

# Inward Bound Evaluation Survey Results

## - Full Report -

Compiled: November 8, 2002

### **The Purpose of Inward Bound:**

Inward Bound's purpose was to "turn students on" to the high's, low's, challenges, and ultimate *magic* of the "spiritual adventure." To do this, there were two primary methods:

- Provide students with an experiential taste of "radical authenticity" and self-honesty
- Provide students with an experiential taste of the benefits of spiritual community

The hope was that if it really came together, that students would fall in love with a higher way of being and a deeper way of seeing and want to insure that they made it a part of their everyday life.

## **PROGRAMMING**

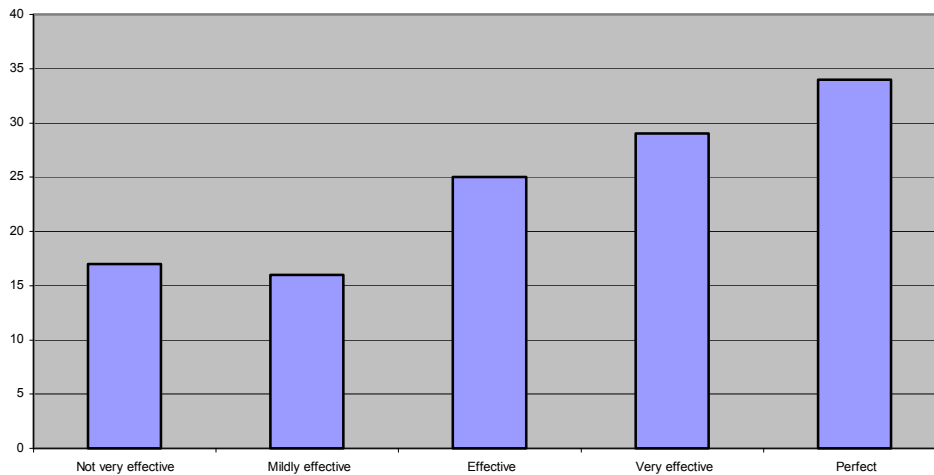
### **Keynote by Augie Turak**

**Purpose:** The purpose of the keynote was as follows

- to touch on the WHY (inspiration) and HOW (insight) of the spiritual life
- to provide an overture to what is to come (touch on the major themes)
  - o intimacy
  - o intensity
  - o courage
  - o risk/fear
  - o depth
- Inspire / Excite – to bring up the energy and excite students about the incredible possibilities of seizing the day, living a spiritual/religious life
- Set the Tone
  - o Depth – story of boy locked in freezer
  - o Unconventional/Irreverent/Bold – movie clips (fight club sequence, matrix sequence)
- Shake up - to point to the void within and give students a hunger to fill that void; to give them the sense that there's more to know about who they really are deep down and that it's worth knowing; Done through some of the movie clips with both positive (American Beauty) and negative ("your life is ending one minute at a time" from Fight Club) tones
- Set expectations
  - o It will be scary. You have to be courageous. "Go first"
  - o It will be rewarding
  - o It's an adventure



Please rate how effective the keynote speech was at setting the right tone



Number of responses: 121

**Avg Response: 3.361 (closer to “Good” than “Very Good”)**

**Question 3:** What was the most memorable part of the keynote for you?

**The Movie Clips:** 27

**Boy in the Freezer Story:** 14 comments

**Jelly Beans:** 13

**American Beauty (movie clip):** 10

**Fight Club (movie clip):** 9

**Matrix (movie clip):** 3

**Question 4:** General comments about the keynote:

**Commentary:**

1. **Multi-media:** The multi-media aspects of the keynote were far-and-away the most spoken about and the overwhelming majority were very excited about them (“The movie clips were very effective.” – “Using American Beauty scene - very meaningful for me” – “choice of film clips, excellent for truth & beauty” -- “The movies were a cool touch”) though one person was offended by the “you are not your f-cking khakis” line from the Fight Club clip.
2. **Energy/Intensity:** Some people were very exciting by the energy/intensity of the keynote (e.g. “like ‘in your face’ truthfulness” -- “showing the true emotion, extend and depth that everyone experiences during their sincere spiritual journey” -- “Augie was very enthused--this was good.” – “Aug's humor & excitement” – “The vivid stories and the humor”) though one educator commented “Feeling like I had been hit with something I wasn't prepared for and hadn't prepared my students for.”

3. **Inspiration:** Quite a few respondents indicated being very inspired by the keynote. Some of the more notable quotes include
  - “Spirit of readiness in the group--we were pumped!”
  - “live the best life possible, live the truth, you have to go first”
  - “To remember that I have to face \*right now\*.”
  - “I LOVED, loved Augie's story about the young man in the freezer and how he tied it into OUR lives in searching for the truth like your hair is on fire.”)
  - “Within the first few minutes of Augie's speech. I was convinced that sitting in that auditorium was the best decision I had ever made in my life.”
  - “really cool, really true”
  - “Never seen a group so motivated at a conference”
  - “Dynamic. Energizing. Loved the movie clips.”
  - “very accessible”
  - “able to reach students”
  - “August's direct approach set the tone for a "quickly open and honest" conference”
4. **Turn-offs:** About a dozen respondents were very turned off by the keynote, some describing the speaker as “sexist” or “misogynist” or “lookist” and one even complained that the speaker’s “examples and references were very heterosexual male oriented.” One student said they were “extremely uncomfortable and offended,” and that the speaker “Came of [sic] as some great guru when is not in my opinion [sic]. Very domeneering [sic]. Hes brainwashing people [sic].” One student respondent offered an explanation saying, “a lot of people seem to have gotten caught up in the fact that Augie isn't PC and missed the point of his address.”

### **Conclusion:**

Overall, the keynote was generally well-received and fulfilled its purpose but among those for whom it was not well-received, it was an extremely negative experience. This is something to look at very seriously going forward because the intent was to inspire and excite students and to whatever extent that this did not happen is tragic and deserves serious consideration.

The mix of intensity and inspiration that characterized the keynote and the general responses to it might best be summed up by the following quotes from two respondents:

- “I appreciated his keynote -- but not a few comments (ex. 400 lb. Woman). I could find value in his honesty and approach though. AGGRESSIVE. Intensity just isn't quite my style...but...there was also great power in the approach.”
- “I think his speech had its flaws, but overall I enjoyed mostly how he related the divine to intimacy and intensity. I think that is a pretty fundamental human need.”

## **Value Options Game**

**Purpose:** The Value Options game was intended to provide an evolutionary framework for the conference as students are constantly challenged about what they really believe and, perhaps more importantly, how far they are willing to go for those beliefs. The game will place students in situations very similar to what they encounter in their lives by asking to form communities according to their some shared and some disparate values. Later, the students will form groups with others holding opposite values and again attempt to arrive at a community. Again this situation is similar to what students face in their daily lives—living in a community of people who do not necessarily agree with your values.

Inward Bound was intended to enable students to *experience the process* of community building, thus modeling the process by example. The groups formed by the Value Options Game were to stay together through the conference. The students in each of these small communities were to go through intense and challenging experiences, learn about each other, and accomplish objectives as a team and hopefully learn from experience how these activities, built on top of a shared core of values, form the seeds of a community of spiritual individuals.

