

FOCUS

ON

The Undergraduate Study of Religion

IN THIS ISSUE

- AAR Undergraduate Departments Survey Shows Increases in Religious Studies.**11
- AAR Undergraduate Departments Survey Methodology**13
- AAR Undergraduate Departments Survey Comparative Analysis of Wave I and II**14
- Group Examines Undergraduate Research in Religious Studies**15

AAR Undergraduate Departments Survey Shows Increases in Religious Studies

IN 2005, THE AAR conducted its own undergraduate survey of the 2004–2005 academic year. Two and one-half years later, the results show that courses, enrollments, majors/degrees, and faculty have grown steadily. The last such survey was conducted for the 1999–2000 academic year, and it also collected limited data from the 1996–1997 academic year. With this final survey, the Academy now has trend data showing changes — mostly growth — in a field influenced after the events of September 11, 2001.

The survey of the 1999–2000 academic year was conducted by NORC, utilizing approximately \$250,000 of a Lilly Endowment-funded “Strengthening College and University Programs in Religion and Theology” (SCURT) initiative. Additionally, several other entities joined with the AAR in sponsoring the 2000 survey: the Association of Theological Schools, the Auburn Center for the Study of Theological Education, the Canadian Corporation for Studies in Religion, the Canadian Society for the Study of Religion, the Council of Societies for the Study of Religion, the Fund for Theological Education, the Council on Graduate Studies in Religion, and the Society of Biblical Literature.

The new survey was conducted online by AAR alone with residual funds from the original Lilly–SCURT initiative. By going online, the AAR was able to collect data without having to rekey it into another system before analysis. David Brewington, an Emory sociology PhD candidate who has worked on the past surveys, conducted the data analysis. Please see the accompanying articles in this Focus section for methodology details.

Institutional Findings

For this undergraduate survey, institutional data was collected regarding Carnegie classification, institution and program type, academic calendar, and whether the program offered a major or minor, among other data.

The Carnegie classification respondents were as follows:

- Baccalaureate colleges – liberal arts (35.5%)
- Doctoral/research – extensive (17%)
- Master’s colleges/universities I (13.4%)
- Master’s colleges/universities II (12.7%)
- Baccalaureate colleges – general (10.8%)
- Doctoral/research – intensive (5.7%)
- Theological/specialized faith institutions (2.3%)
- Baccalaureate/associate’s colleges (1.5%)
- Associate’s colleges (0.8%)
- Other (0.2%)

Only 3.5 percent and 0.2 percent respectively reported they were accredited by either the Association for Biblical Higher Education (ABHE) or the Transnational Association of Christian Schools (TACS).

The institution type respondents were as follows:

- Protestant (29.8%)
- Public (28%)
- Private, nonsectarian (24.3%)

- Catholic (15.2%)
- Other Religion (2.5%)
- Jewish (0.2%)

Eighty-five percent of the respondents reported they were on the semester academic calendar; 4.9 percent reported a 4-1-4 calendar; 3.7 percent reported a quarter calendar; 3.7 percent other; and 1.9 percent reported a trimester calendar.

The program types were as follows:

- Free-standing department (53.4%)
- Combined department (32.3%)
- Program that borrows faculty (7.5%)
- Humanities or social science department (6.6%)
- Research center (0.2%)

Courses

Course offerings in the field showed overall growth of 23 percent. The survey asked whether courses were offered, how many were offered in 2004–2005, whether the course was offered as a major, and whether the courses fulfilled a general education/distribution requirement for the institution. The table on the next page illustrates these findings in percentages reporting “yes,” excluding the number offered during the 2004–2005 year as it can only be reported in raw numbers.

Enrollment and Majors

Enrollment increased by 22 percent in 2004–2005 when compared with 1999–2000; the respondents reported 68,864 more students enrolled in the 2004–2005 academic year. Public schools reported the largest growth increase at 40 percent.

Of the responding institutions, 83 percent offered a religion major and 81.5 percent offered a religion minor. Most of the growth came within public institutions, which reported a 53 percent increase in majors and 44 percent increase in bachelor’s degrees conferred (cross-tabulation tables for institution type, region, and department type will be posted online at www.aarweb.org in the summer).

Bachelor’s degrees increased overall by 22 percent; the number of BAs awarded to women increased by 26 percent and the number of BAs awarded to men increased by 18 percent.

