

INTERVARSITY

INTERVARSITY CHRISTIAN FELLOWSHIP/USA

Friends and Partners,

I am often asked, “What are college students like these days.” In some ways they are just like they’ve always been; full of energy, idealism, and in the midst of great personal change. And students at American colleges and universities are interested in spirituality.

When polled on the question of whether students are becoming more interested in spiritual issues, more than twice as many InterVarsity staff respondents (41%) chose yes, over the choice of less interest (18%). And 23% said there was no change. While the perception is not overwhelming, and the survey done by InterVarsity represents a small percentage of field staff, the results correspond with other data indicating that a clear spiritual hunger exists among college students. A recent survey of college freshman by the [Higher Education Research Institute of the University of California-Los Angeles](#) found 80% have an interest in spirituality.



An openness to spirituality does not necessarily correspond with an openness to Christian faith. There are a lot of students who are so jaded by who they think Jesus is that they won’t even engage in conversation about Him. But InterVarsity are still engaging students and many conversations about the gospel are taking place. And from these conversations students often realize that Jesus provides the focus that vague spirituality lacks. Statistics from InterVarsity field reports for the 2006-2007 school year show more student conversions than any year in the last several decades.

Additional comments by survey respondents indicate that campus ministry is as challenging as it ever was, no matter what the spiritual climate:

- “Interest in faith issues is largely out of the desire to become more tolerant of people from faith backgrounds, rather than out of a personal desire to explore the possibility of joining a faith community.”
- “I sense less overt antagonism; their interest comes from genuine spiritual openness and interest.”
- “Students are looking for opportunities to ask questions about faith.”
- “Although spirituality in general is viewed positively, it’s almost considered hateful and bigoted to believe that Jesus is the only way to God.”

My sense is that those along with those students who have this increased interest in spiritual things there are at least to other significant kinds of students today. One has a high interest in social issues and a concern for the environment, the poor, and health issues such as AIDS. The other group is at the other pole being very self centered and materialistic.

I value you and your partnership with us as we seek to bring the gospel to students and faculty at colleges and universities.

Chuck