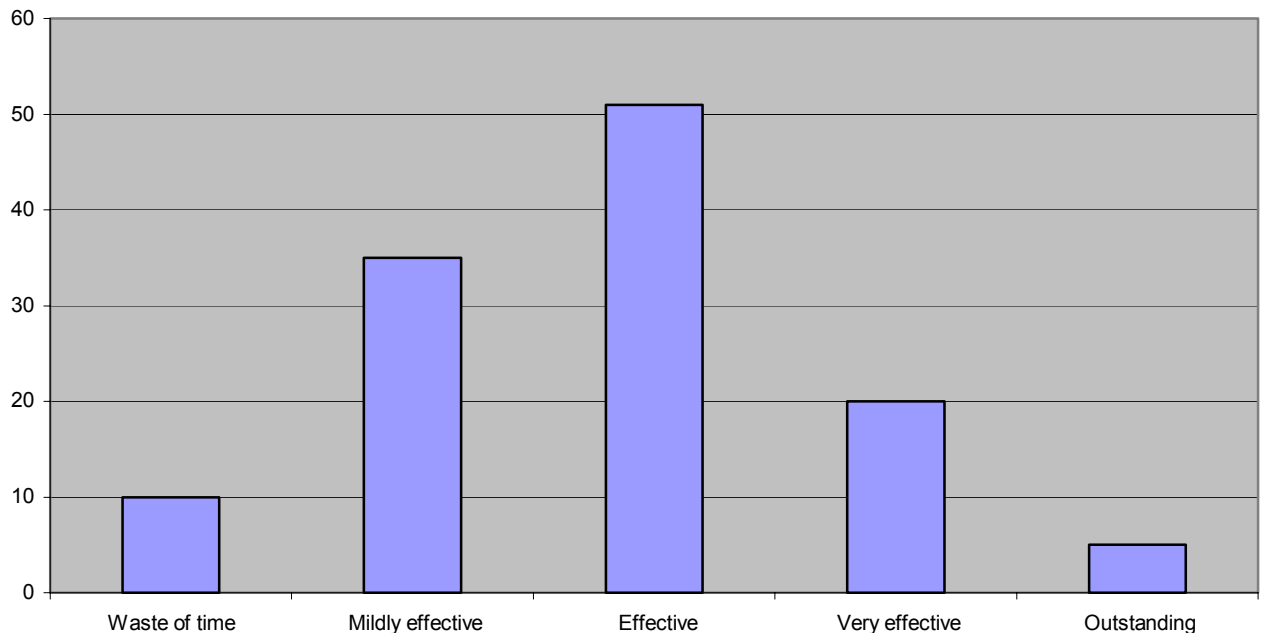
From a process perspective, the purpose of Value Options was:

- to get students involved – to change the energy from speaker-oriented keynote to everyone involved and taking ownership
- to form groups
- to get students to formulate and articulate their values
- to confront students with a taste of the radically different values out there
- to model the realities of life / the spiritual path
  - o there is a price to be paid for sticking to your values
  - o the desire to not be alone
  - o the discovery (fairly likely) that you're not
  - o insight into how they cope with all of these (do they cheat in order to get into a group or rationalize or play down their values to fit in? do they compromise? How do you compromise without selling out? Etc)

**Question 5:** Please rate the effectiveness of the Value Option Game (CIRCLE ONE):

Waste of time	Mildly effective	Effective	Very effective	Outstanding
1	2	3	4	5

Please rate the effectiveness of the Value Options game:



Number of responses: 121

**Avg Response: 2.79338843** (between “Mildly Effective” and “Effective,” closer to the latter)

**Question 6:** What was your favorite part of the Value Options Game?

The most common answer was the exchanging of cards- getting to meet people in the process, seeing the cards and what others believe, having to reflect on their own beliefs. One person enjoyed “paying attention to the words used and sorting out my specific values on particular subjects.” A number of people liked getting to know their group and facilitator.

**Question 7:** How could the Values Option Game or the Value Option process be improved?

- **Improve Value Cards:** Most thought the values on the cards were too limiting or outdated. They wanted more contemporary cards, that didn't use the word “God” every time the cards spoke about the Absolute. A number of people suggested having the option of writing your own card.
- **Similarity/Diversity:** The second most common suggestion was to do diversity groups. Many people were disappointed that the groups were focused on people with similar values. (Note: Diversity groups were originally intended but dropped due to lack of time)

- **Disorganized/Unclear:** Many people thought the entire Value Option process took too long and was too disorganized. A number would have cut the group sharing of mission statements at the end. Students wanted more detailed, clear instructions. Some students didn't like writing the mission statement or didn't understand the point of writing the statement.
- **Overall Rules/Structure:** In addition, some students would have preferred to be assigned to a group based on the numbers on the cards or just randomly, instead of trying to form them on their own (this seemed to be a waste of time and a long, confusing process that ended up being sort of random anyway). Having smaller groups was also a common response.

**Question 8:** Would you recommend Value Options to your campus when you return? If so, why?

Only 19 people said with certainty that they would use it on their campus. Most, 38, did not answer or said "maybe". A large group, 33, said no. Most did not explain their reasoning, but of those who did common complaints were the values were too old/limiting and that grouping together with people with similar values was not interesting or stimulating. Of the people that would recommend it to their schools, most appreciated that it was a good way to mix people up, that it was thought-provoking, and that it gets people to know each other on a deeper level.

**Question 9:** Any other general comments about the Values Option Game:

Selection of Positive Comments:

- Very difficult game. It feels very vulnerable to show your beliefs on four cards and be judged because of those beliefs. The importance of this activity became apparent through the time.
- The game was terrific and I love my group.
- It was a great way to form an Affinity Group
- It's a daunting task -- to put 15 people together and ask them to come up with a statement that comprises what is inherently very close to the heart is tricky- and I think it's a good icebreaker and helps people to work together
- ...a good idea for getting people to react w/ everyone around the room
- Good way to get people talking on a more meaningful level

Selection of Negative Comments:

- I don't like the idea that we are put into group that people have same thought.
- hard activity to do as icebreaker
- It was difficult for it to be very effective with so many people, maybe.
- Unclear what the purpose was
- A little impersonal. Maybe placing this game later in the conference - hard to open up right away - but I know this is much of the point and unavoidable.
- the environment: much too large of a room

- Augie [keynote speaker who also facilitated the Value Options game] did not do an effective job facilitating. He let discussion drag on, he was rude, and did not answer questions.
- Was spending that much time needed? I don't think we needed to have common group beliefs to discuss our feelings in a group
- I think a lot of time could have been saved by not having the groups read out [mission statements] at the end and just having everyone go and read the posters made by each group. Then we would have had time to do what Augie said was the third part of the game with finding unity in seemingly contradictory ideologies.
- Find the purposes of it and talk about that to give more meaning
- As a faculty member I was sorry to have to be cut-out from the process for as long as we were

**Conclusion:** Overall the Value Options game seems to have suffered from a lack of focus, dragged on too long, and was something of a lower-energy let-down after high-energy keynote. It succeeded at some of its intended purposes, namely to turn the energy and focus over to students (though some students felt this would have been better accomplished had keynote speaker, Augie Turak, not MC'ed the event), to form groups, to get students to think about and articulate their values, and confront them with the radically different values of their fellows. The fact that the “diversity groups” section of the exercise was dropped due to time constraints did take away from the opportunity to really have to confront opposite values and work with them. In addition, the aspect of the Value Options Game that models the realities of everyday life and can reveal to the participant aspects of their character they might not otherwise have seen was not given much emphasis or focus in the activity and was thereby lost on most of the participants.

