Towards a Multi-faith Community at Wellesley College

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Perhaps it was the opening words of welcome from Baha'i, Buddhist, Christian, Hindu, Jain, Jewish, Muslim, Sikh and Unitartian Univeralist students; or the call to worship by Native African drumming offered by the Yanvalou African Drum and Dance Ensemble; or the mystical singing of a Zoltan Kodaly piece by the College Choir; or the scripture read by Buddhist, Catholic, Jewish, Muslim and Protestant Chaplains; or the classical Indian song and dance performed by Hindu students; or the inspirational reflections on the theme "Education as a Spiritual Journey" by writer/teacher Parker Palmer; or the echoes of a Hebrew song sung in round; or the prayers for a new president, spoken in seven different languages; perhaps it was one of these things or the inter-wovenness of all of these things elements of the service that moved those gathered at the Inaugural Multi-faith Celebration to realize that something different was happening at Wellesley College, when Diana Chapman Walsh was inaugurated as Wellesley's 12th President in the fall of 1993.

This celebration was the most visible manifestation of a revolution in religious and spiritual life taking place at Wellesley College, a revolution that has evolved during the past decade to a comprehensive exploration of role of religion and spirituality in higher education. In 1993 the Wellesley College community was introduced to an exciting new model of religious and spiritual life. At a time when most colleges and universities, confused by the conflict between a mono-religious institutional history and a multi-religious contemporary college community, were de-emphasizing the religious and spiritual dimensions of their institutions, Wellesley set out on a journey in the opposite direction. Determined to continue to value the role of religion and spirituality in the educational experience which has been so much a part of her past, Wellesley created a new and largely untraveled path for an academic community, (or perhaps any community), the exploration of multi-faith community.

How did this happen? First a bit of context.

The Wellesley College that you may think you know or at least that I thought I knew before arriving at Wellesley, is not the Wellesley that I found in February of 1993 when I walked onto campus for the first time. The college whose name conjures up for many images of white new England debutants, (as evidenced by the recently released Hollywood film, Mona Lisa Smiles,) is, in fact, one of the most racially and ethnically diverse colleges in the United States. Do to it's commitment to need blind admissions, which enables Wellesley to admit students without regard to financial status, and to an equally strong commitment to multiculturalism as an essential context in which excellent global education takes place, Wellesley College's student body is a microcosm of human diversity. What had not changed as rapidly by 1992, were the institutional structures that were born out of Wellesley's history as a more homogeneous community in which the cultural norms of wealthy, white, Western Protestant Christian society were dominant. One such outdated institutional structure was the college chaplaincy that was a reflection of both Wellesley's history and reflected a much broader history of religion and higher education.

The history of religious and spiritual life in higher education has been complicated at best. It was religiously-inspired motivation that led to the founding of many of the earliest colleges and universities in this country and shaped early educational philosophy and pedagogy. The relationship between religion and education persisted, over the growing objections of many scholars who found their academic freedoms restricted by the theological principles rather than educational ones. This continued until in the mid-20th century when secular scholarship won out and most colleges and universities severed ties with organized religion or relegated it to the extreme margins of the educational enterprise. In non-religiously affiliated institutions, chaplaincy programs continued to exist either on the margins of academe quietly serving their communities or in a few remaining places like Duke, Harvard and Stanford, historically powerful religious programs cling to larger roles within institutions, but in increasingly ceremonial ways.

