

New staffing patterns for ministries in higher education emphasize finding mutually resourceful ways for college and religious staff to work together on issues of common concern.

Contributions of Community-Based Campus Ministry

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"Why isn't our campus minister around here more often? Why do we get a different chaplain every year or two? How can one religious worker claim to serve both our university and the community college?"

Many student services professionals may be puzzled about the whereabouts of their campus minister or chaplain. A full-time person has been the historic pattern, but most people in ministry in higher education today do not have the prerogative of serving only one campus and of being exclusively attentive to its issues and constituencies.

The practical reason for this phenomenon is not complicated: budgets of religious institutions that provide funding for ministries in higher education simply could not keep up with the burgeoning numbers of campuses, particularly of community colleges, in the past quarter century. Yet the commitment of many of those religious bodies to continue to enable ministry in higher education persisted. The result has been the decision on the part of many church agencies to develop creative staffing patterns that could make the best use of both their financial and their human resources.

These staffing patterns may include (1) deploying professional campus ministry staff members to more than one campus; (2) using parish clergy on the campus part-time; (3) providing a central staff person who

coordinates ministry on more than one campus, often training clergy members, lay volunteers, or seminary students; (4) encouraging faculty, staff, and students from different congregations to claim their own ministries on campus; and (5) using graduate students as peer ministers.

Perhaps as relevant as the pragmatic considerations for not having one staff person associated with a single institution, however, is a philosophical perspective that informs and shapes the way many religious communities have chosen to work on campus. As many institutions of higher education have come to embrace more of an equal-access approach to admissions, so too have religious institutions come to believe that their ministries should be directed to a broader segment of students, as well as to more community-based campuses. The religious community has attempted to adapt its ministry in higher education to reflect the changing educational options in a more pluralistic society.

The practical necessity of religious staff members serving only part-time in one campus setting, then, becomes a metaphor for the necessity of religious institutions to be engaged in a variety of places and ministry activities. Certainly this also can happen—and does—within a single campus on which clergy members have full-time assignments. However, the reality of multiple campus and shared pastoral responsibilities does not preclude, and may even enhance, the possibilities for more diverse ministry.

For the campus, too, these new staffing patterns have a number of advantages. The most obvious advantage is that campus ministers bring to their work a sense of relationship with a larger community than that of one specific campus. Given the penchant everyone has for tunnel vision when it comes to caring for personal interests and concerns, the perspective of the part-time campus minister may become a useful corrective to campus personnel who are obliged to focus more on their own institutional issues and needs. Part-time campus ministers are likely to be simultaneously attending to the interests of one or more religious governing bodies, area congregations, and advocacy groups within their faith, even as they are also aware of inherent issues peculiar to or common to more than one campus setting. Although this can certainly create the negative impact of attempting to serve many masters, the more positive result is the campus minister's ability to relate both to the complexity of needs on campuses and to initiate or respond to issues of concern beyond the walls of academe. A sponsoring denomination's emphasis on promoting global educational experiences, for example, might lead a campus minister to work with student services within a university in facilitating learning and service trips in foreign countries, while also involving persons from the community college and from area congregations to join in the project—creating a more diverse community of persons and perspectives for the learning environment of the project.

It is no doubt frustrating not to be able to count on the campus minister's availability—or even reachability—at any time during normal working hours. Intentionality and careful scheduling on the parts of both religious and student services staff will ensure that cooperative working relationships are established and maintained.

Five Approaches

Five approaches to campus ministry in multiple campus settings suggest the exciting possibilities for campus and church cooperation in responding to the needs of persons they mutually seek to serve. They have been selected because each contains replicable ideas for student services partnerships involving part-time religious staff members on several campuses within a geographical area.

Jacksonville (Florida) Campus Ministry. The Jacksonville Campus Ministry (JCM) has a fourteen-year history of developing a church-campus-community coalition that has informed many subsequent models. JCM provides a vehicle through which the participating institutions can work together for mutual enrichment and in pursuit of common goals. It acts as broker for sharing resources between its participating institutions and constituencies. It develops programs to further common aims, including (1) the development of whole, human persons—spiritual, social, physical, and mental; (2) the discovery and transmission of truth; and (3) the improvement of the quality of community and personal life. Aware of the diversity of the institutions and persons that it comprises, JCM is founded on mutual respect and appreciation for the variety of gifts, commitments, and limitations among its participants, and it is pledged to preserving the integrity of each. At the end of its first decade, the mutual ministry involved three institutions of higher education, ten local congregations, and five denominational judicatories.

