Dan Stoker, Executive Director of Student Services, opened up the discussion with a PowerPoint presentation on Student Development Theories.

- Psycho-Social models
  - Erikson
  - Chickering & Reisser
  - Identity Development models
- Cognitive models
  - Piaget
  - Perry
  - Kohlberg
  - Gilligan
  - Faith & Spirituality
    - Fowler
    - Parks

The college environment speeds up the development process. Students are finding individuals that are different from them. They are encountering individuals with different sexual orientation and different cultures that add to and challenge them. Instructors try to push critical understanding but are not always versed in student development.

Kory Vitangeli stated that we are always telling student that “we want you to grow and learn. We are setting the stage for you to grow and embrace change.”

The Seven Vectors, Chickering’s original research on students development was done in the late 60’s but updated in the early 90’s. A vector is an arrow and show progress along a line. Chickering’s vectors are more of a sliding scale movement and each vector interacts. Progress on each vector is different but to interact has to have movement to progress.

1. Achieving competence (understanding, critical thinking);
2. Managing emotions (ownership of your emotions, how do you handle conflict, keep it in context)
3. Moving through autonomy toward interdependence
4. Developing mature interpersonal relationships (self sufficient but also rely on each other)
5. Establishing identity (realistic self image)
6. Developing purpose
7. Developing integrity

Faith and Spiritual Development Theories

- Fowler
  - Meaning making as a spiritual & cognitive process
  - Hierarchical stages
- Parks
Stages of faith development influenced by forms of knowing, dependence, and community

“Adolescent or Conventional”, “Young Adult”, “Test Adult”, and “Mature Adult”

Stoker offered the following questions to begin the discussion.

- How are we, as a campus, fostering individual spiritual development?
- How are our students developing (exploring) a greater understanding of their own faith?
  - How is this being demonstrated or practiced?
  - Student Organizations?
  - Lantz Center for Christian Vocations
- How are our students engaging in interfaith understanding and/or dialogue?

Lois Jones stated that the “religiosity series” focuses on all types of religion and provides a greater understanding of other faiths. Dan interjected that this series was student initiative.

Michael Cartwright discussed how the Lantz Center curriculum sequence begins with exploration and setting up for formation. CAS faculty asked Cartwright why the same type of programming couldn’t be done for Muslims or Hindus. The answer is because there is not someone on staff who understands those religions and could serve as a guide. The set of rules and practices for Christians wouldn’t work for Sikhs, etc. Faculty normally does not think about student development, but John Langdon on the other hand, thinks we should take into account the biological phenomenon of student development and plan programming around it. There is not a single set of developmental understandings that can be used in every situation. Plurality some times makes people want to back off but it is imbedded in the curriculum understanding about what to introduce to students.

Kory Vitangeli stated student affairs is clear on student development and the theories but not always doing the best at it. There are pockets around campus doing the same things.

Cartwright point out that UIndy’s identity statement has developmental assumptions built into the language: re “… a Christian tradition that emphasizes character development and embraces diversity."

Stoker stated we take the time for students and to assist students on their intellectual/social journey. Students are all looking for a mentoring role to make sense of it all. Students don’t always know they are in need of a mentor but are looking for someone to have conversations with.

Cartwright discussed the creation of the Christian mentoring programs through The Crossings Project. There was a book discussion on Big Questions, Worthy Dreams by Sharon Daloz Parks that focused on ways that faculty could make a difference in students lives, but some people despite reading the book were puzzled about the phenomenon of mentors and stated they did not have a mentor as a student. Michael described the Christian mentoring program as “lingering along side students.”

Jeremiah Gibbs stated the campus has a high degree of volunteerism but the Christian mentor program itself has small numbers. All students have to take religion 100 and there are students who want to pursue this further and students who only encountered religion because of religion 100. Stoker stated that students are being challenged with the spiritual process. Students are asking “How do I fit in?”. Our role is to help them with their journey.
Gibbs offered that the “religification series” may be more likely to cause students to explore their faith than Religion 100. CVOC courses have a small number of students and most of them are taking it because it is a requirement for UMYL Scholars, Youth Ministries majors and pre theology majors.

Vitangeli stated that we don’t have a campus-wide initiative to engage students on own their own spiritual journey but there are pockets of places where they can explore. Is this the a role of a faith-based institution to have a campus-wide initiative to engage students are their spiritual journey?

Cartwright discussed that the NSSE data of freshmen/seniors shows that ULndy students perceive having had an opportunity for spiritual life. ULndy is tracking these statistics. The Interfaith Youth Core is putting together data to be used in the NASSI survey to track interfaith information.

Brownlee stated that he feels there is a quasi-mentoring program in the “Sharing My Story” series where students, faculty and staff hear stories of other spiritual journeys. These are narratives that can be shared. Lang asked “How attentive are we to the students disconnect?” There are a lot of students that reject what they are learning in religion class and come and complain to him. He sees retrenchment. In some instances, pastors warn the students to beware of philosophers. Students do, however, feel they have a safe environment in which to raise rejections of what is being taught.

Mixon stated that students’ whole character doesn’t move along at the same time. We are doing a good job of providing opportunities for more faith development but less opportunities for spiritual development. Faith offers specific doctrines but spirituality is more difficult, more individual. More opportunities for spiritual development could provide us opportunity for deeper conversations. Stoker agreed that his spirituality is not always in line completely with the doctrine of his faith. Mixon says some students feel that the university is “trying to change my mind” and so they completely block the discussions. People are more accepting of other areas then faith and spiritual development. The growth or exploration doesn't always all happen on campus. Stoker remarked that Eboo Patel did speak to some of the students and they want to explore more of their spiritual development.

Cartwright talked about when the gospel choir restarted it had a curricular feature to it. Geoffrey Kelsaw, director of the gospel choir, stated that the some students were very uncomfortable that the gospel choir was in a curricular form. They felt they should volunteer their music and not get credit for the time. “What does it mean to do this for a different reason than what I’m use to?”

Stoker stated that students are given opportunities now that they will be able to have discussion on later. Brownlee offered that the opportunities do not necessarily have to be structured but can take place in a dorm hallway.

Jones spoke of her opposition to thrusting programming about issues such as homosexuality and sex outside of marriage when she feels a Christian university should not be providing this type of programming. Stoker said each individual is working through who they are and it is important to recognize that everyone has their own identity. We are not identical and it is a process.

Cartwright reminded the group that the institution is taking a pluralistic expression with faculty consensus. It is not any one individual’s call. It is important for students to hear all voices so that they can form their own identity.
The Religious Life Review will continue into next semester. The December 9th session will probably be moved to second semester. Watch for details.