## Affinity Groups

**Purpose:** The Affinity Group experience was intended to be the central and most important part of the Inward Bound experience. Consequently, it was given more time (over a full day of the 2.5 day event) than any other activity. It was in this context that students were to hopefully get their most direct, experiential taste of spirituality/self-exploration/self-honesty and spiritual community.

**Question 1:** What was the most memorable or most valuable aspect of your experience with your Affinity Group?

The responses generally fell into a few major categories. People found the following (along with some sample quotes), in the following proportions to be their most memorable or most valuable experience.

**Depth/Authenticity/Honesty/Intensity** – 47 comments (36%)

- genuine and authentic
- breaking boundaries and leaving comfort zone
- This was the highlight of the conference for me

- We talked about our own cups of trembling, helped each other see ways out
- Everybody was so incredibly [sic] honest and open with each other.
- the intentional learning we set out to do even if that learning was not what we wanted to hear
- Confrontation. Facing hard truths. Seeing compassion in stranger's eyes.
- Personal experience that most everyone can relate to
- People's openness to anything I might say/feel and knowing they would accept anything - it's a little scary actually, in a good way

**Community** - 43 comments (33%)

- I love them all, and I'm so glad I ended up with these people
- The people in my group were great! Facilitator, too! Sharing of ideas.
- Our group was amazing. I feel very close with everyone in the group. We stayed overtime in our small group just to talk.
- Hearing other people express many of the same things I feel and be open to sharing that.
- Unconditional love
- People coming together, willing to share and listen and help guide one another on the path to a meaningful life.
- seeing how some of us were polar opposites but came together, supported each other, and bonded
- The group realization that we have a lot in common
- getting to know each other and connect no matter what the background--the fact that everyone felt this--and how promising that is for reaching out to people--the world
- I think the honest trust that came out of our group was great- I think the chemistry was hard because really, a lot of our experiences in this group were quite painful

**Exposure to New Ideas/People** – 23 (18%)

- New friendships with people I wouldn't have associated with in the past
- The different spiritual journeys represented
- meeting people with similar, dissimilar beliefs
- Talking to individual members of my group about who they are and how they approach life - not necessarily in group meetings.
- It was a dialogue. We made the conference work.
- Particular Ideas mentioned
  - o the challenge of reflecting specifically. That is a different kind of exploration. And writing it down.
  - o I really liked talking about money's effect on our life, the purpose of life, the environment, etc.
  - o discussion of interconnectedness

**Facilitator** – 9 (7%)

- The people in my group were great! Facilitator, too! Sharing of ideas.
- With our facilitator [sic]. People opening up and sharing.

- Fleet [facilitator] & the emotional connection we all had
- The people were open, Kenny [facilitator] was insightful.
- Sharing our cups of trembling and listening to Augie's [facilitator] stories and advice
- Just the conversations I had with the facilitator outside of the group setting.

... as well

- 4 that defied categorization – (3%)
- 4 overtly negative comments – (3%)
  - One unhappy student said, “They taught that in the world there are people that will never want to listen to me and that I must keep working in spite of it. People don't always respect you and its sad but I will go on.” Ironically, another student had the exact opposite experience saying, “Discovering that there truly are accepting [sic] people out there”
  - “Our facilitator was domineering and monopolated [sic] the conversation with talk of himself” – this student was ironically in the same group as the student above who said that their most memorable part of this activity was “Meeting and listening” to their facilitator, “who kicks ass”
  - Another student felt that Inward Bound was anti-christian “brain-washing” while a number of other students ironically found it “too Judeo/Christian”

### Conclusion

The categories into which all of the feedback was divided were chosen arbitrarily while sorting the comments. Amazingly, these very categories almost directly parallel the intentions for the Inward Bound experience and the Affinity Group experience, in particular. As mentioned above, Inward Bound's purpose was to “turn students on” to the high's, low's, challenges, and ultimate magic of the “spiritual adventure” by providing them with an experiential taste of authenticity/self-honesty/spirituality and community.

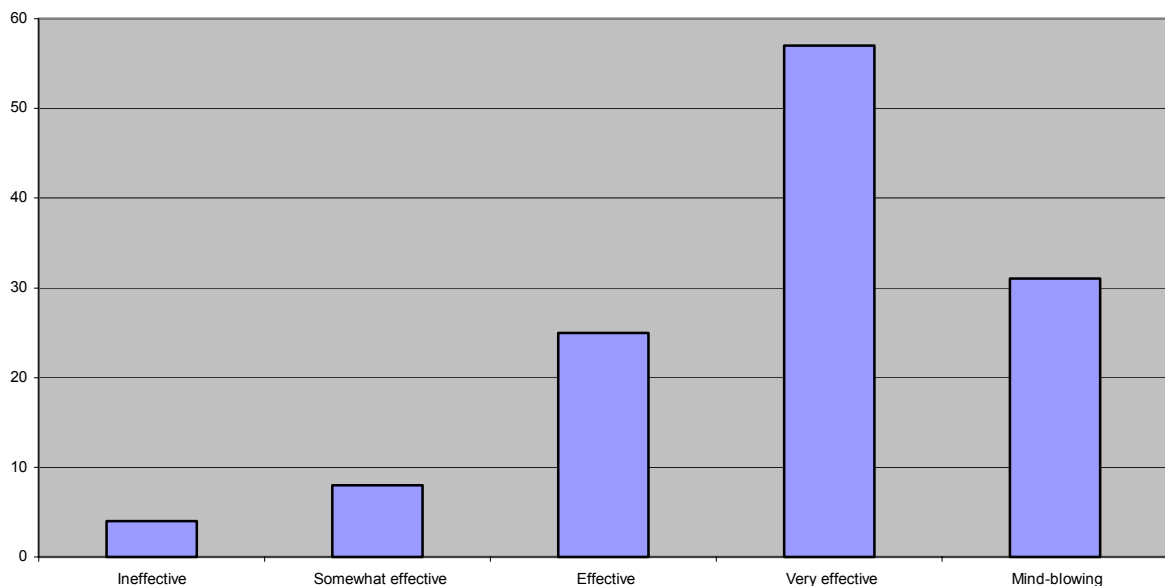
These two goals for Inward Bound map very closely to the top-two categories above (**Depth/Authenticity/ Honesty/Intensity** and **Community**). The next most represented category, **Exposure to New Ideas/People**, is at the core of Inward Bound co-sponsor Education as Transformation Project's mission.

The least mentioned category, **Facilitator**, either indicates that the based-based model Inward Bound was based on bears changing *or* that the facilitators succeeded overwhelmingly at the true purpose of facilitation which is to be midwife to the great experiences of others without getting in the way or being the main event.

**Question 2:** In terms of your Affinity Group, please rate your facilitator:

Ineffective	Somewhat effective	Effective	Very effective	Mind-blowing
1	2	3	4	5

In terms of your Affinity Group experience, please rate your facilitator



Number of responses: 125

**Avg Response: 3.824** (very close to “Very Effective”)

**Question 3:** General comments about your facilitator:

### **Statistics**

**Positive:** 67 comments (68%)

**Mixed, but ultimately/generally good:** 18 comments (18%)

**Negative:** 13 comments (13%)

**Total comments:** 98

Here is break-down of why people felt the way they did...