The survey also asked what program activities are offered at the institution:

- Internships available (46.3%)
- Grants/scholarships/prizes (45.9%)
- Public lecture series (45.5%)
- Honors program (45.3%)
- Website (38.8%)
- Associations/clubs for majors (35.5%)
- Visiting scholar program (15.5%)
- Alumni newsletter (15.5%)
- Partnerships with primary/secondary schools (4.7%)

(continued on page 12)

Course	Offered	Required for Major	Gen Ed/ Distribution
American Religion	36.7	10.8	29.8
Arts, Literature, and Religion	25.1	5.9	20.4
Bible Languages	30.2	11.6	14.3
Buddhism	32.2	9.0	26.5
Christian Cultural	22.9	7.6	18.0
Christian Ethics	37.8	23.1	28.4
Christian Historical	60.0	31.4	41.0
Christian Theological	48.0	33.1	35.7
Church Administration	8.2	7.8	1.6
Comparative	36.1	17.3	30.4
Confucianism/Taoism	15.3	3.3	13.1
Counseling	8.4	6.3	2.4
Ethics	36.3	15.5	27.6
Gender and Sexuality	29.2	5.7	21.6
Hinduism/Jainism/Sikhism	26.5	6.7	22.0
Indigenous Religions	13.1	2.9	12.0
Intro – Bible	51.2	34.9	48.8
Intro – Eastern Religions	27.6	14.7	25.1
Intro – Sacred Texts	6.9	4.5	6.5
Intro – Western Religions	21.0	14.3	21.0
Intro – World Religion	49.0	30.6	41.0
Introduction to Religion	39.8	28.0	35.3
Islam	34.1	10.4	28.8
Judaism	31.4	8.6	27.6
Missions	12.2	10.4	3.7
Music	3.7	2.0	2.0
New Religious Movements	11.0	4.1	8.2
New Testament	68.2	40.8	53.1
Old Testament	63.7	38.2	50.8
Other	13.9	6.1	9.2
Other Practical	4.7	3.7	2.9
Philosophy of Religion	31.6	13.1	21.2
Preaching	9.2	7.8	2.7
Racial and Ethnic Studies	12.0	3.1	11.2
Religious Education	12.4	11.4	3.7
Ritual and Performance	9.6	3.1	7.6
Social Scientific Study	14.9	5.3	11.2
Women's Studies	24.3	5.7	18.8
Worship	10.2	8.8	3.9
Youth/Family Ministry	14.1	11.2	3.3

(continued from page 11)

Ten was the most commonly reported number of religion courses required for a major, followed by 12; 11 courses was the third most-cited course number required.

Beyond coursework, programs required a variety of projects:

- Seminar or capstone course (52.7%)
- Thesis (21.6%)
- Comprehensive exam (9.6%)
- Portfolio (9.2%)
- Other (5.9%)

Faculty

The faculty data indicated growth in all areas from the 1999–2000 survey; however, as national data has shown, the total tenure and tenure-track lines grew at a slower rate than the nontenured and part-time positions.

The tenured positions grew by 18 percent, with men in tenured positions increasing by 15 percent and women in tenured positions increasing by 32 percent. While the

increase for women was dramatic, there is still a huge discrepancy between men and women in actual number of tenured positions occupied: 3,067 reported for men compared with 678 for women.

The data showed a similar pattern for tenure-track positions. Growth was a robust 30 percent, with men showing a 28 percent increase and women a 34 percent increase. Again, the actual number belies the continued imbalance: 961 are men and 437 are women.

Full-time nontenure-track positions grew by 43 percent, topping both the tenure and tenure-track growth. The number of men in nontenure-track positions increased by 39 percent and the number of women in nontenure-track positions grew by 55 percent. Men again held the vast majority of these positions, with almost triple the number that women held: 877 to 276.

Part-time positions grew the most (44 percent). Additionally, of the four categories (tenured, tenure-track, full-time nontenure-track, and part-time), only the

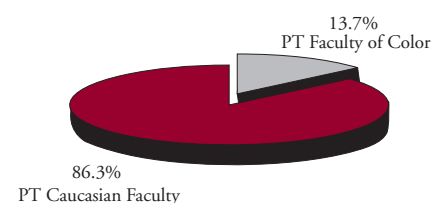
tenured positions outnumbered the part-time numbers: 3,745 to 3,486. The number of women in part-time positions grew by 48 percent compared with the last survey, and the number of men in these positions increased by 43 percent.

The faculty trends of moving toward more nontenure-track and part-time faculty supports the trend reported in a 2006 study by the American Association of University Professors that shows percentage growth in these areas far outpacing tenure and tenure-track lines.

