summing the totals of the following 4 statements: Cultivating interreligious understanding will make the world a more peaceful place (figure 33:7); I feel a sense of good will toward people of other religions (figure 33:8); I respect people who have religious or nonreligious perspectives different than my own (figure 33:1); and there are people of other faiths or beliefs whom I admire (figure 33:6).

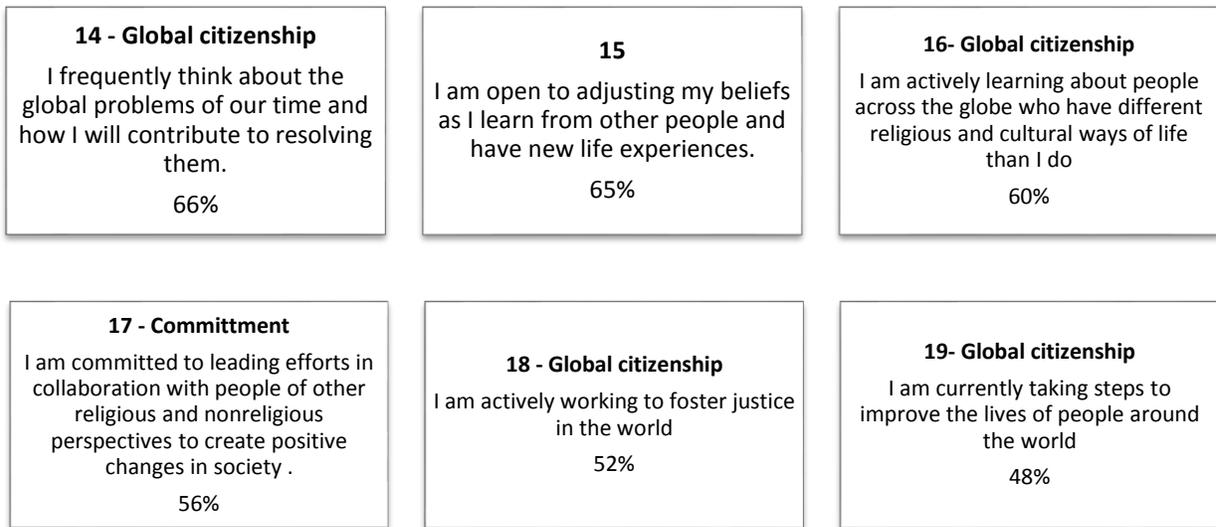
A **Commitment to Interfaith Leadership & Service scale** (figure 32) was created by summing the totals of the following 4 statements: I am committed to leading efforts in collaboration with people of other religious and nonreligious perspectives to create positive changes in society (figure 33:17); My worldview inspires me to serve with others on issues of common concern (figure 33:12); It is important to serve those with diverse religious

backgrounds on issues of common concern (figure 33:11); and we can overcome many of the world’s major problems if people of different religious and nonreligious perspectives work together (figure 33:3).

As part of these measures, a series of 19 statements gauged overall perspectives, perceptions and opinion of world matters (figure 33). Students overwhelmingly (92% strongly or somewhat agree) express having a respect for people who have different perspectives than their own (figure 33:1). Questions in figure 33 are organized by highest somewhat or strongly agree statements (statement 1 - 92%) to the lowest (statement 19 – 48%). Each question is also identified as to which scale (global citizenship, goodwill, appreciation, or commitment) it was a part of.

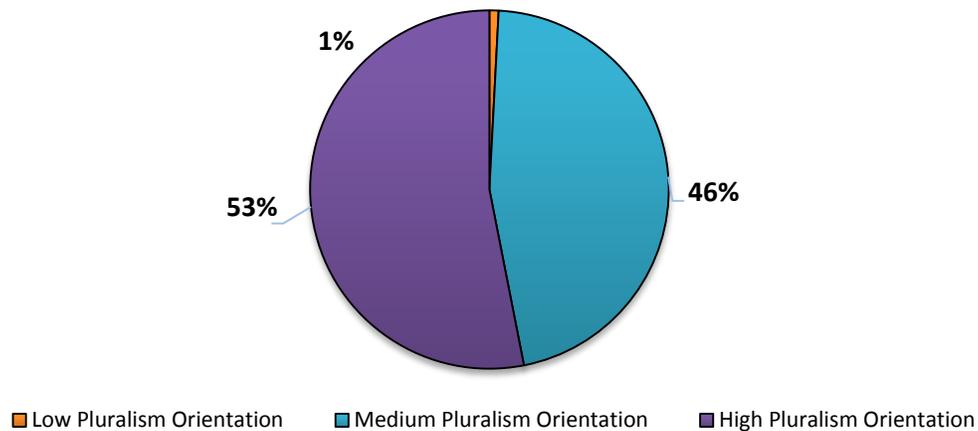
Figure 33: % of students who somewhat or strongly agree with the statement:





With the exception of one statement (figure 32:19); over half of all students surveyed somewhat or strongly agreed with all of the statements and for 10 of the 19 questions, over 75% of students somewhat or strongly agreed with the statements (figure 32: 1-10).