Positive – people wrote positive comments about their facilitator in the following numbers because their facilitators were

- Nice/Cool – 19 comments
- Light-handed/Egalitarian/Non-directive – 16 comments
- Inspiring/Opened up the group – 14 comments
- Very Honest – 12 comments
- Able to make people feel safe/comfortable – 12 comments
- Insightful/Had Good Advice – 11 comments
- Courageous/Bold – 7 comments
- Committed – 4 comments
- Inclusive – 4 comments

- Challenging – 1 comment

Mixed, but ultimately/generally good - This group was made up of those comments that were in any way qualified in their praise. Some of the good things said here:

- sincere, committed, overall a very good group leader
- He was excellent... helpful and deep, always knowing where to pull the group... very open minded... gentle... Loved his style
- Genuinely liked/appreciated him... incredibly sincere
- Wonderful
- Fantastic
- Phenomenal!
- I saw his patience, strength, and emotional knowledge
- Led an effective discussion... did a good [job] provoking questioning
- Did a great job of hitting on nearly all of the issues... behind people's stories
- Gave a great perspective... knows a lot of amazing truths.
- He had some great things to say

Some reasons people weren't completely satisfied:

- Too much direction / Forced ideas on group (5)
- Not enough (good) Direction (2)
- Exclusivist/Elitist (2)
- Offensive (2)
- Talked too much (1)
- Tried too hard (1)
- Not "kick-your-ass" enough (1)
- Couldn't believe you could be a lawyer and be spiritual (1)

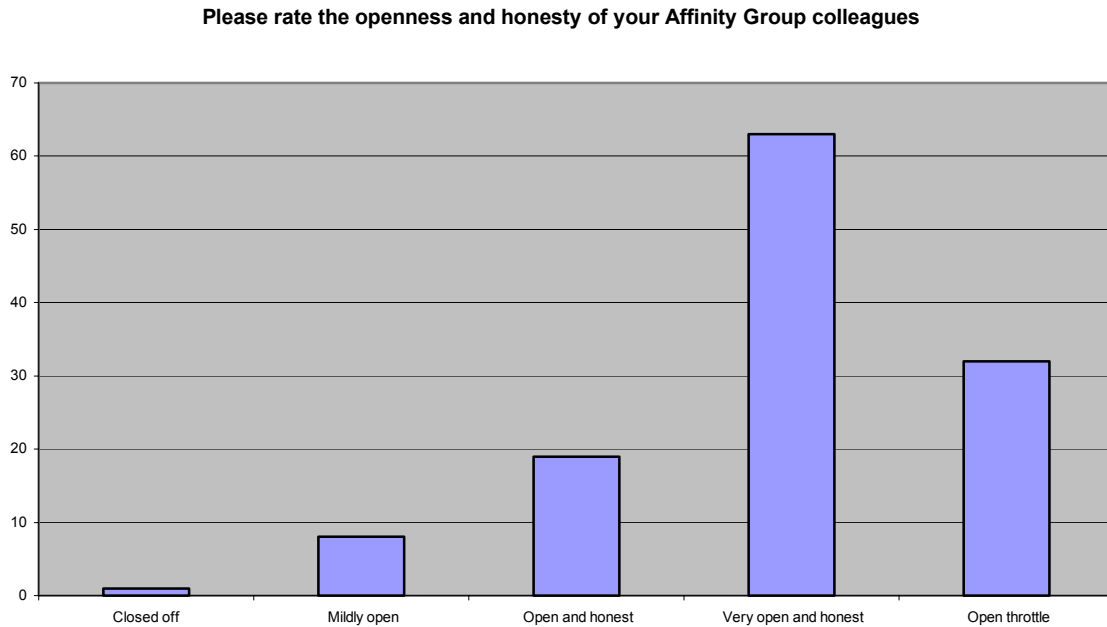
Negative - In the overtly negative category, responses broke down into a few basic categories

- Too much control (3)
- Talked too much (3)
- Inappropriate/Incompetent Facilitator (3)
- Not Honest Enough (1)
- Weirdered out (1)
- Not Inclusive (1)
- anti-christian (1)

**Conclusion:** Overall, students rated their facilitators highly. Even the "Mixed" comments were on the positive side. Although a small minority had a negative experience according to the surveys we received, some of those who did have them tended to be vehemently unhappy and this is something to seriously analyze and consider. Our goal with Inward Bound was to reach everyone and give them a positive experience. Although the majority of people seemed to have a very positive experience, the magnitude of negativity of the few is of great import to us to find a way to address.

**Question 4:** In terms of your Affinity Group, please rate the openness and honesty of your Affinity Group colleagues:

Closed off 1    Mildly open 2    Open and honest 3    Very open and honest 4    Open throttle 5



Number of responses: 121

**Avg Response: 3.951 ( “Very Open and honest”)**

**Question 5:** General comments about your Affinity Group colleagues:

**Stats**

**Positive:** 64 comments (71%)

**Negative:** 11 comments (12%)

**Mixed:** 9 comments (10%)

**Statements:** 6 comments (7%)

**Total:** 90 comments

**Commentary**

**Positive**

These were a significant majority of the responses and they tended to be gushing. Some common ones:

- great
- fantastic
- awesome

- Wonderful! Wunderbar!
- Genuine
- open
- honest
- I love them!
- best thing about conference

And also some notable ones:

- An unbelievable group of people
- At first we didn't work well together...we didn't even finish the mission statement. Yesterday and today we were laughing, crying, meditating, singing in silence together.
- I was so impressed with the honesty and beauty of the group--many things came up that no one had imagined.
- an amazing, intense experience when interacting with them
- They are a terrific set of people and I'm looking forward to keeping in touch.
- Very supportive, open and understanding. Great rapport!
- very different backgrounds and beliefs--but all open-minded and accepting and b/c of that, we were all able to open up and get to the bottom of our issues (which is why we came here). Most of them were outstanding.
- everyone was fabulous--they shared deep, personal experiences and listened. Everyone cared about each other after only 1 day. I would have preferred MORE time with them.
- They were all fascinating people and I loved talking and listening to them
- It was like a family
- They are sweetass; Like butter only louder.
- They taught me a lot about human nature and that everyone has their fears

### Negative

Of the negative comments...