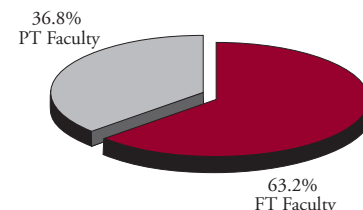
The data also indicates that while a gender gap continues to exist, women are securing positions at much greater rates than in the past.

There continues to be a great discrepancy, however, between faculty of color and white faculty. Among full-time faculty, just 10 percent are people of color; with part-time faculty, the figure is 14 percent.

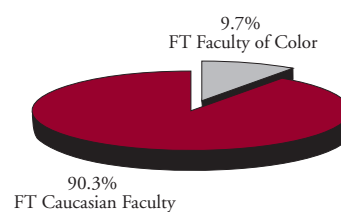
Ratio of PT faculty of color to PT white faculty



Ratio of PT to FT faculty



Ratio of FT faculty of color to FT white faculty



Next Steps

This summer, the AAR will be posting the data from the survey online. There, cross-tabulations of all data along multiple types — program, institution, regional, and others — along with the entire frequency tables and survey instrument will be available for members to see. Additionally, the data set will be posted nationally for other social science researchers to use for further studies. An announcement will be sent to all members when the complete data is posted.

1999–2004 Numbers for Comparison to Humanities

Change from 1999–2000 to 2004–2005 academic years

Raw change indicates raw numeric increase from 1999–2000 to 2004–2005 academic years

Growth change indicates change BASED on raw growth from 1999–2000 to 2004–2005 academic years

Example: a growth change of 1.26 indicates that a particular category has increased 126% from 1999–2000 to 2004–2005

	2004–2005	1999–2000	Raw Change	Growth Change
Number of undergraduate courses offered	16,067	13,076.5	2,990.5	23%
Total enrollment in undergraduate courses	379,565	310,701	68,864	22%
Number of undergraduates majored in religion	14,918	12,230	2,688	22%
Number of bachelor's degrees received				
All	4,179	3,428	751	22%
Male	2,141	1,816	325	18%
Female	2,038	1,612	426	26%
Number of positions (i.e., salary lines) supported				
FT Tenured	4,405	3,745	660	18%
FT Tenured – Male	3,513	3,067	446	15%
FT Tenured – Female	892	678	214	32%
FT Tenure track	1,813	1,398	415	30%
FT Tenure track – Male	1,227	961	266	28%
FT Tenure track – Female	586	437	149	34%
FT Nontenure track	1,649	1,153	496	43%
FT Nontenure track – Male	1,222	877	345	39%
FT Nontenure track – Female	427	276	151	55%
Part-time	5,019	3,486	1,533	44%
Part-time – Male	3,513	2,465	1,048	43%
Part-time – Female	1,506	1,021	485	48%

AAR Undergraduate Departments Survey Methodology

THE AMERICAN ACADEMY of Religion fielded a second wave of its Undergraduate Survey on September 29, 2005, covering the academic year of fall 2004 through spring 2005. The survey was live for over a year, with final data collection ending on September 30, 2006.

While the first wave of the survey (1999–2000 academic year) was fielded as a mailed paper instrument, for the second wave the AAR utilized online surveying techniques to host the survey and communicate with respondents electronically. The survey was hosted on AAR’s web servers, and e-mail communications were used to notify respondents of the survey.

Out of 1,202 departments and programs across Canada and the United States invited to take the survey, 490 responded to the survey, making for a 40.8 percent response rate. This rate, although lower than the 1999–2000 surveying period of 78.8 percent (897 responses out of 1,148), it is well within normal response rates for surveying. The difference in response rates is largely attributable to the fact that the first survey was fielded by the National Opinion Research Center (NORC) at the University of Chicago, and NORC used its considerable resources to contact programs and departments who had not completed the inaugural survey repeatedly by phone, mail, and e-mail. For the second wave, the AAR decided to conduct the survey in-house with residual funds left over from the original Lilly-SCURT grant, using Internet technology to facilitate the process. The AAR staff did contact nonresponders multiple times, using multiple avenues of communication including e-mail, E-bulletin reminders, telephoning by AAR Regionally Elected Directors, telephoning by AAR interns, e-mail reminders from AAR officers, and a final mailed letter from AAR Executive Director Jack Fitzmier near the end of the survey period. In all, a total of eight points of communication were used throughout the survey period to bolster response rates. These points of communication are summarized in the following:

