



Making Meaning: Embracing Spirituality, Faith, Religion, and Life Purpose in Student Affairs

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"In this comprehensive work that melds practice with theory, the authors join an emerging wave of scholars emphasizing the cultivation of meaning and purpose as an essential element in holistic student development. By tackling such topics as the unjust privileging of Christians and the engagement of diverse worldviews, the authors argue compellingly that student affairs should not forsake its responsibility in creating spaces for all students to explore their religious, secular, and/or spiritual paths."

--Pamela Crosby, Co-Editor, Journal of College and Character, NASPA

This book addresses religion and secularism as critical and contested elements of college student diversity. It both examines why and how this topic has become an integral aspect of the field of student affairs, and considers how scholars and practitioners should engage in the discussion, as well as the extent to which they should be involved in students' crises of faith, spiritual struggles, and questions of life purpose.

Part history of the field, part prognostication for the future, the contributing authors discuss how student affairs has reached this critical juncture in its relationship with religious and secular diversity and why this development is poised to create lasting change on college campuses.

Section I of this book focuses on the research on spirituality, faith, religion, and life purpose; considers the evolution of faith development theories from not only Christian perspectives but Muslim, Jewish, atheist and other secular worldviews; examines the influence of faith frames in students' daily lives; and addresses the impact of campus climate for religion/spirituality, as well as the relationship between religious minority/majority status, on student outcomes. It concludes by tracing the pendulum swing from higher education's historical foundation in religion to the science-focused, religion-averse 20th century, and now to a fragile middle position, in which religious and secular diversity are being seriously considered and embraced.

Section II analyzes the role professional associations play in advancing the student affairs field's commitment to spirituality, faith and life purpose; the degree of support they offer to practitioners as they examine their own religious and secular identities, and envisages potential new programming, resources, and networks.

Section III describes a number of programs and services developed by practitioners and faculty members working in this area on their campuses; synthesizes these developments for an examination of where best practices stand today; and imagines the future of institutionalizing higher education's support for students' explorations of spirituality, faith, religion, and life purpose.

Making Meaning provides a comprehensive resource for student affairs scholars and practitioners seeking to understand these topics and apply them in their own research and daily work.

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