- 4 comments were on group structure (too large, too similar, no groundrules, etc)
- 3 comments were about disappointment that group didn't get deep / open enough
- 3 comments were about being unhappy with other group members (1 about not being comfortable opening up to their group and another about the group being closeminded, biased, and ignorant and 1 thought the conference was anti-catholic and found his group trite and ungrounded and the whole conference to be a sham)
- 2 comments were about not having enough time with their group [these might be positive remarks in disguise!]
- 1 respondent thought the whole conference was a cult-motivated anti-christian bashing session [though did enjoy Father Francis Kline's service very much]

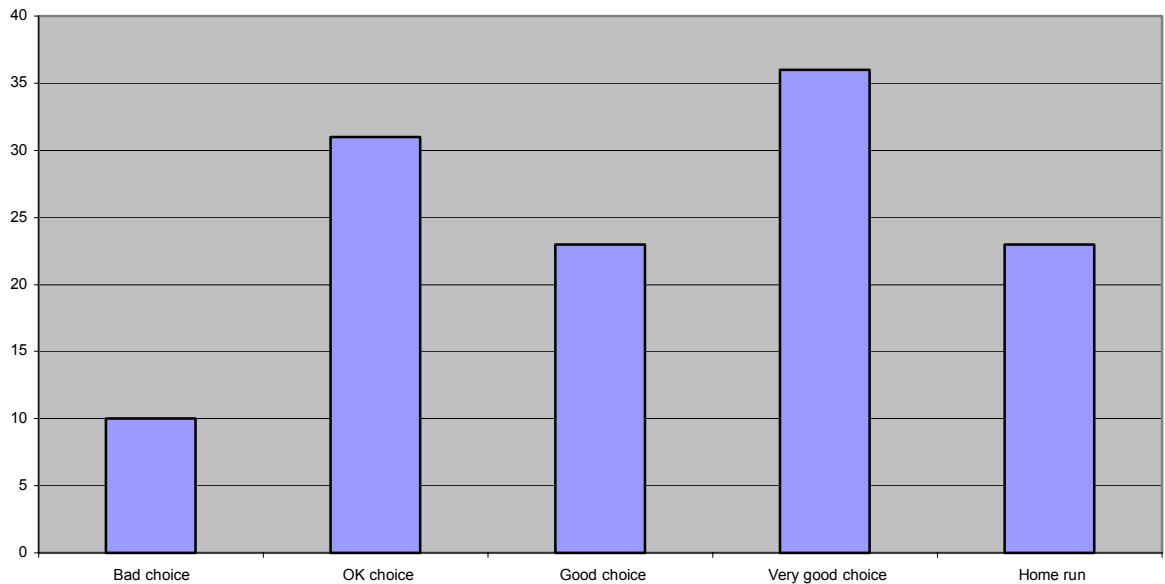
### Mixed

Of those in the mixed category, most were generally positive. Some of their sticking points are summarized as follows:

- 3 were disappointed that the group didn't get deeper sooner or more widely
- 1 found some people closeminded and others awesome "and thank god for them"
- 1 liked his group "although a few were disturbingly defensive of SKS."
- 1 mentioned the group got caught up on the method [article, I think] but eventually got down to business
- 1 wished people had spoken up more evenly – "But they are all really cool."
- 1 found group "mostly awesome, sincere" but had trouble "differentiating belief from fact"
- 1 just had a so-so time getting along with group



**Please rate The Cup of Trembling as a theme/conversation starter**



Number of responses: 123

**Avg Response: 3.252 (slightly better than “Good choice”)**

**Question 8:** General comments about The Cup of Trembling:

**Stats**

**Positive:** 27 comments (31%)

**Negative:** 27 comments (31%)

**Mixed:** 27 comments (31%)

**Info:** 7 comments (9%)

**Total:** 88 comments

**Commentary**

**Positive**

It's quite hard to find a pattern here. Here are a list of some of the most interesting / extraordinary things said:

- This idea was great! I really grew through sharing my Cup of Trembling with others.
- It was risky to start things off with...but very good things resulted from it.
- I liked how each individual could identify with the cup of trembling --- personal is great
- Fantastic article that speaks to everyone and challenges everyone
- Intense topic everyone [sic] can relate to in a very personal way.

- I feel like that idea, even if not identified with that image, is the key to spiritual transformation
- Difficult and authentic
- It seemed like the story struck right at the heart one of those things that everyone had in common.
- It's something to think about, it's deep, it's cool, we all need to get in touch with that.
- The type of writing that can be pondered / discussed for a week!
- I really felt that I gamed [sic] a better understanding of myself through this exercise

### Negative

Most of these are folks who were bothered/offended by the religious/Christian context of the article. Of the remainder, most just didn't think it was the best, most clear article choice or that it was too ambitious in one weekend. Here are the stats...

- 10 took exception to the Judeo/Christian/religious theme of the article
- 4 thought not a good focus for students / couldn't relate to it
- 3 took exception to the focus on pain/suffering/negativity
- 3 said we could simply have chosen something better
- 2 felt that it was too much to try to do in a weekend
- 2 felt the article was unclear and ambiguous about what a COT was
- 2 thought it was too much to spend a whole day of the conference on
- 1 took exception because it wasn't in line with his christian spirituality enough
- 1 thought it was "a little contraversial" to start a conversation with
- 1 person saw absolutely no point it
- 1 person wanted to talk more about how to deal with your cup rather than talking about what it was

Some interesting samples:

- We don't know each other. We're not about to express the most painful moments at that point.
- Discussing the COT doesn't feel constructive--it just dwells on bad experience.
- Very Christian-based - thought this was suppose [sic] to be multifaith
- I know my cup and like to keep it to myself. Next time talk more about dealing with your own cup than talking about what your cup is.

### Mixed

Hard to say why those that didn't like the article but enjoyed the discussion (largest group) didn't like it. Was it the Judeo/Christian thing? Was it just hard to understand or connect to? And for those who didn't like the article/symbol but liked the themes, wasn't it probably the Judeo/Christian thing (what else could they be talking about when distinguishing the symbol from the themes but the outer garment of the story itself)? A breakdown of mixed emotions follows.

- 7 didn't like the article but acknowledged that it started good discussion

- 5 said it didn't really factor into their group experience or was hard to connect to
- 4 took exception to the Judeo/Christian/Religious context
- 3 said it was effective but tough/rough/scary at first
- 2 didn't like the article/symbol but liked the themes
- 2 had trouble understanding/connecting with it, either at first or the whole time
- 1 thought the facilitators weren't well-trained enough to handle the loaded topic
- 1 said it started conversation but not a good one
- 1 said they didn't get much past intellectual discussion and that this "may have been a function of the topic."
- 1 person said they found it interesting but that some people didn't like it b.c. it was depressing.

#### Interesting Quotes:

- scared me off at first but as I read it it had meaning
- I liked how it depended on the group, it wasn't THE IB theme, but a useful and deep method.
- A loaded topic, and it would have been effective had all group facilitators been well trained.
- I didn't love the article but it started some wonderful discussion.
- I didn't like the article. I did like the discussions it inspired.
- I didn't get it fully until we went and discussed our cup of trembling
- Very good concept. However, was God-centered. In a Judeo-Christian way. Need to make sure discussions are applicable to everyone.
- It was indeed a good article, though it was very...very-Judeo Christian. I was hoping for more spirituality and less religion.
- We didn't discuss the story at all, we just jumped in and started talking about ourselves.

**Conclusion:** The Cup of Trembling article, although framed in an explicitly Judeo/Christian context was not chosen for this reason. Rather, it was felt that this article was outstanding because it spoke to universal human themes that would apply to anyone on a path to greater self-understanding, deliberate living, and spirituality. However, it's quite clear that this required at the least some acknowledgement (which had been intended and fell through the cracks in the weeks leading up to Inward Bound when the pre-conference packets were sent out and the facilitators briefed) and addressing. Even better, an article which touched on the same points but which avoided placing itself in the context of a particular religious tradition would probably have solved more problems than it created. The majority of respondents ultimately had positive experiences based on the discussions inspired by the Cup of Trembling article though some were in spite of the article rather than because of it. Some very useful feedback here for future activities.