- September 29, 2005 – First e-mail letter sent to departments, signed by then AAR Executive Director Barbara DeConcini
- September 29, 2005 – Survey goes live
- October 31, 2005 – E-mail reminder letter from Kyle Cole, AAR Director of Professional Programs
- March 2006 – E-bulletin reminder
- April 2006 – E-bulletin reminder
- April 21, 2006 – E-mail reminder letter from AAR officers Diana Eck, Jeffrey Stout, and Emilie Townes
- April 27, 2006 – Telephoning request of Regionally Elected Directors to departments in the regions who had not responded
- May 2006 – E-bulletin reminder
- May and June 2006 – Upper Midwest, Midwest, Southwest, and Western Regionally Elected Directors complete their lists by the end of June. Summer intern at AAR offices called departments in the other six regions during the summer of 2006
- August 2006 – E-bulletin reminder
- August 30, 2006 – Letter from Jack Fitzmier went out for final push to end data collection
- September 30, 2006 – Data collection ends

The survey instrument for 2004–2005 replicates the survey instrument from 1999–2000, with several important additions. The most important additions to the survey instrument are questions concerning the race and ethnicity of both full-time and part-time faculty. Other additions include questions regarding accreditation with ABHE and TACS, Carnegie Classification (this data existed in the AAR databases from the previous survey wave), minor concentrations in specific religious traditions, course data on practical training associated with applied programs, and whether and what other departments provide faculty to teach in a program.

Survey results have been analyzed for information about the second wave survey period of 2004–2005, as well as for changes between the first wave period of 1999–2000 and the second wave period of 2004–2005. Additionally, the second wave instrument asked questions about the previous period of 1999–2000. This is a fruitful continuation of the practice of asking for data from a previous period — the first wave of the Undergraduate Survey asked for data from the 1996–1997 academic year.

Together, the results from the two survey waves provide three periods of data. Several caveats need to be specified in understanding these data. Because of the difference in response rates between the surveys, comparing raw numbers across the two survey waves will appear to denote significant reductions in almost all areas, such as number of majors, enrollments, number of tenured female faculty, and so on. This interpretation is inaccurate — it does not take the relative population sizes of the number of respondents for each wave of the survey into account. For example, when examining the total number of courses offered in the 2004–2005 period (16,067 courses) versus the 1999–2000 period (30,924 courses), it appears that there is a large reduction in courses offered. This runs counter to intuition and anecdotal evidence. The issue is that this is not an “apples to apples” comparison — more departments submitted information in the first wave of the survey. The pool of potential departments submitting data on total courses for the 2004–2005 survey wave is almost half that of those departments submitting data for the 1999–2000 survey wave.

Fortunately, we do have the ability to make an “apples to apples” comparison for some questions across survey waves. Both survey waves asked departments for historical data; in the case of the 2004–2005 survey wave, this data was prepopulated in the online survey fields using data supplied by respondents in the 1999–2000 wave. Such data exist for number of courses, total enrollments, majors, male and female BAs, and male and female faculty. These data allow us to limit comparisons to only those institutions that answered the 2004–2005 survey. This allows us to utilize the raw numbers in the survey for these questions for comparative purposes. For instance, where there appeared to be a large decrease in the number of courses offered by religion departments between 1999–2000 and 2004–2005, we see that there is actually an increase when using the technique outlined above. The

2004–2005 total number of courses offered is 16,067 courses. In 1999–2000, the institutions that responded to the second wave of the survey reported a total of 13,076 courses, an “apples to apples” increase of over 3,000 courses (see Figure 1 below).

There is a legitimate technique for comparing all the survey data from all periods asked for in the two survey waves (i.e., the 1996–1997, 1999–2000, and 2004–2005 periods). We utilize the data analysis technique of cross-tabulation, or examining two or more sets of survey data by “crossing” them. For example, we can cross the type of institution by how many courses are offered across the three periods covered by the two survey waves. When we examine the resulting output (Figure 2 below), we immediately see the issue outlined above. The raw numbers across the three survey periods indicate the same drastic decrease from 1999–2000 to 2004–2005.

However, we can compare the ratio of the raw number where a time period and institute type cross with the total for that time period with corresponding ratios for the same category across time periods. This technique controls for the large changes in raw numbers. For example, if we examine Figure 2 again, we see that for public institutions, there were 4,186 courses in 2004–2005, 6,969 courses in 1999–2000, and 6,781 courses in 1996–1997. If we just examine these numbers, we see a modest upward shift from the first period to the second, and a distinctive drop in number of courses in the last period. But this is an “apples to apples to oranges” comparison. If we examine the ratio of the number of courses offered in public institutions to the total number of courses in each survey period, however, we can compare in an “apples to apples” fashion because we are mathematically accounting for the large difference in total response rate between the survey waves. Using this approach, we see that courses at public institutions dip slightly between the first and second survey period and then rebound by 3.5 percentage points from the second to the third survey period.

