

Study Shows College Graduates Are More Religious

By Brooke Heath

A recent study indicates that college graduates in the United States are more likely to attend houses of worship or maintain religious practices and beliefs than people who never attended colleges or universities.

The study, entitled “Losing My Religion,” was conducted by sociologists at the University of Texas at Austin. The researchers found that young adults who attended four years of college or received degrees considered religion to be an important aspect of their lives, whereas their non-degree-seeking counterparts were more likely to have turned away from their faith or abandoned it altogether, according to a press release from the University of Texas at Austin.

“Many people assume college is public enemy number one for religion,” said Mark Regnerus, assistant professor of sociology. “But we found young adults who don’t experience college are far more likely to turn away from religion.”

Regnerus also commented that campus culture has evolved, which may explain the surprising results of the study. According to the press release from the school, he said the focus of today’s higher education has shifted away from liberal arts and been redirected to professional programs. Regnerus thinks that this shift has sheltered students from being subjected to philosophical questions and debates that challenge students’ beliefs. And when their beliefs are challenged, they have campus religious organizations and peers with similar beliefs to back them up and offer support.

Jeremy Uecker, University of Texas at Austin graduate student and lead author of the study noted, “Religion and spirituality are becoming more accepted in higher education, both in intellectual circles and in campus life. Religious students are encountering a much less hostile environment than in years past.”

The data the sociologists analyzed was from the National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health. This data tracked more than 10,000 Americans from adolescence through young adulthood.

Further information on this study can be found in the June issue of the journal *Social Forces*.