Wellesley College's religious history was in some ways no different, (and in a few very important ways completely different.) Like many similar institutions, by 1993 Wellesley had a College chaplaincy

program which was a slightly modified version of its earlier Christian chaplaincy. Religious life at Wellesley was led by a full-time College Chaplain, who was the Protestant Chaplain. The Protestant Chaplain was first and foremost responsible for the Protestant Christian majority on campus and then, only by her own inspiration rather than by design of her role, concerned with the spiritual lives of all students. [In fact, Wellesley's two previous College Chaplains, Paul Santmire and Connie Chandler-Ward, were outstanding examples of spiritual leaders serving all members of the community in spite of their institutional roles.] In addition to the College Chaplain, a part-time Hillel Director/Campus Rabbi and a Roman Catholic Priest (both funded for the most part by their own religious communities) served Jewish and Roman Catholic communities on the margins of campus life. In the face of the dissonance between this model and the college's diverse student population, College Chaplain Connie Chandler Ward, in her final letter to the community in 1991, pleaded with the College to move beyond this outdated model of religious life that failed to respond to the reality of the diversity of the contemporary college community, but rather simply perpetuated the outdated culture of the past.

The religious context of the Wellesley College culture is indeed similar to many New England schools and yet different enough to be fertile ground for experimentation. Founded in 1875 by Henry Durant, a self-proclaimed evangelical Christian and friend of evangelist/educator Dwight Moody who served on Wellesley Board of trustees in the early years, the language of Wellesley's founding documents is filled with calls for the radical necessity of women's education as a Christian imperative. Listen to the language of Durant's opening address to the college. "The Higher Education of Women is one of the great world battle cries for freedom... I believe that God's hand is in it; that it is one of the great ocean currants of Christian civilization; that He is calling to womanhood to come up higher, to prepare herself for great conflicts, for vast reforms in social life, for noblest usefullness."[1] Although clearly Christian in context, from the beginning the language of Wellesley's mission called for the education of women for full participation in the world. One point to which I will return later in this chapter is that although explicitly Christian, Wellesley was from the beginning also fervantly non-denominational and therefore not attached to any organized religion, a fact that has been significant to its multi-faith development. Through the years, the Christian context of the College's mission gave way to the values of secular liberal arts education. What did not fall away, however, were the institutional structures that carried the cultural norms of Wellesley's Protestant Christian past. These structures remained largely invisible to those who shared the dominant culture (wealthy, white, western and Protestant Christian) and yet painfully obvious to those who did not fit this cultural profile. Community members were reminded of the dominant culture through the words in the Wellesley logo (Non ministrare, sed ministrare, not to be served but to serve from Christian scripture,) Christian images in stained glass windows across the campus, and college rituals such as convocation and baccalaureate which followed Christian liturgical forms. Each of these things served as subtle (and not so subtle) reminders not only of the historical culture of Wellesley, but created a sense that Wellesley's contemporary culture is Christian and that all others may be welcome, but are welcomed guests. The college which I discovered in 1993 is best described by Diana Eck in her extraordinary book *Encountering God* in which she presents three forms of inter religious relationship, exclusivist, inclusivist and pluralist. Wellesley was according to this analysis an inclusive community in which "the diversity of peoples and traditions is included in a single worldview that embraces, explains, and supersedes them all."[2] What I found particularly ironic in my first year at Wellesley was to discover that this secular college was unknowingly perpetuating institutional structures that proclaimed Protestant Christian hegemony. My first big challenge was to attempt to bring this factor to light as we tried to move from an inclusivist community to a pluralistic one in which different cultures, traditions and perspectives are equally valued in a grand experiment of educational encounter among different peoples of the world.

In contemplating this process of change, I discovered certain aspects of Wellesley's history that stood apart from these dominant cultural norms and other peer institutions. As it turned out these historical realities played a crucial role in laying a foundation for the creation of the multi-faith religious and spiritual life program. As mentioned above, Wellesley was founded as a women's college in defiance of a male dominated culture. The memory of such a revolutionary spirit of equality through challenging cultural norms remains a part of Wellesley's stated institutional values. This initial value of gender equity has been extended over the years at Wellesley to include those racial, ethnic and religious groups that have historically been excluded from full participation in shaping the culture in institutions of higher education. Wellesley's 7th President, Mildred McAfee Horton illustrated such revolutionary thinking in her farewell address to the College in 1949. When talking about the importance of including all students into the

Wellesley community she said, "Because she is a student at Wellesley, that rich girl, that poor girl, that Catholic, Protestant, Jew, Muslim, Hindu, American, Egyptian, Chinese, Iranian (girl)... is entitled to all the 'rights, dignities and responsibilities' of this College." At another occasion she added, "The day we learn as a people that differences do not necessarily involve discriminatory evaluations, vast problems of human relations will be solvable."[3] It became clear after a brief introduction to Wellesley's history that the value of equality and the goal of Wellesley as a diverse educational community would play a positive role in the development of a multi-faith model.

