

Ascending Heights of Excellence: Scholarship, Service and Social Action
[letter sent to participants upon registration]

ASSOCIATION FOR BAHÁ'Í STUDIES • ASSOCIATION D'ÉTUDES BAHÁ'IES

March 9, 2005

Dear Friend,

In preparation for the upcoming conference “Ascending Heights of Excellence: Scholarship, Service and Social Action,” we want to share with you a bit more about the vision and structure of the event. In its letter to the Association for Bahá'í Studies requesting it to organize this gathering, the National Spiritual Assembly of the United States emphasized the need to focus young adult Bahá'ís on the “true meaning of Bahá'í scholarship.” Toward that end, we are endeavoring to create an event that will provide participants the opportunity to engage in dialogue and reflection concerning the many different dimensions of Bahá'í scholarship.

Thus, the conference is less about the presentation of original research than about the exploration of the diverse expressions and forms of Bahá'í scholarship. Through a variety of panels and workshops led by young adults we hope to have an enriching conversation about the “new scholarly paradigm” called for by the Universal House of Justice—one that “offers a priceless opportunity of service and achievement to those Bahá'ís who enjoy the dual gifts of spiritual faith and intellectual faculties trained in the best that contemporary society has to offer.” Understanding how we can “correlate” the Bahá'í teachings to current social needs and trends of thought will also be a focus of the conference discussions.

To stimulate your thinking before the event, we are providing links to two resources: a paper by Dr. Peter Khan entitled “Some Aspects of Bahá'í Scholarship” (found at <http://studycircle.angeltowns.com/scholarship.htm>), and the compilation on scholarship prepared by the Research Department of the Universal House of Justice (found at <http://reference.bahai.org/en/t/c/SCH/>). With this background, we have been asked by the National Assembly to encourage each participant to prepare a short reflection about Bahá'í scholarship. What does Bahá'í scholarship mean to you, what are its purposes and how is it linked to service and social change? What insights have emerged from your study of the Bahá'í Writings that pertain to your field of study or career path? We expect that the sharing of these reflections will greatly add to the conference dialogue.

Finally, we want to encourage you, either beforehand or at the conference, to submit or raise questions that you would like to see addressed. We look forward to seeing you the first weekend of April.

With loving Bahá'í greetings,

ABS Conference Task Force