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Associate Professor of Psychology, Colorado State University
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—Michael Harvey

Professor of Business Management Washington College
Co-Editor of *Leadership Studies: The Dialogue of Disciplines*

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—Richard M. Lerner,

Bergstrom Chair in Applied Developmental Science and
Director, Institute for Applied Research in
Youth Development
Tufts University

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Frontiers in Spiritual Leadership

**Discovering the Better Angels
of Our Nature**

Edited by

Scott T. Allison, Craig T. Kocher, and
George R. Goethals

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FRONTIERS IN SPIRITUAL LEADERSHIP

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FOREWORD

“Spiritual” and “leadership”—two words that could hardly be more slippery. The editors of this book are brave to take on both at the same time. They are even braver to examine those words within the context of a twenty-first-century institution of higher education.

It may seem surprising at best to look for the spiritual within a secular university. It is not obvious where the spirit might live in a place that is simultaneously an institution of higher education, a complicated bureaucracy, a business enterprise, an athletics franchise, a nonprofit, a large employer, a wealthy investor, a philanthropic institution, and a large real estate holding.

The place of spirituality may seem especially fugitive in an institution that bore an explicitly spiritual mission throughout most of its history but now does not. The University of Richmond was proudly and explicitly Baptist for its first century and a quarter. Since the 1970s, however, the institution, like counterparts across the nation, has grown steadily more diverse in the faith traditions it welcomes and supports. Today, the chaplain coordinates those who minister to Catholic, Jewish, Buddhist, Hindu, Muslim, and Protestant students. The two chaplains represented in this collection, David Burhans and Craig Kocher, reflect on the experience of presiding over a place that has seen spirituality flourish both in the context of focused denominational vision and in the newer context of a broader diversity of faith.

The place of leadership is also complicated in a university. Shared governance is an article of faith in a university, and yet exactly what is shared, when and how, requires elaborate explication and continuous negotiation. The Board of Trustees has the ultimate responsibility for a university, but the faculty exercise the most important and immediate

leadership within an educational institution—determining what is taught and how it is taught, day in and day out, in every classroom for generations. The administration exercises power only on behalf of other people. The president is more a broker than anything else, negotiating among every group that claims an interest in the institution, ranging from students and their parents to neighbors to alumni to staff to faculty to donors to fans to accrediting agencies to bond-rating companies.

Such a complex environment both nurtures and fractures spirituality and leadership. To the surprise of many, religious faith has not registered a steady decline in an increasingly secular world. Rather, it has taken new forms and shapes, often less anchored in formal institutions but vital nevertheless. Young people, in particular, yearn for a kind of meaning that can only be described as “spiritual” even as they sustain only flitting relationships to churches, synagogues, and mosques. A university provides a welcome haven for such seekers, offering the welcome and fellowship of faith without strict confines and commitments.

Leadership, too, flourishes in a university that seems to have no fixed leadership. Students seek out “leadership opportunities” of every sort, finding them in fraternities and sports clubs as well as in student government and in alliance with the administration of the university. Faculty exercise leadership in departments, in schools, and on university-wide committees as well as within their classrooms and disciplines.

Universities are tightly woven into the society beyond its bounds, so that trends analyzed in this collection press on institutions that seem timeless in their architecture and ceremonies. Many people worry, for example, that the neoliberal values described in Jennifer Erkulwater’s chapter are eroding the communal values of higher education. Others worry that higher education policies created in Washington correspond poorly with the needs of actual students.

The range of topics explored in this collection demonstrate that American universities early in the twenty-first century, even a relatively small one proudly devoted to undergraduate education, foster broad curiosity and erudition. The specialized knowledge displayed in the pages that follow impressively embody the kinds of knowledge that live in a university and nowhere else.

The chapters in this book thus reflect a paradox: spirituality and leadership can flourish in a university precisely because they are not

unitary, not fixed, and not bound there. The very flux that stirs anxiety also stirs creativity and energy.

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