A second factor that enabled us to build a case for the importance of a multi-faith model of religious and spiritual life at Wellesley College was Wellesley's defiantly non-denominational religious beginnings. While the founders of Wellesley were certainly devout Christians, they refused to be attached to any Christian denomination. This meant that from the beginning the religious and spiritual life of the College was entrusted to the president and the faculty rather than an external religious institution. Although this led to the rapid secularization of the College in the mid-1960s, I found that it also enabled me to call upon these early ecumenical roots when suggesting that a multi-faith community which included people of all traditions was a better reflection of Wellesley's educational values than a community in which one tradition was privileged over another (the old College Chaplaincy model.) The principles underlying Wellesley's ecumenical roots have been translated a century later from inter Christian ecumenism to multi-faith ecumenism.

And finally, in the early 1990's while many colleges and universities faced with fiscal challenges were downsizing or curtailing support for their outdated chaplaincy programs, Wellesley chose a different route. Convening a consultation on the religious and spiritual life of the college involving trustees, students, faculty and senior administrators, the college devised a plan to renew its commitment to religious and spiritual life through a multi-faith program. The first act of the college in this direction was to create the new position of Dean of Religious and Spiritual Life, the role of which was not to represent any one religious community, but to design and oversee a new structure that would meet the religious and spiritual needs of students, faculty and staff, and consider the role of religion and spirituality in the college's overall educational mission. The second part of this charge proved to be especially important, in that it opened a door to reconsider the relationship between religion/spirituality and education, a process that ultimately moved religious and spiritual life from the margins of the institution to a seat at the table in defining how to implement the college's core educational goals.

In my opening address to the College as Wellesley's first Dean of Religious and Spiritual Life, I offered the following words:

> I believe that it is the awakening of a desire for wholeness, in one's self, in one's relationships, among humanity and in all of creation that is the essential task of all spirituality and religion and the essential work of education. In my first few months at Wellesley, I have been truly inspired by the desire of so many people here to incorporate a spiritual component into their lives in this community: students who seek the support of familiar religious experience, other students who explore the possibilities of spirituality beyond institutionalized religion; faculty who see the educating of the mind as inseparable from the nurturing of the spirit; and staff for whom the place in which they work holds the possibility for the development of community. In these first months, I have experienced a genuine commitment to include religion and spirituality in the life and learning of this College.
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> Now for some, the thought of a College embracing any sort of religious or spiritual component in this day and age strikes fear in their hearts and raises critical not to mention constitutional concerns... and I might say not without good reason, for in the past the mingling of religion and academia has often meant the establishing of a normative religious perspective centered around a single religious tradition. But we are up to something new at Wellesley, something which springs forth from the rich religious and spiritual traditions of this College and yet something which truly reflects the magnificent montage of religious and spiritual beliefs represented in today's Wellesley College community.
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> It is my hope that in the years ahead, we will, through the Religious and Spiritual Life Program, nurture a multi-faith environment which truly responds to this rich diversity of religious tradition and experience represented in the Wellesley College community among students, staff and faculty. This means striving to support the spiritual, educational and worship needs of each religious group on campus, while establishing new ways in which people of all religious and spiritual beliefs can learn about and from one another and thereby begin to discover the common threads which bind us together as people of faith. This I might mention is very different from past interfaith efforts where the goal was most often to establish a kind of common, neutral language and practice, which offended no one but which also quickly became