**Question 9:** General feedback on the overall Affinity Group experience:

#### Stats

**Positive:** 53 comments (61.5%)

**Negative:** 12 comments (14%)

**Info:** 11 comments (13%)

**Mixed:** 10 comments (11.5%)

**Total:** 86 comments

## **Commentary**

### Positive

The only thing to say about this is that the positive comments were extremely positive. Some common examples:

- best part of conference
- awesome
- super
- loved the groups
- It was INCREDIBLE...WOW!!
- I loved it and felt extremely fortunate to be a part of this group
- Great, the most meaningful self-discoveries came out of it
- Beautiful, amazing
- Awesome, awe-inspiring
- Excellent experience
- My group is SWEET ASS!!!
- could not have been better

### Negative

Interesting set. Not a whole ton of negativity. The most common single complaint was about group size. There were 4 truly unhappy people who were rubbed the wrong way by a variety of things, two of whom were inconsistent in their attendance and which ironically led to another student complaining that the group membership was inconsistent.

Of these,

- 4 felt the groups would've worked better had they been smaller
- 2 were abjectly negative (e.g. "unrewarding and a waste of my time" or saying facilitator tried to manipulate them, was very ineffective, "and I am very appalled")
- 2 felt uncomfortable, unwelcomed, marginalized
- 1 complained that it hurt the group that the group membership changed or was inconsistent throughout the conference
- 1 regretted that the group was too similar, not diverse enough
- 1 suggested a better "get-to-know-you" activity
- 1 wanted "to go outside" !?!?!?

### Mixed

With the exception of 2 folks who just plain had a so-so time, all of the others seemed to have a generally overall positive take on the activity. The reason for their mixed emotions are summarized below

- 1 thought the resulting groups might've been too "eclectic" (?)
- 1 regretted not doing more interfaith sharing, learning about beliefs of others
- 1 felt it was too much like "group therapy" and had "enough of that for now!"
- 1 just had mixed feelings although felt it went well overall
- 1 preferred the personal/philosophical side, to the spiritual areas
- 1 wished others had talked more

- 1 cited that they experienced “good times along with bad” and then acknowledged that what they found bad, someone else might’ve found good – overall, they found the event a “success with room for improvement”

**Conclusion:** Overall, people rated the affinity groups quite highly. The positive comments tended to be superlative, the negative comments were partly about group size being too large with a few very unhappy people. The info category reiterated concerns about group size and the Mixed category was just that; a mixed bag of qualifiers for folks who generally acknowledged that it was overall a good experience.

## Services

**Purpose:** The purpose of the “services” (for lack of a better word) was to create a space at the beginning and end of each day for “tuning in” to the sacred/divine/stillness in a communal way. Each one was hosted by a different one of the guest speakers, some who represented religious traditions (eastern and western) and others who did not.

**Question 1:** Please rate the services on a scale of 1 to 5, (Where 5 is WONDERFUL and 1 is POOR)

**Overall Average Rating Across All Services:** 3.916

**Question 2:** General comments/recommendations about the services:

### Stats

**Positive:** 32 comments

**Negative:** 21 comments

Some sample positive comments:

- nice variety
- EXCELLENT! I personally would like more of this. Islamic service??
- I think all of the services were beautiful and brought up a range of experiences and traditions.
- Good to have things so inclusive
- Good mix of religious traditions and spiritual practices
- I really enjoyed these...so important to experience these ways of worshipping
- They were all good, but I prefer not getting up & holding hands
- good idea!
- I liked the songs, movement, breath, meditation- all better than being talked at.
- I think it is an excellent idea to begin and end each day in a spiritual/reflective way. It added a lot to the general flow of the conference.
- Fantastic services, a great part of the conference. Absolutely essential..
- I loved the collectiveness of them.
- Wonderful speakers; a nice eclectic group
- Enjoyed them all, especially since they were of different religious persuasions.
- Really lovely - interfaith services are very meaningful

- Added an excellent element to the conference

#### Some Sample Negative Comments

- Over-rated. I don't think they really had an impact
- Services just feel like theater to me...religion entertainment
- Represent more faiths!! Not just the one you did [sic].
- Not diverse enough
- I think they were unnecessary, honestly - and they made the conference SEEM more religiously motivated rather than spiritually motivated.
- Take us outside

Conclusion: It seems from the positive comments that many people were touched /moved by the Services. Very few of the negative comments were abjectly negative simply wishing for even more diversity or at worst, just bored by them. A few folks made mention of a comment made by Rabbi Niles Goldstein in his service that offended them. On the whole, these seemed to work for most people but not work for a significant number of others.

## Monday Night Tent Social

**Purpose:** This and other downtime was provided to give the participants the opportunity to process and relax as well as to give them the opportunity meet one another and enjoy the spontaneous fellowship and community of “great conversations” that “don’t happen normally back at school.” This down-time in particular was also billed as an opportunity to talk further with speakers in a one-on-one way.

**Question:** General comments/recommendations about the tent social:

### Stats

Total 88 responses

Ice Cream: 17 comments

Drums: 11 comments

Dancing: 4

Did not attend: 18

### Selected Positive Comments

1. Great shit! Dancing was ++++. Two thumbs up.
2. Cool beans. Wish I could have stayed longer
3. I really enjoyed the opportunity to socialize and play games--GREAT idea!
4. It was fun
5. Fun, helpful (ask the burning questions that you didn't get the chance to ask in the group)
6. FUN! LOVED THE ICE CREAM AND DRUMS!!!
7. Excellent! Incredibly fun! Go Ben & Jerry's! I talked to Auggie [sic] for 45 mins.
8. Ice cream, drumming, and dancing -- can it get better?

9. YEAH! Drumming, singing, dancing -- this is where my spirituality feels AT HOME!!! My form of worshipping -- please have it more intentional -- and encourage more to participate!
10. ice cream and cold? Heh! Good overall though, sans the superficial annoyances people seemed really happy & involved- and drums, the drums really brought things together
11. I loved getting to talk to everyone and all the speakers
12. That was the most beautiful thing I've ever seen
13. good place to talk to speakers and students
14. good time for interaction, good "vibes"
15. The better part of the conference. Socials are important and it should happen every night, especially when you're discussing such a paradoxically serious and happy-making subject
16. Perfect (as in progress is perfection) - really hit home. Good to organize "togetherness" and "free" time. Drums are a huge help. Thanks for the ice cream.
17. Added an excellent element. Wish more people were there. It may be good to have more things like it

### **Constructive Feedback**

1. great, more space and less tables and chairs
2. Wish more people had come
3. Fun, too cold though.
4. It was good, but with the drumming it was hard to talk to people - should have a quieter space for those who want to talk.
5. Great fun, too loud (Hungry hippos and soft of music) need quiet space somewhere as well.
6. Open mic for reflection could be cool
7. More music
8. Didn't relate to anyone that was there. I came back to campus for that and was disappointed

### Interesting "Didn't make it"

1. sorry, I was so exhausted from the intensity of the day that I passed out at 5:30pm and didn't make it.
2. Didn't go--went to bar instead
3. Didn't go, when home to process and sleep
4. Didn't attend--too tired
5. NA--I was too emotionally drained to attend
6. I did not go. It was too cold

**Conclusion:** The Tent Social was very well received by those who attended. Positive responses numbered about 3 to 1 against Constructive Criticism. In addition, it seemed to have the desired effect of good conversation and bonding. Unfortunately, many folks didn't make it for a variety of reasons and missed out on a very warm event. A few (though not a lot) people took advantage of the opportunity to talk with the speakers. Perhaps a mix of items, both noisy and quiet, both structured and unstructured would be better in the future.