Throughout the analysis of data we present both types of comparisons across time periods where we have the information. We provide cross-tabulation tables for institution type, program type, appropriations, and AAR region. These data will be posted on the AAR website this summer.



Figure 1

Institution Type	# Courses 2004–2005	Col%	# Courses 1999–2000	Col%	Raw Change	Percent Change
Public	4,186	26.05	3,321.5	25.40	864.5	0.65
Private, non sectarian	2,644	16.46	2,369.0	18.12	275.0	-1.68
Catholic	3,574	22.24	2,831.0	21.65	743.0	0.59
Jewish	8	0.05	0.0	0.0	8.0	0.05
Protestant	5,124	31.89	4,342.0	33.20	782.0	-1.31
Other religion	531	3.30	213.0	1.63	318.0	1.68
Total	16,067	100.00	13,076.5	100.00	2,990.5	0.00

Figure 2

Institution Type	# Courses 2004–2005		# Courses 1999–2000		# Courses 1996–1997	
Public	4,186	26.1%	6,969	22.5%	6,781	24.0%
Private, nonsectarian	2,644	16.46%	5,108	16.5%	4,725	16.7%
Catholic	3,574	22.24%	6,163	19.9%	5,687	20.1%
Jewish	8	0.0%	106	0.3%	89	.3%
Protestant	5,124	31.9%	11,801	38.2%	10,274	36.3%
Other religion	531	3.3%	777	2.5%	746	2.6%
Total	16,067	100.00%	30,924	100.00%	28,302	100.0%

AAR Undergraduate Departments Survey Comparative Analysis of Wave I and II

David V. Brewington, Emory University

WITH THE SECOND WAVE of the Undergraduate Department Survey the AAR now has a set of data over time, allowing us to begin to understand how the field of religious studies has changed in the last decade. In some cases we have three periods to compare because the original 1999–2000 survey asked for data from the 1996–1997 academic year.

An issue that affects analysis of the data across survey waves is the difference in response rates between surveys. The first wave garnered a response rate of 78 percent while the second wave response rate was 40 percent. This difference affects comparative analysis over time because we do not know if one or other of the survey results are statistically representative of the entire population of over 1,200 religious studies departments and programs in the United States and Canada.

To resolve this issue, we identified 267 programs and departments that responded to both waves of the survey, and answered a substantial number of items in the survey to allow for comparison. By restricting the following analysis to these programs and departments, we can conservatively analyze how these 267 religious studies departments have changed in the last ten years without making inferences about the entire population of departments for which we do not have accurate measures. It is important to stress, then, that the following analyses should be taken as a measure of what has changed to only these 267 departments.

Undergraduate Education and Students

For the most part, total courses offered, enrollments, numbers of majors, and bachelor's degrees conferred increase between 1996 and 2005. For example, consider total courses offered in Table 1.

Table 1 shows the number of courses, enrollments, majors, and bachelor's degrees conferred segmented by time period. This table shows changes in categories from the 1996–1997 to 2004–2005 academic years, using 1996–1997 as a baseline. Raw change (Raw ▲) is the current survey period total minus prior survey period total, and percentage change (%▲) is raw change divided by previous period total. Net change (Net ▲) is ending period total minus baseline total, and net percentage change (Net % ▲) is net change divided by baseline total.

Between the first (1996–1997) and second (1999–2000) periods there is an increase of 996 courses, or 10.7 percent. Between the second and third (2004–2005) periods, there is an increase of 1,256 courses, or 12.2 percent. The net effect is an increase of 2,252 courses, or 24.1 percent from 1996–2005. The story is about the same for enrollments and majors: each of these categories increases in the period between 1996 and 2000, between 2000 and 2005, and shows a net increase overall from 1996 levels.

Baccalaureate degrees conferred show a net increase overall from 1996 levels to 2005 levels as well: there were 601 net, or 27.4 percent more, degrees conferred in religious studies. However, males receiving degrees increased by much less than did female degrees: males increased by 17.9 percent over the entire period, while females receiving degrees increased by nearly 37 percent. The trend for BA degrees for males peaks in 2000 at 1,473, but then declined by 70 in 2005.

With the exception of number of courses offered, these categories showed stronger increases between the 1996–1997 and 1999–2000 period over the 1999–2000 to 2004–2005 period for these 267 departments.