> unrecognizable to any person of faith. Our hope is to affirm the integrity of each religious tradition while challenging people to see their own experience as simply a part of some greater whole...
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> But there is more to this challenge than the support of the religious ad spiritual lives of people at this College, for I believe that spirituality far transcends the boundaries of institutionalized religion and is a part of the intellectual, moral and personal development of all people. As an academic institution charged with the task of educating women to fully engage in society, the incorporation of a spiritual dimension to this educational process seems essential. What that means... how that becomes manifest in this community, is the work of discovery that lies before us. There is much in the recent and past history of this College that will inform us in this process. Some of what has come before, we will incorporate into the future. While some things, we will necessarily need to leave behind. For we are attempting something new and yet something old as well. For the roots of this movement towards spiritual wholeness hearken back to the beginning, the beginning of creation... and that which we create here at Wellesley in our day, will, if we do it well, awaken in us the desire for wholeness and help us rediscover a very essential aspect of our common humanity.

And with these words, we began a process of experimentation as to the role of religious and spiritual life in higher education that continues to this day. At the inauguration of Diana Chapman Walsh as Wellesley President in 1993, two ceremonies signified the beginning of a new era of religious and spiritual life at Wellesley. The first was the multi-faith celebration held the evening before the inauguration. Months in the planning by a team that included students from the Baha'i, Buddhist, Christian (Evangelical, Orthodox, Protestant and Roman Catholic,) Hindu, Jain, Jewish, Muslim, Native African, Pagan, Sikh, Unitairan Unversalist and Zoroastrian religious communities, this celebration introduced the community to the implications of the inspiration to multi-faith ecumenism that they had followed. For some, it was the realization of a dream, for others perhaps more of a nightmare, for the door was now opened to deconstruct one hundred years of Protestant Christian defined college culture and rebuild a new multi-faith community. The next day, at the inauguration ceremonies, President Walsh was presented with the "keys to the College," an historic Wellesley ritual unearthed for this occasion. The three keys, to the library, the dormitory and the chapel, represent the three historic areas of educational development central to a Wellesley education, the intellectual, the social and the spiritual. The implication of this ritual embraced by President Walsh was clear. Wellesley was seeking to reclaim its historic values of a holistic education for women that included the spiritual dimension. At that moment, none of us had any idea how significant this process would become for Wellesley and for those outside of Wellesley concerned about the role of religious and spiritual life in higher education.

Space does not permit me to adequately tell the story of the past decade of multi-faith work at Wellesley. Several years ago I attempted this in a chapter in the book Education as Transformation: Religious Pluralism, Spirituality and a New Vision for Higher Education in America.[4] For this chapter, rather than retell the tale in narrative form, I would like to highlight a series of principles that guided our process and in doing so hopefully provide insights that can be used to develop multi-faith programs in different contexts.

1. <u>Ultimately this is about education not religion.</u>

One of the principles that we discovered only by making many mistakes over many years, was that ultimately questions about the role of religion and spirituality in higher education must start and end with the question "How does religion and spirituality enhance the education of our students?" not the question, "How do we support religion on our campuses?" This is a principle that religious folk often find hard to swallow. But if you can't get past this question, stop! because your efforts will most likely lead to the perpetuating of old dysfunctional processes, not the birth of new constructive ones. For too long, religious professionals working in higher education have spent inordinate amounts of time bemoaning the fact that they feel marginalized on campuses, voicing frustration that faculty members have all the power and nostalgically reflecting back on the good old days when "religion really mattered." Having wasted far too much time participating in these musings myself, I learned my lesson one fall day when a faculty friend clearly tired of listening to my whining about the marginalized state of religion on campus said, "Did you ever consider that maybe it is your job to think about how religion and spirituality fit into education not ours?" Oops. I sat silent. 50 years after secular colleges and universities rejected religious control over their educational institutions, I was still carrying the notion that religion and spirituality should be assumed to be an important part of the educational process. This gentle confrontation early in my time at Wellesley changed my entire orientation to the work of religious and spiritual life on campus. What became clear was that a new dialogue was needed as to why religion and spirituality are relevant to

education. The first step for us was to initiate a conversation about this question so that we could explore the possibility of a partnership between academics and religious folks working together to enhance our students learning. We found it useful to start such a conversation by reflecting on questions that students are asking about religion, spirituality and education. For example, in a survey of Wellesley students in 1995 these questions emerged.