Striking examples of their cooperative programming include the coordination of Christmas International House. In this program, forty to fifty international students from universities throughout the country were hosted for two weeks by a group of churches that provided housing, meals, special entertainment, and fellowship with other international students. A directory of local religious resources has been distributed to the faculties of all the local colleges for several years. The Listening Post on campuses, designed to give commuter students a chance to pick up a snack and talk informally to someone not visibly identified with institutional services, drew significant numbers.

Robert Thomason (1987, p. 1) founding minister of the Jacksonville Campus Ministry and now minister-director of United College Ministries in Northern Virginia, describes his work with three part-time ministry interns on four campuses as “seeking to experience and embody the unity

we believe God intends for the whole of creation.” This is done through such programs as the following:

- **Beyond Religious Differences:** including an interfaith dialogue called *On the Road to Peace: Religious Perspectives* and a pastoral care network inclusive of Roman Catholics, Jews, Muslims, Mormons, Southern Baptists, Greek Orthodox, members of the Assembly of God, and some para-church groups
- **Beyond Nationality:** hosting international visitors
- **Beyond Racial Divisions:** employing a racial/ethnic minority chaplain who revitalized the All African Student Union
- **Beyond Town and Gown:** working with the local ministerial association and four campuses to hold a seminar on emerging issues in bioethics and a symposium on the future of the religious provisions of the First Amendment
- **Beyond Generation Gaps:** pioneering along with several community groups an intergenerational conference held on one campus but involving people from the others campuses
- **Beyond Sacred/Secular Dualism:** providing performances of a Jesuit priest’s sidewalk circus, folk singers, and a display on spiritual wellness during the school’s wellness fair
- **Beyond Words:** cosponsoring a campus-wide Hunger Awareness Week, gathering food and money for the world’s hungry, and helping to develop materials and programs with the AIDS Education Task Force
- **Beyond the Campus:** interpreting higher education concerns to area churches and to the larger community.

The Dallas County Community College Ministry. The Dallas County Community College Ministry came into being when I realized that students in my English class were asking faith questions in response to the literature they were assigned. Continuing to teach part-time, I entered seminary and worked with the Greater Dallas Community of Churches to initiate a diversified program of ministry within the multicampus configuration of the Dallas County Community College District. By 1984, the ministry had expanded to six campuses and had five part-time staff members, representing the Protestant and Roman Catholic faiths, each of whom was assigned to work ecumenically on a specific campus. Programs similar to those described for the JCM occur regularly on these campuses, as well.

A notable achievement of this ministry has been the creation of the PRAXIS Project, an action/reflection model that currently involves more than 700 students each year in providing nearly 15,000 hours of volunteer service to fifty nonprofit agencies in the city. This program, arranged by the option of individual faculty members who wish to give their students more experiential opportunities than the classroom affords, is coordi-

nated by the campus ministry staff. Reflection groups, which are a required dimension of the program, are often co-led by student services staff. The Student Programs and Resources Office at one of the campuses has adapted the program for academic credit. Both religious and student services personnel rejoice in students' PRAXIS evaluations in which the refrain, "I didn't know I could make a difference!" builds involvement beyond the formal learning environment.

The Northeast Pennsylvania Regional Ministry in Higher Education. The Northeast Pennsylvania Regional Ministry in Higher Education is an ecumenical ministry of nine Protestant and Roman Catholic communions. With two dozen colleges and universities in the area, sixteen of which have no chaplain or campus minister, this ministry considers that its task is to "nurture ministering relationships between congregation and campus, building partnerships from community to community, encouraging church leaders to see the gifts the campus has to enrich their lives in the congregation, encouraging campus people to see the gifts nearby churches have to enrich life in the academic community, and then helping the exchange of gifts to happen" (Brooke Rolston, correspondence to the author, July 13, 1988).

Originating in the mid-1970s (with the work of J. Springer and now Brooke Rolston), the primary effort is to foster relationships that will draw clergy and laypersons from the area churches to campus concerns and, more often, to find campus folk to bring their talents into the churches. A recent program entitled Teaching as Ministry offered five separate events, at different schools across Northeast Pennsylvania, gathering faculty who are lay members of churches in the supporting denominations, clergy, and other church leaders to look at what it means to be called to teach, how teaching can be a lay ministry, how the church may celebrate the work of teachers, and how congregations may understand the gifts faculty have to give on campus and in church settings. The importance of affirming faculty ministry in the form of mentoring relationships and personal care for students has already been discussed (see Chapter Two) and is surely a major area of common cause between student services and religion on campus, even where no professional religious staff are present.