Undergraduate Education and Faculty

Table 2 shows changes in faculty rank for the period 1996 to 2005. From the 1996–1997 to 1999–2000 periods, all ranks show increases. With the exception of tenured faculty, all ranks also show increases from 1999 to 2005. Faculty at the tenured rank showed a slight decrease of -0.5 percent in this period. All ranks showed net increases over the entire period from 1996 to 2005. Increases of tenure-track

Table 1: Period to period and net change for Undergraduate Education/Student categories.

	1996–1997	1999–2000			2004–2005			1996–2005	
	Totals	Totals	Raw ▲	% ▲	Totals	Raw ▲	% ▲	Net ▲	Net % ▲
# Courses	9,334	10,330	996	10.7%	11,586	1,256	12.2%	2,252	24.1%
Enrollments	228,478	261,635	33,157	14.5%	279,961	18,326	7.0%	51,483	22.5%
Majors	6,872	8,572	1,700	24.7%	8,972	400	4.7%	2,100	30.6%
BAs	2,195	2,739	544	24.8%	2,796	57	2.1%	601	27.4%
BAs – Male	1,190	1,473	283	23.8%	1,403	-70	-4.8%	213	17.9%
BAs – Female	1,005	1,266	261	26.0%	1,393	127	10.0%	388	38.6%

Table 2: Period to period and net change for Undergraduate Education/Faculty categories.

	1996–1997	1999–2000			2004–2005			1996–2005	
	Totals	Totals	Raw ▲	% ▲	Totals	Raw ▲	% ▲	Net ▲	Net % ▲
Tenured	1,007	1,092	85	8.4%	1,086	-6	-0.5%	79	7.8%
Tenure-track	331	354	23	6.9%	487	133	37.6%	156	47.1%
Joint appointments	57	65	8	14.0%	106	41	63.1%	49	86.0%
Full-time nontenure	205	261	56	27.3%	296	35	13.4%	91	44.4%
Part-time faculty	750	967	217	28.9%	1,016	49	5.1%	266	35.5%

Table 3: Period to period and net change for Undergraduate Education/Faculty categories.

	1996–1997	1999–2000			2004–2005			1996–2005	
	Totals	Totals	Raw ▲	% ▲	Totals	Raw ▲	% ▲	Net ▲	Net % ▲
Tenured – Female	203	231	28	13.8%	257	26	11.3%	54	26.6%
Tenured – Male	804	861	57	7.1%	829	-32	-3.7%	25	3.1%
Tenure track – Female	112	116	4	3.6%	168	52	44.8%	56	50.0%
Tenure track – Male	219	238	19	8.7%	319	81	34.0%	100	45.7%
Joint Appointments – Female	11	14	3	27.3%	34	20	142.9%	23	209.1%
Joint Appointments – Male	46	51	5	10.9%	72	21	41.2%	26	56.5%
Full-time nontenure – Female	52	63	11	21.2%	75	12	19.0%	23	44.2%
Full-time nontenure – Male	153	198	45	29.4%	221	23	11.6%	68	44.4%
Part-time faculty – Female	241	300	59	24.5%	322	22	7.3%	81	33.6%
Part-time faculty – Male	509	667	158	31.0%	694	27	4.0%	185	36.3%

and joint appointed faculty were strongest in the second period from 1999 to 2005.

Nontenured full-time faculty positions grew less in the 1999–2005 period versus the 1996–1999 period (13.4 percent versus 27.3 percent). Part-time faculty positions increased similarly with much lower growth in the latter period (5.1 percent) versus the 1996–1999 period (28.9 percent).

Interestingly, females tended to do much better than males at tenured ranks: female tenured ranks increased over both periods and showed a net gain of 26.6 percent over the entire period while male tenured positions increased 7.1 percent over the 1996–1999 period and decreased by 3.7 percent over the 1999–2005 period. Female tenured faculty gained 26.6 percent over the entire survey period, while males showed only a 3.1 percent net growth. See Table 3 for more comparisons between females and males.

Undergraduate Education and Course Work

Most courses showed increases by percentage in counting toward the major. New Religious Movements, Indigenous Religions, and Women's Studies were the three courses showing the largest increase for percentage of classes counting toward the major (with increases of 171.4 per-

cent, 140 percent, and 84.6 percent respectively). By contrast, the Social Scientific Study of Religion, Introduction to Sacred Texts, and Ritual Performances showed the steepest declines in courses that count toward the major, with -28 percent, -20 percent, and -15.4 percent respectively.