> "I am a scholar and I am spiritual. Are these two parts of one person? Or I am two people separated from myself by the split in education between mind and spirit?"
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> "Why must I leave the religious part of myself outside the door of my classes,
> only to enter and encounter writings of those who were inspired by their religious faith?"
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> "How can I understand the role that religion plays in the world around me, if I do not have the opportunity to understand the role that religion plays in the life of my classmates?"
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> "In terms of my religion, I am invisible. My professors, they look at me, see the color of my skin and think they know my story. I am African-American and I am Jewish. How can they see me, if they do not know me? and how can they teach me, if they do not see me?"

To adequately take up questions such as these, educators and religious professionals must come together with students and talk about the relationship between religious/spiritual identity and intellectual development. Academics have long recognized the philosophies and practices of the world's religious traditions as formative in the establishment of various systems upon which societies are organized, including systems of law, governance, education, and other dimensions of the total complex of human relations. However, in most of our colleges and universities the influence of these same philosophies and practices on the formation of individual students has gone largely unrecognized by educators. The role of religious identity in student's lives has most often been separated from the education of students and relegated to religious communities who have set up outposts, (called chaplaincies) on college and university campuses. Often these programs have little relationship to the educational program of their institutions. They are seen by many faculty as vestiges of a past entanglement between institutional religion and institutions of higher education and therefore are looked at as either irrelevant or antithetical to contemporary secular education. While issues of racial and cultural identity are finally being seen as central to a comprehensive understanding of the intellectual development of students, by and large religious/spiritual identity has not been included in these discussions. This, however, is beginning to change.

Researchers and writers such as Beverly Daniel Tatum and Daryl Smith, who work on the impact of identity on intellectual development, have begun to include religion as a significant category of identity relevant to education. In the Spring 98 issue of Diversity Digest, Daryl Smith includes religion in her analysis of campus diversity. "...diversity on campus encompasses complex differences within the campus community and also the individuals who compose that community. It includes such important and intersecting dimensions of human identity as race, ethnicity, national origin, religion, gender, sexual orientation, class, age and ability. These dimensions do not determine or predict any one person's values, orientation, or life choices. But they are by definition closely related patterns of societal experience, socialization and affiliation. They influence ways of understanding and interpreting the world." If this is so; if religious identity impacts the way a student understands and interprets the world, then religious/spiritual identity is an educational issue and needs to be taken up as such. Other resources for the discussion of religion, spirituality and education include the work of the Education as Transformation Project based at Wellesley College [www.educationastransformation.org] and the Higher Education Research Institute and specifically their Spirituality in Higher Education project. [www.spirituality.ucla.edu] The first step then to developing multi-faith campus programs is to locate this effort in the larger discourse of enhancing education. This means new conversations among faculty, religious professionals and students.

In 1998 we attempted one such conversation at Wellesley. We gathered a group of Wellesley students and asked them to share stories of "moments of meaning" that they had experienced in their classes. At the time I was searching for a way to make the connection between religion/spirituality and education and struggling with the language to use. As I sat with these students and listened to their stories, their words provided a new language for our discussions. The students told of moments of meaning, inspiration, connection, wonder and awe in the classroom and many spoke of these moments as

having a religious or spiritual dimension. The classes in which these moments occurred cut across the entire curriculum, from biology to history, from sociology to theater, from ethnic studies to mathematics--story after story of moments when they were awakened to a deeper understanding of themselves, of others around them and of the world which they described as transformational in some way. One student told of a moment in molecular biology when during a lab when she suddenly made the connection between the smallest forms of life and the largest living ecosystems of the planet. Another student related an experience of working on a psychology project with her mentor in which the faculty member's encouragement of the student's research resulted in them co-authoring a paper and in the students having a sense of herself as being able to have original thoughts. Still another student shared her experience of her political science studies (and her own understanding of the world) coming alive during a wintersession trip to Mexico. Students spoke about transformational moments coming through collaborative work with other students, through service learning opportunities associated with a course, through an encounter with particular texts, through the mentoring of a faculty member.

