



Why Choose a Christian College? –

A Message Every Christian Parent

(and Student) Should Hear!

**Steve Henderson
Christian Consulting**

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- A. Public Education has been around for a long time:
Consider the Babylonians -- four young men faced that world's educational system (Daniel)

Agenda:

- Change support group: family, friends, church
- Change location: separate from roots
- Change name
- Change lifestyle

Result:

Only those four did not bow

For the others:

- Stole their future
- Stole their past
- Stole their purity – lifestyle
- Stole their heritage
- Stole their God

After only three years full-time (equivalent in time to our four nine-month terms), even the four bore the marks of the process for the rest of their lives

- B. How College Affects Students, Pascarella and Terenzini (1991) – summary by Pepper Dill – Howard Payne University

There is a maturing process – development of personal identity and values

1. During their time at college, students experience a significant “search for identity” as to the adults they will become (p. 183)

Overall decline in religious indicators unless at a Christian college

2. Research consistently reports a decline in religious values, attitudes and behaviors during the college years.
 - A report examining seniors at U. of Texas found a drop of 27% in self-reported religious activities (i.e., church attendance, prayer, etc.)
 - Studies also clearly indicate that a change in a student's religious commitment mirrors the change in their religious affiliation and behavior. (pp. 280-281)
3. Colleges do influence changes in a student's religious orientation and behaviors. (p. 293)

4. Studies (Astin 1972 & 1977) found significantly greater than expected decreases in conventional religious affiliation and religious behaviors (praying, reading the Bible, etc.) among students attending selective, prestigious, non-religious affiliated, 4-year colleges and large public universities.

In fact, while attending secular and public universities produced declines in students' religious values and behaviors, enrollment in church-related colleges tended to support and strengthen the students' existing religious values and behaviors. (p. 303)

5. Institutional characteristics clearly play a role in the degree to which religious preferences, values, attitudes, and behaviors change during the college experience – with secular institutions exerting the strongest most consistent negative influences. (p. 303-304)

Values from college years are foundation for life-time values

6. The college years are a particularly intense period of change in values and attitudes that does not occur to the same degree following the college experience. (p. 323, 325)
7. Consistent evidence points to the fact that a young person's value structure significantly changes during the college experience, with one exception – at denominationally affiliated schools. (pp. 326-327)
8. Further research indicates that changes in religious values which occur during the college years, do indeed persist into the adult years. (p. 329)

Impact of Faculty Values on Students

9. "...[R]esearch makes clear the important influence faculty members have on student change in virtually all areas." (p. 655)
10. Evidence indicates a link between the religious values, behaviors, and preferences of faculty and the tendency among students to change their religious commitments. (p. 315)
11. Where the faculty is non-religious or mildly religious, students' religious commitments move considerably toward the secular. Where the faculty expressed greater commitment to religious values and behaviors, the institutional environment supported the students' religious values and commitment during their college experience. (p. 315)
12. The values of faculty have a direct influence on the change in values among students. (p. 328)

Summary:

Students take on the values of the faculty where they attend.

What is the first thing that most students give up when they go off to college? – Church attendance – 35% drop in some studies

C. An Exploratory Study of the Religiosity and Related Outcomes Among College Students – Railsback, 1993 – using national CIRP data. Most numbered items below are direct quotes.

Study of 3,643 maintainers, converts, drop-outs and never born again students over four years. “Council” refers to the Council for Christian Colleges and Universities but was known as the Coalition at the time of the study.

Born-again student population

1. The percentage of born-again freshmen has remained at about 30% of college students.
2. The vast majority of born-again students attend non-Christian colleges.

Non-Christian Colleges

3. The secular college or university is saying at best that God is irrelevant to the real business of living.
4. Council colleges were the only type of college that significantly predicted an increase in ‘religious beliefs and convictions’ for born-again Christians.
5. For born-again students who attended a public university, frequent church attendance during high school and college was significant to their religious growth – and conversely.
6. Values instilled in college persist to adult life – if relatively conservative when leaving college, studies have found similar orientations twenty-five years later.
7. Majority of attitudes do not revert back to their family background.
8. With some exceptions, the literature published since 1967 fairly consistently reports statistically significant declines in religious attitudes, values and behaviors during the college years ... changing (usually dropping affiliation with a traditional church, a reduction in church going or prayer, alterations in beliefs about a supreme being, or a decline in general religiosity).
9. Some public scholars have compared fundamentalist Christian students to the severely mentally retarded who are denied admission to public higher education on the basis that “such people are unable to profit... placing them in the university would pointlessly deplete the state’s educational resources.”
10. Some public scholars have advocated excluding from admission any individual who does not believe that their fundamental beliefs “could” be wrong.
11. Forty percent of all Evangelical students studying at Evangelical colleges claimed as one of the three most important reasons for choosing a college was because of the belief that their...faith might have been threatened in a secular school.

Dropouts – (not saying born-again after four years in college)

12. Overall, 28.4% of those who called themselves born-again and attended non-Council colleges did not call themselves born-again four years later.
13. Students who dropped away from the born-again faith were not likely to end up in a conservative church where born-again commitment is considered essential, but instead dropped out entirely from affiliation with a religious group, or moved to a liberal or moderate denomination where born-again is not stressed.
14. Total defection rate by college type ranges from a low of 6% at Council colleges, to 23% at Protestant colleges to a high of 51% at Catholic colleges. Overall there was a considerable movement away from born-again status at all non-Council colleges.

Church Attendance

15. Overall, Council colleges had the largest percentage (77%) that reported their religious beliefs and convictions had become stronger over the four years of the study.
16. Twenty-eight percent of maintainers at public universities reported having never attended religious meetings in the previous year compared to only 1% at Council colleges.
17. Coupling non-attenders with drop-outs, 52% of Christian students at public universities stop going to church. (34% defection and 28% of maintainers do not attend any religious services – non-additive percentages – not 62%).
18. Coupling non-attenders with drop-outs, 15% of students at Council colleges stop going to church. (6% defection and 1% of maintainers do not attend any religious services).

Summary of Railsback Study:

Public universities had fewer students that maintained born-again status, the highest defection rate from born-again status, the least amount of students who reported their religious beliefs and convictions as stronger, the largest percentage of students that maintained born-again status who spent no time attending religious services, and the smallest percentage that spent three or more hours at church.

Council colleges had the highest percentage of students that maintained born-again status, the smallest defect rate, the highest amount of students who reported that their religious beliefs were stronger, and the largest percentage of maintainers that spent three or more hours per week at religious services.

Black college students had a pattern of stability and change in religiosity similar to those students attending Council colleges.

D. Consider this story

Conclusions

Just like the triumph of the fiery furnace – the battle is won at the point of admission – they purposed they would not bow – but only a small percentage could resist.

No matter where students go, there is a need for them to establish their own values and relationship with the Lord.

Clearly, public college/university environments are diametrically opposed to Christian growth (although there are some great Christians on the faculty and good Christian kids attending). Only a very few students actually increase their faith attending public institutions. The odds are clearly against it.

Clearly, Christian colleges are far more conducive to spiritual growth and long-term spiritual stability.

The decision to attend college cannot just be about money – it is about life's meaning and purpose – not Educational Choice by Cheaper Price

The decision to attend a public college cannot be about quality – faculty professionalism, personal attention, and peer support increase most quality indicators

Ultimately the question when considering a non-Christian college is simply:

Is the cost savings worth the price??