Most course topics that count toward general education credit increased, with the exception of Introduction to Sacred Texts, which declined by 32.3 percent. The top three increases in course topics by percentage are New Religious Movements (126.7 percent), Indigenous Religions (140 percent), and Islam (70 percent). The smallest three increases in course topics by percentage are Introduction to Religion (1.7 percent), Christian Ethics (2.1 percent), and Introduction to Eastern Religions (2.3 percent).

In terms of the number of courses offered, New Religious Movements (69 percent), American Religion (62.3 percent), and Islam (52.8 percent) showed the three highest increases by percentage. Ritual and Performance, Introduction to Sacred Texts, and Confucianism/Taoism suffered the steepest declines in numbers of courses offered with -37.1 percent, -27.3 percent, and -21.1 percent respectively.

	Offered		Majors		General Education?		How Many?	
	Raw ▲	% ▲	Raw ▲	% ▲	Raw ▲	% ▲	Raw ▲	% ▲
Intro to Religion	-25	-16.0%	-1	-1.1%	2	1.7%	-13	-1.4%
Intro to World Religions	-32	-17.1%	4	4.0%	6	4.7%	84	14.0%
Intro to Bible	-17	-9.6%	18	19.6%	29	21.8%	215	25.3%
Intro to Sacred Texts	-49	-70.0%	-4	-20.0%	-10	-32.3%	-21	-27.3%
Intro to Eastern Religions	-33	-26.2%	3	6.5%	2	2.3%	20	8.7%
Intro to Western Religions	-33	-30.8%	5	11.1%	6	8.8%	-8	-3.5%
Christian – Old Testament	-17	-7.8%	-8	-6.1%	11	6.9%	44	7.1%
Christian – New Testament	-17	-7.2%	0	0.0%	15	9.2%	76	10.0%
Christian – Historical	-19	-9.0%	-5	-4.6%	24	19.8%	67	12.6%
Christian – Theological	-26	-14.6%	1	0.9%	13	12.1%	106	12.7%
Christian – Ethics	-28	-19.3%	11	17.2%	2	2.1%	23	5.1%
Christian – Cultural	-9	-10.8%	7	35.0%	24	58.5%	82	51.3%
Buddhism	-10	-8.4%	12	48.0%	27	37.0%	47	22.5%
Confucianism/Taoism	-19	-25.7%	-1	-7.1%	10	27.0%	-24	-21.1%
Hinduism/Jainism/Sikhism	-9	-9.1%	10	55.6%	32	60.4%	54	39.1%
Indigenous Religions	-19	-32.8%	7	140.0%	24	114.3%	11	16.9%
Islam	-4	-3.5%	18	78.3%	42	70.0%	95	52.8%
Judaism	-26	-20.8%	10	41.7%	18	22.0%	17	5.9%
Comparative	-27	-17.8%	5	9.3%	30	34.9%	144	47.8%
American Religion	-12	-9.0%	7	19.4%	31	39.2%	142	62.3%
Arts, Literature, and Religion	-20	-20.0%	0	0.0%	12	20.7%	2	1.1%
Ethics	-23	-16.0%	3	6.0%	8	8.6%	40	11.3%
Gender & Sexuality	1	1.0%	3	16.7%	28	53.8%	22	16.2%
NRMs	-13	-22.8%	12	171.4%	19	126.7%	29	69.0%
Philosophy of Religion	-25	-18.8%	2	4.5%	15	25.0%	42	29.2%
Racial and Ethnic Studies	-29	-42.0%	1	8.3%	7	20.6%	-7	-6.4%
Ritual and Performance	-22	-41.5%	-2	-15.4%	3	13.0%	-26	-37.1%
Social Scientific Study	-30	-35.7%	-7	-28.0%	6	16.2%	31	28.7%
Women's Studies	-19	-17.9%	11	84.6%	13	21.3%	46	31.3%
Other	-53	-51.5%	-5	-16.7%	-2	-5.3%	-140	-40.2%

Table 4: Course change between survey periods. Table shows the raw and percentage change between 1999–2000 and 2004–2005 for courses offered, whether courses qualified for general education requirements, whether courses qualified towards the major, and how many courses or sections of courses were offered.