The next step was to approach faculty members with the stories told by their students. I e-mailed faculty members telling them that a student in their class had described having a transformational experience, a moment of meaning in their class. I then invited these faculty members to a discussion about such moments in the learning and teaching process. Over the course of the next month, 55 faculty members met to discuss transformational moments in the classroom and shared similar stories with one another about such moments from their own learning and teaching. Eventually the discussion centered on the reasons for their original choice to become a scholar and a teacher. Some spoke of a passion for seeking truth, others of a desire to kindle a fire within their students, many told stories of having been affirmed as a person whose ideas were of value by a faculty mentor in their own life. Many spoke of the joy of watching students come alive in their classes as connections between self and world began to be made.

A meeting between students and faculty to process the experience led to the formulation of central questions that they felt bring religion and spirituality together with education. These questions included: What is the purpose of our learning? What does it mean to be an educated person? What does my learning/teaching have to do with my living? How is my learning relevant to the lives of others? Embedded in the stories told by students and faculty and in their questions is a vocabulary that seems to bridge the chasm between the language of religion/spirituality and the language of scholarship.

2. <u>You've got to be willing to move beyond tolerance.</u>

Perhaps the most profound lesson that we have learned at Wellesley is that tolerance is not the goal that we should seek in forming pluralistic community. In the face of a world punctuated by acts of intolerance, how could tolerance possibly be an unworthy goal for which to strive? After all, throughout history has not tolerance been the goal towards which forward thinking people have worked in seeking to respond to conflict? At a time when tolerance has often been replaced by overt acts of intolerance on our campuses, a little tolerance seems a worthy goal. Our experience (and numerous historical examples) tells us otherwise. Tolerance, as often practiced in our communities, is little more than conflict arrested. While it is a harness applied to the destructive forces of ignorance, fear and prejudice and provides a kind of wall between warring parties, at best this is a glass wall where protected people can see one another going about parallel lives. In this condition, people exist less able to harm each other, but also unable to interact do to the wall of tolerance dividing them from each another. As such, tolerance is not a basis for healthy human relationship nor will it ever lead to pluralistic community, for tolerance does not allow for learning, or growth or transformation, but rather ultimately keeps people in a state of suspended ignorance and conflict. Rather than tolerance as a goal, we choose to speak about tolerance as only a first step to interdependence.

A program with tolerance as its ultimate goal is satisfied with tinkering with existing models so that previously disenfranchised students feel a little less disenfranchised. While this may serve to mollify students for a while, it fails to examine both the structural ways in which religious life programs were created to serve particular groups of students (and not others,) and that inter religious dialogue may be one of the most significant skills that students learn at college in preparation for work in today's multi-religious realities.

The multi-faith program at Wellesley College is entitled Beyond Tolerance. For us this means that in moving beyond tolerance we seek ways in which religious diversity can be a resource rather than a barrier to building multi-faith community. In developing this program, we started with the assumption that to move from a mono-religious community to a multi-religious community would take people from all traditions building new relationships and providing leadership for the college as a whole. This required building two leadership teams: The Religious Life Team of chaplains and advisors: and the Mult-faith Student Council. The Religious Life Team at Wellesley College is now comprised of a Buddhist Advisor, Catholic Chaplain, Hillel Director, Hindu Advisor, Muslim Advisor, Protestant Christian Chaplain and Unitarian Universalist Chaplain. This team meets weekly with the Dean not simply to coordinate our work but also to examine together issues of religious and spiritual life that affect the lives and learning of our students. The religious life team meets regularly with other religious advisors on campus such as the advisors to Intervarsity Christian Fellowship, Real Life, and the Mormon student group so that all religious professionals on campus are in touch and working collaboratively. The group also works regularly in partnership with student life professionals (including residence life staff, counseling services, and cultural advisors) and faculty members interested in supporting the whole lives of students as they go through their college years.