Figure 34: Overall plurality scale



All statements were then summed for an overall plurality scale to measure the overall acceptance, commitment, appreciation and global citizen ship a student feels. Just over half of students and OU have a high pluralism orientation while just 1% have a low pluralism orientation (figure 34).

Correlation Analysis

Self-report influences on worldview perspective

Influences on religious and world attitudes vary greatly among college students. This survey was administered during their first semester on OU campus. As a preliminary examination of the survey data, a simple correlation analysis was conducted to determine which influences on a student's worldview had a relationship with their global citizenship, goodwill & acceptance, appreciation, commitment to interfaith commonalities & difference, commitment to interfaith leadership and service, and overall pluralism orientation.

Table 1: Correlation between influences on worldview and scales

Influences	Global Citizenship	Goodwill/ Acceptance	Appreciation	Commitment	Pluralism
Religious faith/beliefs	-.008	-.020	.090	.072	-.006
Nonreligious faith/beliefs	.041	.066	.025	.021	.057
Philosophical tradition	-.138*	.105	.020	.157*	.142*
Political views	.131*	.006	-.007	.004	.028
Family background	-.056	.016	.066	-.020	.005
Cultural background	-.040	-.015	.007	.026	-.009
Social class	.060	-.050	-.063	-.020	-.017
Racial/ethnic identity	.009	-.027	.031	.051	.025
Gender identity	.005	-.031	-.042	-.079	-.044
Sexual orientation	-.158*	-.195**	-.154*	-.202**	-.220**
Other influences	.015	.033	-.113	-.071	-.022

*-indicates significance at $p > .05$

**-indicates significance at $p > .01$

Influences. This examination of relationships shows that for OU students, there are negative correlations with a weak relationship for all scales and sexual orientation: Global Citizenship ($p = .014$); Goodwill/Acceptance ($p = .002$); Appreciation ($p = .016$); Commitment ($p = .002$); & Pluralism Orientation ($p = .001$). This indicates that the less of an influence sexual orientation has on the student's formation of their worldview, the higher the scale and vice versa; the more an influence sexual orientation has on a student's worldview formation, the lower the sense of appreciation, goodwill/acceptance, appreciation, commitment, and overall pluralist perspective.

Both political views ($p = .041$) and philosophical traditions ($p = .031$) have a positive correlation and weak relationships with global citizenship. The more these factors influence their worldview, the higher the sense of global citizenship. Philosophical tradition also has a positive correlation with a weak relationship with commitment ($p = .014$) and pluralist perspective ($p = .027$). There were no other significant correlations between worldview influences and scales (Table 1).

Student experiences

In an effort to determine what experiences have a relationship with the worldview of OU students, a correlation analysis was conducted between 14 experiences students report having in the previous year and the worldview scales.

To learn a bit more about students and their experiences in the year prior to coming to OU, the series of questions asking about experiences in the students year before coming to campus were examined for relationships with the global citizenship, goodwill & acceptance, appreciation, commitment and pluralism scales. The results showed that several experiences had significant relationships with the worldview scales and can be seen in table 2.

Table 2: Correlation between experiences and scales

	Global Citizenship	Goodwill/ Acceptance	Appreciation	Commitment	Pluralism
Shared a meal	.119	.109	.075	.110	.130*
Studied	.117	.125	.126*	.170**	.163*
Socialized	.140*	.153*	.046	.097	.133*
Discussed diversity	.133*	.127*	.071	.132*	.146*
Discussed religion	.145*	.079	-.011	.020	.064
Discussed in class	.173**	.094	-.039	.109	.104
Multi-faith family	.156*	.077	.000	.094	.103
Discussed friends/family	.311**	.324**	.109	.224**	.309**
Attended own service	-.015	-.006	.087	.013	-.005
Attended service not own	.229**	.183**	.085	.211**	.225**
Community service	.210**	.158*	.171**	.212**	.214**
Travel outside US	.078	-.069	-.061	-.010	-.024
Interfaith vigil	.056	.017	.028	.007	.021
Interfaith dialogue	.179**	.121	.152*	.158*	.164*

*-indicates significance at $p > .05$

**-indicates significance at $p > .01$

Global Citizenship. Having socialized with someone of a different religious or non-religious perspective ($p = .030$); discussed religious diversity in at least one of their high school classes ($p = .024$); discussed religious or spiritual topics with teachers ($p = .024$); come from a multifaith family ($p = .015$); attended religious services outside of their own tradition ($p = .000$); participated in community service ($p = .001$) and participated in an interfaith dialogue ($p = .005$) all had a correlation and weak positive relationship with Global Citizenship. The strongest (moderate) positive relationship with a sense of Global Citizenship was with students who had discussed religious diversity with family or friends ($p = .000$).

