



In October 2015, a random sample of first-year students at UNI will be invited to complete a survey called IDEALS. This document provides information to explain what this survey involves and why the information gathered by it is important and useful.

WHAT IS IDEALS AND WHY IS IT UNIQUE?

The Interfaith Diversity Experiences & Attitudes Longitudinal Survey (IDEALS) is part of a national study examining how undergraduate students from across the country engage with religious, non-religious, and spiritual diversity while in college. IDEALS is unique because it captures information about the student experience across four years, which in many cases encompasses students' entire college careers. This research design makes it possible to examine how students' interfaith diversity experiences and attitudes change over time, and to pinpoint programs, activities, and other environmental factors that foster meaningful interactions with diverse others. The other unique aspect of IDEALS is the scope of the research study. Administered at more than 130 institutions nationwide, IDEALS makes it possible to compare the experiences of students from different institution types—public and private, large and small, secular and religiously affiliated. It is the first of its kind to address U.S. college students' engagement with interfaith diversity in such an expansive and nuanced manner.

WHAT IS A WORLDVIEW?

Worldview describes the way people perceive and make meaning of the world around them. We use the term worldview broadly to describe the lens that shapes our understanding of significant events, interactions, and experiences. Alternately, our worldview may be defined in relation to a particular aspect of our identity (e.g., race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, gender identity). In the case of IDEALS, which is designed to examine religious, non-religious, and spiritual diversity, worldview is defined as *a guiding life philosophy, which may be based on a particular religious tradition, spiritual orientation, non-religious perspective, or some combination of these.*

WHY DOES INTERFAITH ENGAGEMENT MATTER?

We interact with and encounter situations that consist of people of different religious and philosophical worldviews on a regular basis. Whether everyday interactions with neighbors and

colleagues, tensions in the Middle East, public officials leveraging faith for political gain, or social media promoting acts of charity across religious difference, interfaith experiences are commonplace in our society. Interfaith engagement can help you gain knowledge and understanding of others' perspectives while also providing an opportunity to share important aspects of your own worldview.

Interfaith engagement also has important implications for your life right now and in the future. College students arrive on campus with distinct and complex identities, and these identities influence how they interact with one another. While students regularly participate in conversations about gender, race/ethnicity, sexual orientation, and ability, they are often hesitant to discuss religious or philosophical perspectives. Interfaith engagement provides an opportunity for you to share your worldview with others and learn about different worldviews held by roommates, classmates, friends, and others you may meet on campus. Interfaith encounters in college can help you make meaning of others' attitudes and behaviors, while also enabling them to better understand who you are. The peer support and acceptance that often grow out of interfaith engagement ultimately foster stronger and more fruitful relationships. Thinking about your future, the ability to navigate different religious and philosophical worldviews and bring together people of disparate beliefs will lead to greater success in your career and leadership roles. Finally, interfaith cooperation is essential to identifying and implementing solutions to society's most complex questions.

WHY SHOULD I PARTICIPATE IN IDEALS?

First and foremost, IDEALS will provide valuable information to inspire positive changes on your own campus. The information you provide by completing the survey will help campus leaders identify successful practices as well as areas for growth in the realm of interfaith engagement. It can then be used to guide institutional decision-making related to campus programming, allocation of resources, strategic planning, and more. Additionally, survey responses from your institution will be combined with data from other IDEALS campuses across the country to help us learn what campus practices best promote interfaith cooperation and understanding. Ultimately, findings that emerge from IDEALS have the capacity to inform education policy at the state and national level, and will improve U.S. college students' preparation for active participation in a global society. Specifically, by participating in IDEALS you will help campus leaders gain insight into how different college experiences shape students' knowledge and attitudes related to global citizenship, appreciation and goodwill towards others, and development of students' own worldview.

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