Previous and Related AAR Surveys of the Undergraduate and Graduate Study of Religion and Theology

2000 Survey of Departments of Religion

www.aarweb.org/Programs/Department_Services/Survey_Data/Undergraduate

2002 Survey of Graduate Programs

www.aarweb.org/Programs/Department_Services/Survey_Data/Graduate

Group Examines Undergraduate Research in Religious Studies

Robin Rinehart, Lafayette College



Robin Rinehart is Associate Professor of Religious Studies at Lafayette College, where she teaches courses on Asian religions, theories of religion, gender and religion, and alternative religious movements in the United States. Her research focuses on the religious literatures of the Punjab region of South Asia, and she is currently working on a controversial Sikh text called the Dasam Granth. She travels to India regularly for research. She is co-chair of the Religion in South Asia section of the AAR, and a steering committee member of the newly formed Sikh Studies Consultation.

COLLEGES AND universities are promoting undergraduate research and highlighting it for prospective students as an opportunity for educational growth and improved career prospects. Faculty at many institutions are encouraged or even required to mentor undergraduate research projects. In 2005, the Council on Undergraduate Research (CUR) and the National Conferences on Undergraduate Research (NCUR) endorsed a joint statement that read in part, “We believe

that undergraduate research is the pedagogy for the twenty-first century” (www.cur.org/SummitPosition.html).

The initial impetus for undergraduate research, however, developed in the natural and social sciences, and most descriptions of the undergraduate research process use the language of scientific experimentation. CUR, for example, which focuses primarily on work in the natural and social sciences, defines undergraduate research as “an inquiry or investigation conducted by an undergraduate student that makes an original intellectual or creative contribution to the discipline” (www.cur.org/about.html). But is this the appropriate model for undergraduate research in religious studies? Rebecca Todd Peters of Elon University and Bernadette McNary-Zak of Rhodes College both mentored undergraduate research projects and were curious to learn more about how our discipline has addressed the topic. They were surprised to find that there is very little literature on undergraduate research in the humanities in general, and virtually nothing on it in religious studies. Thus they applied to the Wabash Center for Teaching and Learning in Religion and Theology for a grant to host a consultation on undergraduate research in religious studies.

At the first consultation meeting in April 2007, religious studies and theology faculty participants from colleges and universities in the United States and Canada discussed a range of questions about undergraduate research. We asked what an undergraduate research project should look like — is it simply an extended research paper, somewhat longer and more in-depth than one might do for a course? Or is it

more involved? We also discussed the reservations that many humanities faculty have about undergraduate research in their disciplines. Many of us reported conversations with colleagues who argued, for example, that undergraduates have neither the breadth and depth of knowledge nor sufficient methodological sophistication for such research. Another frequent objection, especially among religious studies faculty, is that students are unlikely to have the necessary language skills. Given such reservations, many faculty members would argue that undergraduates are not ready to undertake a research project that will fit the CUR criterion of an “original intellectual or creative contribution” to our discipline.

Nonetheless, many religious studies faculty are mentoring undergraduate research through independent study projects, honors theses, and other programs. The problem, it seems, is that while undergraduates are in fact conducting research in our discipline, the prevailing models of what undergraduate research should be, largely derived from the natural and social sciences, do not fit the type of research that students in religious studies are doing. There are virtually no resources for faculty who wish to learn more about mentoring undergraduate research in our field.

Realizing how much work remained to be done to create such resources, Peters and McNary-Zak successfully applied to the Wabash Center for a second grant to support a Working Group on Undergraduate Research in Religious Studies. That group, somewhat smaller than the initial consultation, met at Elon University in September 2007, and began crafting a statement on the recommended ele-

ments and learning goals of undergraduate research in religious studies. Our discussions included the contentious issue of undergraduate research as “original,” the distinctive features of undergraduate research in religious studies, types of undergraduate research projects, learning goals, best practices for the mentoring relationship, assessment and evaluation, and recommendations for institutional and disciplinary support. Some schools offer stipends or course reduction for mentoring undergraduate research; others have no formal means of crediting faculty mentors. Few schools appear to have systems in place for assessing the quality of faculty mentoring. Some schools offer students credit for undergraduate research, others have programs that provide stipends and other benefits. When it comes to venues for students to disseminate their research, some schools sponsor annual undergraduate research conferences on their own campuses, others support print and online publications, and many schools send students to present their work at the annual NCUR meeting. Clearly, however, there need to be more venues for dissemination of religious studies undergraduate research.

Several members of the working group presented synopses of our work at a panel sponsored by the Academic Teaching and the Study of Religion Section at the 2007 AAR Annual Meeting in San Diego. We have discussed plans to design a website dedicated to undergraduate research in religious studies, and are at work on a volume to be edited by Peters and McNary-Zak tentatively titled *Teaching Undergraduate Research in Religious Studies*. 