Goodwill & Acceptance. Having socialized with someone of a different religious or non-religious perspective ($p = .017$); discussed religious diversity in at least one of their high school classes ($p = .048$); attended religious services outside of their own tradition ($p = .000$); participated in community service ($p = .004$); and participated in community service ($p = .014$) all had a correlation and weak relationship with Goodwill & Acceptance. The strongest (moderate) positive relationship with a sense of Global Citizenship was with students who had discussed religious diversity with family or friends ($p = .000$).

Appreciating Interreligious Commonalities and Differences. Having studied with someone of a different religious or nonreligious perspective ($p = .049$); participated in community service ($p = .007$); and participated in an interfaith dialogue ($p = .018$) all had a correlation and weak positive relationship with Appreciating interreligious commonalities and differences.

Commitment to Interfaith Leadership and Service. Having studied with someone of a different religious or nonreligious perspective ($p=.008$); discussed religious diversity in at least one of their high school classes ($p=.039$); discussed religious diversity with family and friends ($p=.000$); attended religious services outside of their own tradition ($p=.001$); participated in community service ($p=.001$); and participated in an interfaith dialogue ($p=.014$) all had a correlation and weak positive relationship with Commitment to interfaith leadership and service.

Pluralism Orientation. Having shared a meal with someone of a different religious or nonreligious perspective ($p=.043$); having studied with someone of a different religious or nonreligious perspective ($p=.011$); having socialized with someone of a different religious or nonreligious perspective ($p=.038$); discussed religious diversity in at least one high school course ($p=.023$); attended religious services in a different tradition ($p=.000$); participated in community service ($p=.001$); and participated in an interfaith dialogue ($p=.010$) all had a correlation and weak positive relationship with pluralism orientation. The strongest (moderate) positive relationship with a sense of pluralism orientation was with students who had discussed religious diversity with family or friends ($p=.000$).

Discussion

CIRP comparisons. Oakland University administers the Cooperative Institutional Research Program Freshmen survey (CIRP) to all incoming freshmen during their orientation. It is important to note that students who responded to the IDEALS survey closely resemble the demographics of OU Freshmen for AY 2015-2016 who responded to the CIRP, but there are some key differences that must be considered when interpreting the findings of the IDEALS survey.

While direct comparisons cannot always be made, for many of the demographic items, students who responded to the IDEALS survey were, in many areas, indicative of the same population who took the CIRP survey. Some key demographic comparisons are as follows:

Table 3: IDEALS & CIRP student demographic comparisons

Question	IDEALS	CIRP
Age		
• 18 years old	59.0%	76.4%
• 19 years old	10.9%	20.2%
• 20 years old	5.9%	0.7%
• 21 and older	21.4%	0.3%
Race & Ethnicity		
• Student of color	26%	24.4%
• Not student of color (White)	74%	75.6%
Sexual Orientation		
• Heterosexual	88% *	94.7%
Religion		
• Catholic	21.4%	25.8%
• Non-religious	7.0% *	16.3%
• Agnostic	9.5%	6.3%
• Atheist	8.6%**	4.1%
Political leaning		
• Very conservative	1.3%	1.6%
• Conservative	19.3%	20.3%
• Moderate	42.8% *	54.4%
• Liberal	27.2% *	22.0%
• Very Liberal	9.1% *	2.0%

* more than 5% difference than CIRP

** more than 4% difference than CIRP

Overall, the sample who responded to the IDEALS survey were comparable in race & ethnicity and religion. The only great differences in regards to religion were less students reported being non-religious in the IDEALS (7.0%) than in the CIRP (16.3%), but the IDEALS, being geared towards

asking about religious perspectives, offered more “non-religious” options than the CIRP, which may account for this difference.

