



Talking points for student & parent/guardians  
when recruiting prospective student - athletes

## **LEAVING FAITH BEHIND**

A few years ago, George Fox University professor Gary Railsback, a fellow researcher, prepared an interesting study. Using his data, I determined that more than 52 percent of incoming freshmen who identify themselves as born-again upon entering a public university will either no longer identify themselves as born-again four years later or, even if they do still claim that identification, will not have attended any religious service in over a year. This means over half of our kids are reporting a rejection of family religious values if they attend a public university. This pattern of rejection was similar at secular private colleges and much worse (63 percent) at Catholic colleges. Newer data show a similar rejection pattern across all types of institutions, except for students attending a purposefully Christian college. In fact, the rejection rate at Catholic institutions is now 70 percent.

**THE BOTTOM-LINE IS THIS:** if the past is a fair indication of the future, at least half and possibly over two-thirds of our kids will step away from their faith while attending non-Christian colleges and universities.

A recent press release on the ongoing National Study of College Students' Search for Meaning and Purpose offered some interesting information on students who are beginning their college years. While 79 percent of all freshmen believe in God, 69 percent pray, and 81 percent attend religious services at least occasionally, 57 percent question their religious beliefs, 52 percent disagree with their parents about religious matters and 65 percent feel distant from God. College students are asking deep questions about their faith. Unless they are at a Christian college, they may find themselves in an environment that is not conducive to providing supportive answers. Asking deep questions in such a situation can lead to confusion at best and, more likely, skepticism or outright rejection of family religious values

## **A QUESTION OF "PRICE VERSUS COST"**

### **1. GET OFF TO A GOOD START**

Consider attending a faith-based institution for at least the first year of college. Research shows that the first year is the most critical to one's religious commitment in college. Of course, my desire is that students select a Christian college for their entire college career. But at least begin at a Christian institution. There are many good faith-based institution choices—from flagship liberal arts Christian colleges and universities of the CCCU to all kinds of accredited Bible colleges. With accreditation by agencies like the Association for Biblical Higher Education and the Higher Learning Commission, it's easier than ever to move from one accredited institution to another.

### **2. DON'T BE BLINDED BY DOLLAR SIGNS**

Consider college choices wisely. The bottom-line, out-of-pocket price is one factor. But the price tag is not the only issue and should not be the main issue. Your spiritual life has an eternal value that a temporal education should not undermine. Many Christian colleges go to great lengths to attract the best and brightest with substantial scholarship offers. Make sure you compare the bottom-line financial package carefully before deciding. The "sticker price" is rarely the actual price for those who need financial assistance.

### **3. DON'T PUT TOO MUCH EMPHASIS ON THE AVAILABILITY OF MAJORS**

Too many students view Christian colleges, and Bible colleges especially, as having too limited a number of majors. Keep in mind, however, that approximately 75 percent of students change their major during the first year. This includes 50 percent of those who first reported being "absolutely sure." A desired major may be too limited a reason for choosing a college. If price is still a significant consideration, consider a lower cost Bible college for your first year to get a solid grounding in general education courses before transferring. Many Bible colleges have outstanding academic quality and nurturing environments, making them an ideal place to start. Most also offer reputable baccalaureate programs in an increasingly wide variety of disciplines.

#### **4. DON'T GET COMPLACENT WITH YOUR RELIGIOUS COMMITMENT AND DEVOTIONAL LIFE**

Don't abandon your religion or its practice without careful and prayerful thought. If anything, going to college should drive a person to come to know God more. Putting your faith and values aside to be "cool" or "in" is to sell your soul for less than nothing. No matter where you go, commit to an ongoing devotional life. Be accountable to your home church leadership and Christian peers.

#### **5. GET IN CHURCH AND GET INVOLVED**

Be faithfully involved in local religious groups and campus ministries. The most important thing you can do to maintain and increase your religious commitment is to get involved with a local fellowship. Second, find campus ministries that involve you in Christian service and fellowship. Nearly all those who show any religious commitment as college seniors at public or secular private colleges have been involved in local fellowships and campus ministries.

#### **6. FIND GOOD CHRISTIAN FRIENDS AND CONNECT WITH CARING CHRISTIAN FACULTY**

Find peers who share your same concerns and values. Christian peers are critical to the development of any believer—more so for the college freshman. Connecting with life mentors during the educational quest can be life changing. Finding these mentors should begin with Christian faculty advisors within your major field.

#### **7. GO WHERE YOU CAN GROW**

No matter what college you choose, make sure your religious preference is accommodated.

Make sure you know the religious atmosphere of any college you choose. Even going to a Christian college that does not support your particular beliefs can be difficult. Make sure that your core beliefs are not denigrated by policy or practice at whatever school you choose.

#### **8. LAY OFF SPIRITUAL "JUNK FOOD"**

Preparing for college must be deliberate and complete. Many churches place too great a value on entertaining and pleasing high school kids. While youth groups must be vibrant and meaningful to kids, there ought to be a bigger purpose than occupying time. All college-bound Christian youth should prepare for the serious challenges of collegelife. J. Budziszewski's book, *How to Stay Christian In College*, and Thomas Shaw's *College Bound* should be required reading for a very disciplined preparation for college.