University of New Mexico. Rabbi John Feldman is a full-time law student, but he is also employed as the director of the Hillel Foundation on campus at the University of New Mexico. He has become a valuable colleague to student services because of his ability to respond to specific needs of Jewish students and in interfaith dynamics within a campus that is predominantly Christian. The staffing may be part-time with limited resources, but the care of persons and the extent of the program are operating throughout the life of the campus through a telephone number where messages can be left, local resources matched with student

needs, and arrangements made for the full expression of faith (for example, participation in Sabbath services).

Montana Association of Churches. For the last ten years, the Montana Association of Churches has used a team of volunteers in college communities that have no full-time campus ministry staff members to recognize the need for campus ministry, to help people in these college communities organize for ministry services, and to assist with program planning and with ongoing resources. This is an excellent example of the several volunteer campus ministries that have met with success, and that success frequently depends on the degree to which the local college personnel encourage the volunteers' efforts.

These five approaches depict different dynamics and yet the same pattern of campus and church in common programs for the sake of the larger community. These representative examples can be seen in increasing numbers of locations across the country. As more locations move to this type of religious presence, it will require new patterns of involvement by the staff members in student services.

Organizational Strategies

As can be expected, part-time ministers on campus must contend with a challenging number of accountability and governing structures. Though they may appear on campus to be free from the administrative loads that student services offices must bear, most of them have just as much administrative work within often complex accountability structures to continue the resources required for a meaningful presence on campus.

Because campus ministers often are considered to be in a specialized ministry within the faith traditions, as opposed to parish or congregational ministry, they constantly are required to interpret (and sometimes even to defend) religious work on campus. This may involve lengthy written reports and many public relations presentations at denominational gatherings. If the ministry is ecumenical, this also may involve repetitions within a number of religious groups. Normal pastoral functions (preaching, performing weddings and funerals, counseling, and hospital visitation) demand time and preparation, as well as the clergy person's involvement in other committees of the faith communities being served. As clergy, their professional credentials require church-related activity unrelated to the campus, but a significant asset of their church and community involvements is to discover more of the possibilities for connections and cross-fertilization with campus activities and issues, which they bring back to their work with campus staff and faculty members.

Equally important for campus religious professionals is careful attention to accountability with their campus colleagues. When religious professionals are seen as suspect or are not welcome on campus, it is likely

that they have failed to make known their intentions, to become familiar with procedures, or to establish appropriate relationships with key campus personnel. Careful organizational patterns within the religious communities and on campus can forestall each of these failures before it happens.

Few persons who are assigned to this multicampus or part-time pattern of campus ministry have received training for it. Corrective measures have been under way within several denominations. One example is the ecumenical pattern established over the past five years to provide short-term courses for new campus ministers. In these, a high priority is given to the issue of campus accountability. Members of the religious staff are urged to make immediate contact with student services offices and to discuss ways in which the presence of the religious staff can be most useful to the campus and the community in which it resides and in developing programs of mutual interest.

Special care should be given to ensure that members of the religious staff on campus are invited to visit with student services personnel. Also, lines of accountability need to be clearly articulated—not as a control measure but simply to facilitate communication between persons who share common interests and tasks on campus. When this is not done, opportunities for mutual cooperation may be missed, and misunderstandings may occur. Because members of the religious staff may feel they exist in a somewhat peripheral relationship to the campus, an initiative by student services personnel will usually be gratefully received. A monthly gathering of campus religious staff, meeting with someone from student services, can become an occasion for affirming each other's roles, for brainstorming solutions to campus concerns, and for engaging one another in common tasks of mutual interest.

Three Images for Ministry in Higher Education

Three important images for the church's mission in multiple settings for higher education have been developed by Thomason (1987). These include seeing connections, building bridges, and seasoning the center.

Thomason (1987) reports the story of an old tinker told by James Carroll, a Catholic priest: "It was a cricket. It was stuck on a thorn where it landed in its last long jump. It was dead. The old tinker was very careful as he picked the poor cricket up and wrapped it in a leaf. He put it in the pocket of his tattered vest, shaking his head sadly. He would give the small creature a proper burial in a field he knew farther down the road. The old tinker was a man who knew that he died a little whenever anything died a lot. He saw connections. He was a gentle man with death. And with life" (p. 3).

Like the old tinker, the task of the religious professional who serves

more than one campus is to see connection; between caring for the least of our brothers and sisters and proposed cutbacks in services to underprepared students; between the mission of the community college and the mission of the church; between a visually impaired student who needs a reader and a lonely parishioner who needs to be useful; between the ethical questions being raised in a nursing course and the local pastor with a graduate degree in ethics; between the space needs of the local college and the unused facilities of a nearby church; between willing, but unprepared, church school teachers and the knowledge of teaching skills of the college's education faculty; between the lonely, isolated student and the parishioner in whom everyone seems to confide.