The multi-faith student council is a second leadership group in the beyond Tolerance Program. This group is comprised of students from the various religious traditions on campus. Representation is based on equity of voice not proportional representation (more like the US Senate than the House of Representative.) There may be two Bahai's on campus and 1000 Roman Catholic Christians on campus, but both groups have an equal number of representatives on the council. The goals of the council are as follows:

- to engage in an exploration of the possibility of religious pluralism at Wellesley College as women from different religious and spiritual traditions.

  Religious pluralism in this context is nurturing and celebrating all particular religious traditions and spiritual practices represented in the Wellesley College community and actively engaging this diversity in ways that build community by exploring the principles that bind us together in a common life.

- to serve as an advisory council for the Dean of Religious and Spiritual Life

- The council meets regularly with the Dean of Religious and Spiritual Life and convene in times of community crisis.

- to serve as a leadership team, along with the Religious Life Team and the Dean of Religious and Spiritual Life, nurturing the religious and spiritual life of the College. To do this the council should:
  - meet periodically with Religious Life team
  - participate in the planning of multi-faith community worship
  - participate in the development of the Religious and Spiritual Life
  - program
  - plan programs relating to religious, spiritual, ethical issues for the
  - college community
  - seek ways to engage communities outside of Wellesley in this work
  - of religious pluralism

- to act as a liaison between the sending religious community on campus and this multi-faith work. It is essential that each member of multi-faith council have an active and engaged relationship with their own community and its leadership

- to provide advice on issues related to student religious activities by advising on complaints filed under the code for religious organizations and serving as liaison with College Government and Senate

The religious life team and the multi-faith student council are the heart of the religious life program at Wellesley College. The relationships that are built and the conflicts that are engaged among members of these groups provide the insight and inspiration for the work that we do. My job is always to facilitate this process and remind them that just sitting in a room together engaging in creative dialogue is a radical act in and of itself.

3. The Protestants are not going to be happy. In fact, no one may really be happy at first. (i.e. This isn't about making people happy!)

When dismantling century-old culturally embedded structures and replacing them with new pluralistic ones, it is likely that no one is going to be particularly happy, (at first and probably for a long time.) When we began the process of restructuring religious life at Wellesley, it soon became clear that everyone was being asked to reconsider their identity in the system. For Protestant Christians this meant giving up privileged status, much of which was invisible to them until it was taken away. Very much like the process of becoming conscious of issues of race, those with privilege are often unaware of their status until it is challenged. Over the years, I have found myself spending a lot of time helping Protestants grieve the loss of their status of being the normative tradition of the college. A few are outraged at the loss of their "Christian College," but quite frankly for most it is a subtler change, a sense of loss of the familiar, a slight disorientation from "so much change." Attending to the very real grief process of this community while at the same time not allowing this to slow down the process of transformation is a role that somebody needs to take up, if this issue is to be addressed.

The second part of this principle is in many ways the most unexpected. One would think that a group that has been marginalized for decades if not centuries would heap praises on a process that changes these unjust structures. However, the reality of having a seat at the decision-making table presents new challenges for groups whose identity has been forged as being an outsider for years. Many non-dominant culture groups on our campuses have organized themselves around their marginalized identity, (understandably so.) It takes time for this to change.

More than a decade after starting this process at Wellesley, we are just now beginning to see real change in terms of people's sense of identity within the community. in part, this has to do with the transitory nature of student populations, but culture change takes time and we have found it best to remind everyone of that a lot. (Another reason why people can find this work frustrating.)

