

# Growth: The Journal of the Association for Christians in Student Development

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Volume 6 | Number 6

Article 12

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2006

## How College Affects Students: Volume 2 A Third Decade of Research

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### Recommended Citation

Thornbury, Kimberly C. (2006) "How College Affects Students: Volume 2 A Third Decade of Research," *Growth: The Journal of the Association for Christians in Student Development*. Vol. 6 : No. 6 , Article 12. Available at: [https://pillars.taylor.edu/acsd\\_growth/vol6/iss6/12](https://pillars.taylor.edu/acsd_growth/vol6/iss6/12)

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## How College Affects Students: Volume 2 A Third Decade of Research

Ernest T. Pascarella & Patrick T. Terenzini

*Reviewed by Kimberly C. Thornbury, Ph.D.*

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“If we could first know where we are, and whither we are tending,” Abraham Lincoln once remarked, “we could better judge what to do, and how to do it” (as cited in Bennett, 1995, p. 699). Pascarella and Terenzini’s second volume of their definitive work, *How College Affects Students*, helps student affairs professionals know where we are and where we are going, guides us in making decisions as to what our next steps should be and details best practices on how to move forward.

Many professionals within the Association of Christians in Student Development have Pascarella and Terenzini’s first thick volume of *How College Affects Students* on their bookshelf. The first volume was a “textbook” in most graduate programs related to student development. This groundbreaking book, published in 1991 (also known in educational circles as “Moby Book” because of its size and white cover) provided a comprehensive list and analysis on studies that impacted college students.

This updated and highly readable second volume by the same title is essential because it provides both qualitative and quantitative support for our initiatives, and the need for an update from their 1991 publication was acute. The call for continued research and assessment in our profession remains strong. In their book, *Assessment in Student Affairs*, Upcraft and Schuh (1996) expressed concern with the lack of comprehensive assessment in the area of student affairs. On a practical level, they reported, “Faculty ask why student affairs should be funded when resources for academic programs are scarce. Students and their families demand accountability for fees spent for student services and programs; they insist that funds are spent in accordance with their wishes” (1996, pp. xi-xii). Pascarella and Terenzini continue to answer this call for research and evidence of what works, and what does not, with their encyclopedic review of past studies.

Every year, the need to defend the level of support for co-curricular programs and expand new initiatives in such contexts as budget talks, grant publications, or orientation sessions with faculty increases. Pascarella and Terenzini’s second volume *How College Affects Students* continues to provide “one-stop shopping” on research relating to:



- *Theories and models of student change in college*
- *Development of verbal, quantitative, and subject matter competence*
- *Cognitive skills and intellectual growth (e.g. critical thinking skills and post formal reasoning.)*
- *Psychosocial change (e.g. identity development, self-esteem, interpersonal relations and leadership skills.)*
- *Attitudes and values (e.g. sociopolitical, racial-ethnic, gender roles, attitudes toward religion.)*
- *Moral development (e.g. moral reasoning and moral action)*
- *Educational attainment and persistence*
- *Career and economic impacts of college (e.g. occupational status, earnings, job satisfaction)*
- *Quality of life after college (e.g. well being, health, community and civic involvement)*

In addition, this volume provides an overview and organization of the research Pascarella and Terenzini collected in the 1990's, a summary of how college affects students, and finally, implications for research, practice and policy. One helpful aspect of this book is that the authors continue to discuss overall conclusions without becoming too bogged down with the details of particular studies; for example, studies related to student employment and academic persistence. Although this book is long and comprehensive, the reader can quickly identify a subject of interest in the book and understand concluding points in a matter of minutes. Topics are also evaluated with the same six questions for continuity, including 1) changes that occur while the student is at college, 2) changes that occur due to college attendance, or the "net effects of college," 3) the differing influence of different types of secondary institutions, 4) the differences that occur at the same institution, or "within-college effects," 5) the conditional effects of college; for example, the effect of experiences based on such factors as gender or race, and 6) the long term effects of college. Finally, in this volume, the authors also summarize their findings in comparison or contrast to the results found in their previous volume.

This year, I have used this new volume during new faculty orientation as I explained to these professors research that points to specific benefits to students stemming from out-of-class contact with faculty. This book helped me pinpoint research on the advantage of student internships which I then included in a grant proposal. In addition, this book provided valuable data on the positive effects of on-campus living that I used in dialogue with parents wary of funding another semester in residential housing. This comprehensive work assisted me as I served as a member of a newly formed retention task team as I was able to speak about proven research as to what key programs and factors contribute to student persistence.

As previously noted, this new volume contains key updates from the 1991 publication. The authors admit that when their first volume was published, it was already “dated scholarship.” Key changes that occurred since their first publication that are included in this new volume include studies that account for:

- *A greater diversity within the college population*
- *Different postsecondary institutions (e.g. the rise of community colleges)*
- *Expanded pedagogical methods (e.g. the effectiveness of instructional innovations “...such as collaborative and cooperative learning, learning communities, freshman interest groups, supplemental instructions, problem based learning and service learning...” (Pascarella and Terenzini, 2005, p. 3.)*
- *Policy changes (e.g. the use of technology and impact of distance learning)*
- *An expanded use of research methodologies.*

Of particular note to members within the Association of Christians in Student Development is the fact that the authors “Once again ...uncovered relatively little in the way of research that systematically investigated the conditional effects of postsecondary education on moral development” (Pascarella and Terenzini, 2005, p. 365). Precious little is written on issues of faith and spiritual development in college, a research area well suited for ACSD professionals. Current research such as Astin’s College Beliefs and Values Survey and the CCCU’s Faithful Change Project are two current studies that warrant attention in the next volume. This volume of *How College Affects Students* also reminds Christian professionals that quantitative and qualitative research is not free from philosophical presuppositions.

The second volume to *How College Affects Students* provides educators within the field of Student Development their *raison d’être*. Many in our profession are doing research and asking questions that no one else on campus is asking; research and questions that are vitally important to the university. This volume provides wonderful research questions and answers of incredible value to ACSD members who serve as key players in higher education.

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