



# Seniors' Growth in Reflecting on Life and Life Choices

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The Boston College Questionnaire (BCQ) research project was designed to gather information on seniors' academic and co-curricular experience, as well as their personal and religious/spiritual behavior and development, at Catholic colleges and universities in the United States. The BCQ project originated at and is administered by Boston College.

All graduating seniors at Loyola were invited to take the survey in spring of 2010. The response rate was 43%, with 741 seniors taking the survey. Compared to the Loyola senior population, Loyola respondents were slightly more likely to be female and slightly more likely to be white. They were representative in terms of their school (CAS, Business, etc.).

This report looks at students' personal growth while at Loyola, how much their Loyola experience contributed to their Jesuit education in terms of personal growth, and the importance of various activities to their religious/spiritual growth. It should be kept in mind that freshman (and students who transfer in to Loyola) who remain at Loyola until they graduate tend to feel they have received more benefit from their Loyola experience than those who transferred out before their senior year because they were not happy with how much benefit they were receiving.

## Key findings

### Personal growth while at Loyola

- Eighty-five percent of respondents said that their ability to reflect on their lives and life choices grew stronger or much stronger during their time at Loyola (see Table 1).
- Seniors also reported growing stronger or much stronger in their ability to understand social issues, at the global level (83%), national level (82%), and local level (80%).
- Sixty-two percent said they had grown stronger or much stronger in their ability to get along with people of difference races/cultures.
- Fifty-seven percent said they had grown stronger or much stronger in their ability to articulate their religious/spiritual beliefs.

### Loyola experience contribution to Jesuit education in personal growth

- Two thirds of respondents said that their experience at Loyola had contributed quite a bit or very much to their personal growth in making ethical decisions in professional situations, while 63% said it did so in making ethical decisions in personal situations (see Table 2).
- Sixty-three percent said that their Loyola experience had contributed quite a bit or very much to their defining their own beliefs and values.
- Sixty-two percent of seniors felt that their Loyola experience had contributed quite a bit or very much to their Jesuit education in demonstrating respect for others' differences, but only 46% said so about their development in actively working toward a more inclusive community.
- Sixty-one percent said their Loyola experience had contributed quite a bit or very much to the development of their ability to look critically at society and its institutions.
- Fifty-nine percent said their Loyola experience had contributed quite a bit or very much to their Jesuit education in leadership development, while 58% said so about their devoting effort to help others in need. Half said their Loyola experience had contributed quite a bit or very much to their actively working to further social justice.
- Fewer than half of seniors said their Loyola experience had contributed quite a bit or very much to their development in making connections between their intellectual and spiritual lives (43%), understanding the Jesuit principle of being "women and men for others" (45%), and understanding Loyola's mission (47%).

### Importance of activities to religious/spiritual growth

- The activity (of those listed) seniors most commonly said was important or essential to their religious/spiritual growth was building strong friendships (64%); 40% said that conversations with their peers were important or essential (see Table 3). Only a quarter said so about living in a residence hall, though.
- Praying/meditating was the second most cited activity important or essential to spiritual/religious growth (55%), while 41% cited attending religious

service.

- Fifty-two percent said that exploring their vocation/calling was important or essential to their religious/spiritual growth.
- Forty-eight percent said that reflecting on topics brought up in class was important or essential.
- Forty-three percent said that conversations about faith with family were important or essential, but only 19% said so about conversations about faith with professional staff on-campus.
- Relatively few seniors cited immersion programs as important or essential to their religious/spiritual growth, either international (34%) or domestic (27%). (Eighty-eight percent of participants in international immersion programs cited them as important to their general Loyola experience, however; see IR Report 10-36).
- Also relatively less important to religious/spiritual development were participation in religious organizations (28%) and going on retreats (20%).

**Conclusions**

- People mature over time in various ways through external events and experiences, whether or not they go to college or to Loyola specifically. Thus, not

all development reported by graduating seniors is a sole result of their time at Loyola, and results presented here should be interpreted with that in mind.

- Seniors reported growing stronger in their ability to understand social issues at the global, national, and local levels. Only about half said the Loyola experience had contributed quite a bit or very much to their increasing awareness of the connection between global and local issues.
- The area that seniors reported the most growth in while at Loyola was reflecting on life and life choices.
- Most seniors felt that their Loyola experience contributed quite a bit to their growth in making ethical decisions, both professionally and personally.
- Friendships are particularly important to seniors in their religious/spiritual growth.
- Almost half of seniors cited reflection on topics brought up in class as important to their religious/spiritual growth.
- Organized activities, such as immersion trips, retreats, and religious organizations, were relatively less important to seniors' religious/spiritual growth, compared to other activities.

Table 1 Personal Growth While at Loyola	
% stronger or much stronger	%
Ability to reflect on your life and life choices	85
Understanding of global social issues	83
Understanding of social issues nationally	82
Understanding of the social issues of your local community	80
Ability to get along with people of different races/cultures	62
Ability to articulate your religious/spiritual beliefs	57

Boston College Questionnaire, 2010 (unweighted data)

Table 2 Loyola Experience Contribution to Personal Growth	
% quite a bit or very much	%
Making ethical decisions in professional situations	66
Defining your own values and beliefs	63
Making ethical decisions in personal situations	63
Demonstrating respect for others' differences	62
Ability to look critically at society and its institutions	61
Leading by example	59
Devoting effort to help others in need	58
Increasing your awareness of the relationship between global and local issues	54
Actively working to further social justice	50
Understanding the mission of your institution	47
Actively working toward a more inclusive community	46
Understanding the Jesuit principle of being "women and men for others"	45
Making connections between your intellectual and spiritual life	43

Boston College Questionnaire, 2010 (unweighted data)

Table 3	
Importance of Activities to Religious/Spiritual Growth	
% important or essential	%
Building strong friendships	64
Praying/meditating	55
Exploring your vocation or calling	52
Reflecting on topics brought up in your classes	48
Participating in volunteer/community service programs	47
Conversations about your faith with your family	43
Attending a religious service	41
Conversation about your faith with your peers	40
Reflecting on co-curricular experiences	36
Participating in international immersion programs	34
Participating in community organizing on campus	30
Participating in interfaith dialogues	30
Participating in religious organizations	28
Participating in domestic immersion programs	27
Living in a residence hall	25
Going on a retreat	20
Conversations about your faith with professional staff on-campus	19

Boston College Questionnaire, 2010 (unweighted data)

Note: Excludes "Not applicable."