### **Speakers**

**Purpose:** The purpose of the speakers giving their talks and sharing their own Cups of Trembling on the afternoon of the second day (in the middle of the long Cup of



5 comments about wishing it weren't a talk but more of a dialogue  
 3 comments that a speaker was negative, boring and offered no advice  
 2 comments about not getting deeply enough into personal realizations or beliefs  
 2 comments about "\$ could inspire us to change"; ego and personal gain  
 2 comments about "focused on 1 individual—Rose"; "said gurus are/can be good"  
 2 comments on "quiet voice"; "little boring, dragged"  
 2 comments on "self-centered . . . seemed like therapy for him"; "don't think he has totally synthesized his experience yet."  
 1 comment "wanted more conclusions about what [speaker] learned"  
 1 mentioned "lack of religious affiliation"  
 1 asked about "all the swearing" and mentioned "holier than thou" attitude  
 1 wanted more time to hear about speaker's religious, spiritual practices, and teacher  
 1 suggested "there are other starts to a spiritual path than wanting to do no harm"

**Question 4:** General comments about your speaker:

**Stats**

40 positive, 6 negative  
 6 would have liked to heard all, or more of the speakers  
 Most common positive response was that of being impressed with the honesty and openness with which the speakers shared their stories.  
 There were no common negative responses --

**Some notable positive responses:**

- "It was very personal and real and had really good, practical info about how to be real and find truth. Very religiously/spiritually sensitive to all beliefs."
- ". . . personal and willing to drop all boundaries"
- "loved her"
- "Good point about taking risks and following your heart."
- "Very motivational – really enjoyed it"
- "Dave Gold is great!!"
- "He's a cool guy and more religious leaders need to take his open-minded approach."
- "Brave and dignified"
- "Moved me deeply"
- "Wow"
- "Extremely motivational"
- "I was blown away by the level of peace he had. It resonated? Very centered – focused – sure of himself – humorous!"
- "A blessing that I heard him speak."
- "The talk always struck a chord with me."
- "I was blown away by the level of peace he had. It resonated! Very centered - focused - sure of himself - humorous!"

Some notable negative responses:

- “I just wanted him to go farther and tell me how it applies to our lives.”
- “Personally, hearing about spirituality in general without being grounded in religion doesn't move me.”
- “Weird”

**Conclusion:** This session was overall a success according to these surveys. The ratings were high and the fact that an overwhelmingly majority of the feedback was positive and the overwhelming majority of that positive feedback (53 comments) were from students struck by honesty, candidness, authenticity, openness, and frankness of their speaker. This was just the type of role-modeling we hoped they would provide the students as they entered in their final Cup of Trembling session.

## “Passing It On”

**Purpose:** The purpose of the Passing it On and Processing Session were

- to emphasize that this means nothing unless it’s carried to the rest of your life
- to emphasize that this is not as easy as it might seem and takes commitment and resolution (therefore: contracts and letters to self)
- to emphasize the importance of gratitude on the path and the dangers of the attitude of entitlement and taking things for granted
- to provide the experience of acting on gratitude (e.g. thank you notes)
- to provide an opportunity to practice “passing it on” while still at the conference

Please provide general comments on Tuesday’s programming:

### **Question 1:** Passing It On

This section had an overwhelming positive response. People appreciated having the wrap-up time and a closing time with their groups. Most liked the contract and letter home, commenting positively on those aspects in particular. There was a small minority that thought there was too much paperwork or did not like the contract. Another group of people were confused about the term “Passing It On”- what were they supposed to pass on? To whom? In what form? No one commented, either positively or negatively, on the Thank You notes. A number of people wanted more time.

### **Question 2:** Conference Processing

The content was well received and appreciated- common comments included “powerful, very emotional, truth, beautiful”. The main criticism was that it took so long and that the conference was running behind schedule. Suggestions included having a facilitator to keep things moving along. A few people noted and appreciated that the group of students who were most unhappy had the opportunity to share as well. One interesting

and unique comment, “Sorry, but this felt like an ‘old church revival’ to me. As a student affairs professional, I do have concerns about the emotional impact of this conference on students”.

## **GENERAL COMMENTS/SUGGESTIONS ABOUT INWARD BOUND**

**Question 1:** What about Inward Bound surprised you most?

### **Stats**

38 positive answers (45%)

27 negative answers (32%)

20 neutral or ambiguous answers (23%)

Total: 85

Most of the **positive** remarks fell into one of two buckets:

- The sense of community/bonding (“the incredible amount of intimacy that can be made in such a short time with Strangers”)—9 responses
- Personal discovery (“The personal, confrontational aspects of spiritual discovery. My own fears. My own bravery (?)”)—7 responses

Most of the **negative** responses fell into one of two buckets:

- Too religious (“the overtly religiousness of the conference”)—7 responses. (It is also interesting to note that one person said the conference was too secular.)
- A general sense that what was going on was not appropriate (“The attitude of some organizers surprised me. It was unprofessional”—4 responses

Other issues/categories:

- The issue of diversity came up a fair amount: 4 or 5 people said the conference had diversity, which is a good thing (“diversity of people”); three felt that diversity was pointedly lacking, which is a bad thing (“How white and undiverse it was”).
- Open-mindedness was also hot. Six cited it open-mindedness as a good thing (“The open mindedness of EVERYONE”); several listed closed-mindedness as a bad thing (“How closed minded people are here”).

Notable quote: “I came with no expectations and returned with something I hope I will never forget.”

**Question 2:** What was the most valuable aspect of Inward Bound?

The general responses here fell into a few major categories (along with some sample quotes)

### **Community/bonding**

- The nature of other students' spiritual striving

- sense of community in affinity group
- Talking to people who were interested in spirituality, their lives, their hopes
- The diversity of people
- Meeting people, making connections, and discovering new insights into myself through sharing our differences.
- Bringing such incredible people together.
- listening and sharing ideas with other college students who are dealing with spirituality issues just like me
- discussions--the insights (and backgrounds) the students contributed, esp by the end. B/c we were completely open and accepting, we knew we could "judge" each other for our benefits--it was a very helpful, positive need we all had to help each other and help ourselves by getting to the root of things--getting past the barriers
- Group discussions! This was really the only part I thought was valuable--it's where I learned the most about me.
- The affinity groups. I felt very safe, welcome, and accepted.
- The group...the honesty...the openness
- Group work--so important to have brought myself down into my being to discover my deepest feelings.
- the community in the affinity group

#### Personal Change

- To touch on that big question...
- Searching for my inner self
- There are no words. This changes EVERYTHING.
- Cutting deep, profound and through the B.S. I hate B.S.
- My own realizations
- The interaction with others, the ability to hear other's stories and journeys, and force yourself to face your problems
- Self reflection
- It took apart my brain and made me examine my beliefs

#### Speakers

- talking intuitively with others and getting to talk with Francis [speaker] about prayer methods
- Break time with speakers wandering around
- Learning to accept the questions everyone has, having the cool people like Noah [speaker] available
- Good questions were raised. And most of the speakers

#### Other Notables

- space for honesty and authenticity
- People are at least thinking about religion and spirituality
- Slower, more intentional time for SELF-CARE, INTROSPECTION, REFLECTION WITH an eager, diverse, intentional people with the same in mind [sic]. Challenges of how all those diverse souls do this together.
- ideas, ideas, ideas

- All of it! Being in a community, going deep & having teachers around and available
- deeper knowledge of the human condition and self
- it is a crucible for transformative thinking
- getting me to think and find answers for myself, not giving all the answers.