However, in relation to students who identify as Atheist, the IDEALS sample was at 8.6% while the CIRP sample was at 4.1%. Another incongruence between the IDEALS and CIRP was regarding sexual identity. 88% of IDEALS respondents identify as heterosexual while 94.7% of CIRP respondents also identify as heterosexual. Two possible explanations can account for this difference. First, students who take the CIRP often do so in the presence of their parent or guardian at new student orientation, which may influence the student’s perception of confidentiality. Conversely, the IDEALS was taken privately after almost a full semester on campus. It is worthy to note that in regards to sexual orientation, OU is comparable to CIRP national averages. Secondly, the sample who responded to the IDEALS survey are more likely to be non-religious and/or not be heterosexual. Most importantly though is to consider that these are two key differences in the demographic sample between the IDEALS and CIRP which must be considered when examining the results of this survey (table 3).

In regards to political beliefs, more students from the CIRP considered themselves moderate/middle-of-the-road, while more students from the IDEALS identify as liberal or very liberal/far left (table 3). Perhaps the greatest difference between the IDEALS sample and the CIRP sample is the age of respondents. IDEALS respondents were, as a whole, older than CIRP respondents (table 3). Another key difference is that the IDEALS survey included all students who were first time on OU campus, not just FTIACs. These two factors could account for some incongruence as older students have had more time to develop a worldview and personal identity outside of their neighborhoods and OU campus.

Concept comparisons. There are some closely related concept areas present in both the IDEALS and the CIRP that enables some comparisons to be made.

- ***Socialization.*** Both surveys ask about socialization experiences. 65% of IDEALS respondents have socialized with someone of a different religious or non-religious group while 66.9% of CIRP respondents have frequently or sometimes socialized with someone of a different race or ethnic group.
- ***Attendance at religious services.*** There was very little difference between the percentage of students who reported they frequently or occasionally attended a religious service (CIRP) or attended a religious service of their own faith (IDEALS) with 70.1% and 65% respectively.
- ***Discussions about religion and politics.*** For both the CIRP and IDEALS surveys, students are frequently having discussions about religion (74.6%, CIRP), politics (70.9%, CIRP) with family and friends (68%, IDEALS), as part of a class (49%, IDEALS), and with teachers (38%). One thing that these questions do not discern is whether or not religion or politics was a topic in the class or if the student volunteered their position or worldview.
- ***Ability to see other perspectives.*** Incoming freshmen indicated on the CIRP that they feel their strengths lie in their ability to see the world from someone else’s perspective (77.1%) and having an openness to having their own views challenged (63.4%) which is aligned with the IDEALS respondents who somewhat or strongly agree that they are open to adjusting their beliefs as they learn from other people and have new life views (65%).

Implications for OU

According to the results of the CIRP during AY 2015-2016, our students overwhelmingly come from mostly or completely White high schools (62.1%) and neighborhoods (73.5%) meaning the first prolonged exposure many students have of different cultures, races, and ethnicities will happen on OU's campus. Being on campus closes the social distance between white and non-white students, demonstrating the importance of enabling student opportunities to learn and experience cultures other than those they are familiar with. Students also overwhelmingly feel it is important or very important OU welcome diverse religious beliefs (79.8%), diverse racial identities (83.8%), and sexual orientation/gender identities (74.3%) as well as provide opportunities to meet other students (56.6%). Support of programs and courses that specifically meet this need could greatly improve the student experiences and give them knowledge of diverse populations during this crucial time of personal development.

One of the overarching outcomes of this survey was the portion of the OU student population who have either not considered (Worldview influences, page 9) or experienced (Religious and community experiences, page 10) other religious and nonreligious perspectives as part of the formation of their own worldview. This lack of exposure places students at risk of engaging in courses that reinforce confirmation bias and thusly, missing out on an essential part of undergraduate education as well as personal identity development, including the worldview they will take in to the workplace. Although the majority of students are able to consider the perspectives of others (Worldview influences, page 9; Figure 33.15, page 19) there are still between 23% and 36.6% of students who are not open to considering other perspectives, reinforcing the importance of the integration of race, ethnicity, gender, and sexuality in to existing curriculum and courses (Kuh, Kinzie, Schuh, & Whitt, 2005).

The importance of exposing students to a variety of experiences and perspectives is validated with the results of this survey. Students with the opportunity to socialize with people with different worldviews of their own had a positive correlation with a positive pluralism perspective (table 2). This means that students who are exposed to diverse populations and new experiences during their educational careers are more likely to be more tolerant, accepting, appreciative and global in their overall perspectives. In discussing the essence of General Education programs, this alone supports the need to encourage exploration through this curriculum and for OU to support efforts to expose students to more culture, history, and diversity.

Faculty can encourage exposure to worldviews other than their own by incorporating exercises, events, extra credit, or other activities in to their coursework. Relating what students experience to course material and discussing worldview during the course (table 20) has a relationship with the formation of their sense of global citizenship. This supports the importance of having guided discussions in the classroom to assist students in the formation of their personal worldviews.