While I am delivering the "bad news" (or perhaps most challenging aspects) about this work, let me offer another principle.

4. Including everyone at the table means more food.

Most of our religious life programs have spaces on our campuses and hold spaces in the budget that reflect old models that serve only particular groups of students. Questions about dividing existing resources or designating new resources can unravel efforts to develop new programs before they get off the ground. Rather than pitting communities against each other over limited resources, we have found it better (although not always successful) to start by considering examples of institutional change within higher education that are somewhat analogous. For example, there was a time when Greek and Latin were the only languages taught in universities. Then a strong case was made to expand opportunities for students to take additional languages because it would enhance their education. German, French, Spanish were added, then Russian, Hebrew and Hindi. At no point in the process was the Latin department asked to teach Hindi, nor the Greek department French. We do not ask sociologists to provide the foundations of chemistry in their classes, nor do we ask academic deans to provide psychological counseling for students. In addition, we create spaces in classroom buildings and dormitories that meet the needs of the students in those settings. Therefore, once we have established that religious and spiritual life is in fact an important part of the educational goals of the institution (see principle #1) then providing resources for the staffing and space needs of religious groups on campus should be no different.

Under the leadership of President Walsh, Wellesley College has found creative ways to support religious and spiritual life on campus. From consistent organizational support from senior administrators to fundraising initiatives including the most recent College Campaign in which religious and spiritual life was a priority, Wellesley has stood behind its vision a decade ago for a renewed religious and spiritual life program through times of conflict as well as celebration.

This leads me to a final comment about our journey towards multi-faith community at Wellesley College that has to with celebration. During the past 12 years, many of the significant moments in people's lives that relate to the religious and spiritual life programs are moments of community ritual and

celebration. For some religious & spiritual celebration it is that small gathering of Muslim or Jewish students gathering for weekly prayer or the morning Buddhist meditations, or Christian or Hindu scripture study that they will remember as a meaningful part of their overall educational experience. For others, perhaps most, religious and spiritual celebration will be a time when students, faculty and staff came together to mark a moment of joy or struggle. It is in these gatherings led by the college's spiritual leaders, where people find comfort and community. It is in moments like these, the memorial service for a student or service marking a tragic world event, the multi-faith convocation or baccalaureate service that celebrate the beginning and ending of a school year, that questions about the importance of religious and spiritual life vanish and we are reminded of the kind of ways in which the search for meaning through our learning and in our lives is a task that requires all forms of seeking.

Take a look at the mission statements of any college or university in the country. Somewhere therein you will find reference to the highest vision of education that enables each student to find creative expression for their thoughts and actions in ways that positively contribute to one's community and the world. This is a goal around which scholars and religious folks alike can rally. The search for meaning in this moment in history needs to be a search that draws upon the diversity of human experience and wisdom. As such, it needs to be a multi-faith search in which the depth of all religious and spiritual understanding is brought together with the breadth of scholarly inquiry. Perhaps then, by forging a new partnership between these two worlds can we adequately engage the internal and external struggles that face our world.

There is a second inscription that is part of Wellesley College's motto. The words are "Incipit Vita Novae", translated as "Here begins new life," a motto worthy of the highest vision for the spiritual and the scholarly. In our journey towards multi-faith community, we have begun to sense the creative possibilities that might be born from a new partnership between these two worlds. It has been a good beginning and we are excited about what our second decade of multi-faith community will hold.

[1] Glasscock, Jean, *Wellesley College: 1875-1975 – A Century of Women*, (Wellesley College, Wellesley, MA 1975) p. 1

[2] Eck, Diana, *Encountering God*, (Boston, Beacon Press, 1993) p. 179

[3] Horton, Mildred McAfee, *Presidential Addresses* provided by the Wellesley College Archives

[4] Kazanjian, Victor and Laurence, Peter, *Education as Transformation: Religious Diversity, Spirituality and a New Vision of Higher Education for America*, (New York: Peter Lang Press. 1999)