**Conclusion:** It is very gratifying to see that the top two listed categories of responses are just what Inward Bound was designed to give the participants an experience of.

**Question 3:** Least valuable?

These fit into a number of different categories...

Keynote – 4 comments

Other Speakers/Services – 9 comments (most were vague)

Value Options – 6 comments

Too much break time – 5 comments

Selected Others – 26 comments

- the speakers cause I wish I could have heard more than just 1
- Hearing the swearing. I did not appreciate that at all.
- Separate tracks for educators and students. Educators should be with the students and figuring out what students feel.
- I missed our educators a lot. Sleep deprivation. Group isolation - as in, I wanted some mingling of people w/ radically different beliefs
- Conference was too open-ended. I was not brought to find some great truth within myself. This did not change my view of myself for the world.
- Interpersonal interaction with the crazies
- The lack of a lot of religions equally represented, it could have challenged you more about the way you look at life. Not just what you do / don't do. I think that's equally important for higher consciousness.
- The waiting for the bus
- Explanation of mission statements to all participants. I would have really appreciated the last part of the value options game more.
- advertising was misleading, and I felt as though I'd joined/payed a cult.
- I would have done the same thing w/ the faculty as the students did. (I did appreciate the separate groups) They need it too.

**Question 4:** What's the single most important insight you gleaned from Inward Bound?

**Stats**

53 positive answers

9 negative answers  
9 neutral or ambiguous answers  
38 blanks

### Selected Positive Responses

- a lot of people out there are in the same boat
- there are others out there
- I am not alone in my quest for knowledge.
- breaking the mold
- my view of God is arrogant
- cut out the bullshit
- What my cup of trembling is...obstacles that prevent me from obtaining my goals.
- How much of our spiritual growth is dependent on the open and honest conversations we have with others
- That I need to become friends with myself, be forgiving of myself, gentle
- Be open, be honest. With yourself and with others.
- The ability to connect with my peers deeply
- That God really does act in everyday life.
- The beauty is intense and people are all so similar.
- Made me more open, comfortable with people.
- I have a greater appreciation for Judaism.
- Active listening
- I can take time for ME stuff and not feel like I'm shorting my commitment to social justice
- finding my spiritual path
- Openness and honesty with others and withoneself should be foremost in my mind at all times
- that community is important, can't do it myself
- the importance of community--how we're all in this together, and need to help each other while the people we help simultaneously help ourselves
- there is ALWAYS a challenge in life. Reach out and embrace that challenge and you will grow.
- I have to get my butt in gear.
- I liked the intensity and intimacy.
- I need to trust
- I don't need to be perfectionistic
- I have a lot of work to do on myself
- Appreciateion of diversity - collaborative spirituality
- I have been denying myself some truly rewarding friendships before now.
- importance of others to my personal self
- remember what it feels like to be real/hear truth, even if you don't know what it is.
- That I want my spirituality to be the priority in my life
- How I've grown and how much I've resigned myself. My spirituality is only as deep as wht I actually do \*in the moment.\* So how do I look at "what do I do?"

- I must live outside of my head

### Selected Negative Responses

- this is a cult scene
- That I/we my school are and how appreciative I am of how open and diverse it is.
- I feel that many people view my religion as not valuable to them
- Respect is important, open your mind!
- That I cannot wait to get out of here

**Conclusion:** The list of insights people walked away with, of which the list above is a subset, is stunning. Some people clearly did not get this benefit but a tremendous number of people seem to have actually grown *wiser* in a way that will stay with them for a long time. This is a tremendous measure of the success of Inward Bound in its mission.

**Question 5:** If someone asked you how this conference changed you, what would you tell them?

### Stats

56 positive answers

9 negative answers

8 neutral or ambiguous answers

35 blanks

Most of the positive answers come in the following categories:

- Helped me feel a sense of community – 11 responses
  - o “I met some really cool people. I had some phenomenal conversations”
  - o “I feel like I’m supported in these questions. It’s not a solo journey.”
  - o “made me feel more comfortable and less isolated about my spiritual confusion”
- Made me understand myself better – 10 responses
  - o “I know what authenticity is like, and it is worth it”
  - o “I am more aware of what obstacles I put in my way
  - o “I know my fears, therefore I can utilize them”
- Focused me on my priorities – 9 responses
- “Awakened a struggle that I've put aside for awhile”
- “It got me to focus on what was truly the core issues in my life”
- “It has refocused me and let me know what I need to work on RIGHT NOW”
- Strengthened what I already believe – 5 responses
  - o “reminded me of my convictions
  - o “reaffirmed my faith and made me more bold in the expression of my faith”
  - o “It reaffirmed my belief and faith in God”

The remaining responses were all over the map. Several people commented that they really didn't know how it would affect them (but seemed, at least in my judgment, to be implying that the effect would be real and good).

The negative responses were not particularly helpful: either "It didn't change me" or just reiterating that they didn't like the conference. An interesting negative comment that came up in this section: "Not everyone came here to have some SKS self transformation."

Some notable quotes:

- "I should get busy either living or dying"
- "I understood that I can transform, I can change and make a difference"
- "Made me less depressed over student apathy, a problem at our college"
- "It taught me talking and listening from the heart"
- "I would say that it is going to put me into an intense spin of self-reflection"
- "When I go home, I will be applying to the peace corps rather than continuing to apply corporation positions"
- "I no longer feel a need to settle for shallow friends and shallow goals. I want to be real."
- "I feel my compassion has been restored."
- "I faced myself and now I will face my spiritual path."

**Conclusion:** Like the previous category, the responses here are quite edifying. The vast majority of respondents were not only positive, they gained powerful insights in all the ways Inward Bound hoped most to provide them. The statement above about not everyone coming to have "some SKS self transformation" needs to be taken very much to heart. It seems that many of the people who were most unhappy about what they found Inward Bound to be felt that they had been misled (accidentally or intentionally) about what it was going to be like and had they known what it would really entail, they would not have come. This is something we definitely need to make sure is clearer in the future so that everyone knows what they're getting into and there are no ugly surprises for anyone on either side.

**Question 6:** If your best friend was thinking about coming to Inward Bound, but already had plans to go to the beach, what would you tell him/her?

### Stats

46 positive ("Go to Inward Bound") answers

17 negative ("Go to the beach") answers

15 neutral or ambiguous answers

26 blanks

The positive answers split between two sorts. One is the "Inward Bound is an incredible wonderful life-changing experience" type (in other words, much more important than the

beach). The other is the “The beach will be there any time” type (which I classify as still positive, but less strong).

The negative answers were also split. Some were of the “Forget all this spiritual searching crap” type, and others were of the “You can do spiritual searching at the beach just as well as here” variety. In general, however, I think it’s safe to say that all 17 of them had a generally negative experience.

### Some Notable Quotes

- Now go to work for my own life, rather than floating in fear and sickness
- This conference is so worth the sacrifice <of a beach trip>, it will hopefully affect how you think about your life and your happiness.
- It's your choice, the most positive thing you could ever do for yourself or a pile of sand in your suit and shoes.
- it is an experience to change your college experience
- I would tell them about the unforgettable experience when a room of people come together with no other intent than to help each other