

NATIONAL SPIRITUAL ASSEMBLY

OF THE

BAHÁ'ÍS OF THE UNITED STATES

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April 1, 2005

To the young adults gathered for this weekend's
"Ascending Heights of Excellence" Conference

Beloved friends in the forefront of the army of life,

Our hearts are filled with love and admiration for the idealism, freedom from prejudice, spiritual capacity, and intellectual vigor you possess in abundance. The National Spiritual Assembly welcomes you to this conference dedicated to "scholarship, service, and social action" – a laudable triad of goals for any Bahá'í, but especially for young adults weighing the merits of various professions and career paths and making choices that will shape the future course of their lives.

We are delighted to acknowledge the presence of Counselor Stephen Birkland, who has joined you to offer his invaluable advice and support. We are also pleased to recognize Val Carnegie, Martha Schweitz, and Matt Weinberg – three members of the Executive Committee of the Association of Bahá'í Studies, who have labored assiduously and lovingly to plan this conference.

As you each consider this weekend how a nexus might be achieved between service to the Faith, the pursuit of advanced knowledge in your field of study, and a career, we recommend the following guidance from a recent letter of the Universal House of Justice as a perfect frame for your deliberations:

The period of youth represents a special time in the life of any Bahá'í. During this time, an individual will make decisions with far-reaching consequences for his or her future professional pursuits and will formulate attitudes towards the Faith . . . as well as some of the habits required to engage in the serious study of the Writings. It is also during this period that those who display scholarly interests will begin to adopt the conceptual framework within which they can pursue such activity throughout their lives. What is important is that all these challenges be addressed in the context of unreserved participation in the global plans of the Faith and in a spirit of dedication to promoting the Cause.

We see in you the potential for current and future leadership in the spiritual and social progress of humanity. Be assured of our prayers and of our unbounded confidence that each one of you can and will "ascend to heights of excellence" in service to God and humankind – for each one of you truly possesses power "to move the world."

With loving Bahá'í greetings,

Robert C. Henderson
Secretary-General