Perhaps the primary task of the religious community is to break down the walls that divide persons from one another, to unite that which is separated, to bridge the gaps that keep persons apart, and to celebrate the underlying unity that transcends persons' apartness. The task, in a word, is reconciliation.

So, the mission is to build bridges: between persons who are separated because of race, or nationality, or religion (or lack thereof); between the false dichotomies of faith and reason, of the sacred and the secular, of liberal and conservative, of intellectual and practical; between the faithful and the rest of society, between the world as it now is and the reign of God as humans are given the grace to envision it.

Salt is a peculiar commodity. It is absolutely essential to human survival, but persons are seldom conscious of it. They are more often aware of salt when it is absent than when it is present, or if it is present in too great a quantity. Salt brings out the best of whatever it seasons. It calls forth marvelous flavors that, without it, would remain hidden and unappreciated.

J. Springer argues that ministry in higher education should be concerned with "seasoning the center rather than hustling on the sidelines." He contends that "the idea is to enrich and expand existing programs, not generate separate programs that must hustle for attention from busy educators and commuting students, not to mention the overworked religious leader. . . . The strategy is for the religious leaders to become the theological salt that 'seasons' the ongoing affairs of the college and for the educators to become the educational salt that 'seasons' the ongoing affairs of the religious communities" (Thomason, 1987, p. 2).

Programmatic Opportunities

The implications of these images for campus-church-community partnerships include the most basically practical: seeing connections between the needs of the local churches for social and cultural group activities and the college drama productions and offering a "church night at the theater" on campus, including conversations afterwards with cast mem-

bers; bridging a church's day-care facility to make it available for students to drop off their children during classes; and seasoning the center with service-learning opportunities in community service agencies.

It also includes the most sublimely grand: *seeing connections* between the ethical emphases of Judeo-Christian faith traditions and current ethical dilemmas in law, medicine, and business graduate schools (or even undergraduate classes) and offering symposia involving lay professionals in those fields from area churches, with student panels to address topics of concern; *building bridges* between the religious communities or traditions and a campus display of sacred art or a musical performance and providing faculty and religious leaders to lecture from their own backgrounds and expertise; and *seasoning the center* by educating laypersons about public policy issues affecting higher education budgeting in state appropriations or about church and state issues to increase advocacy for improving the local educational system.

Cooperation Between Religious Staff and Student Services Personnel

The increasing number of lay volunteers in diverse roles within a ministry that involves more than one campus generally requires supervision. This may be a professional clergy member or lay director. Both levels of religious professionals have a high stake in their faith community being agreeably represented on the several campuses. Because this presence is often part-time to a number of campuses, especially on commuter campuses, members of the religious staff literally may not have a place to hang their hats. A timely and logical point of contact and check-in point would be one of the appropriate student services areas. Even though ministry offices may be available in a church or synagogue close to the campus, having this regular access serves the dual purpose of providing a chance to get to know persons and needed resources better as well as establish programmatic ties.

Involving members of the campus religious staff in orientation programs and student services staff meetings and committees will quickly enable student services personnel to assess the particular talents and potential of the religious staff for contributing to ongoing programs and initiating new ones. Trust and respect can, of course, be developed only through opportunities given and taken for the religious community to demonstrate their sense of common mission. Because they often have no official standing on campus, members of the religious staff may feel presumptuous in asking for these opportunities, but they will usually appreciate and enter into them eagerly.

Religious professionals on campus, especially the part-timers, are a mixed breed. They may be there at their own request, eager to become as involved as possible with the educational enterprise. They may be

appointed, with no preparation beyond that for parish ministry. They may be persons whom their faith community believes have special gifts for ministry in higher education, whether they have yet personally acknowledged these gifts. Some are introverts who may prefer the contemplative and theoretical aspects of critical inquiry into educational issues, and some are extroverts whose energy for any relational activity is contagious in their enthusiasm. Some may excel in listening skills and pastoral care for staff and students, and some may prefer the activist role in college and student affairs. Dependability versus good intentions is, of course, an issue. The important thing is not to categorize religious professionals into any one personality type but to seek out the skills and interests that may be complementary, to engage these professionals in exploratory conversations, and to enable their participation in areas of mutual concern.

The familiarity part-time members of the religious staff have with the various connections off-campus may be the most important resource they bring. These religious staff members, clergy and lay, can quite naturally become liaisons between groups and persons who want to work together for common goals relating to student leadership opportunities, community outreach, educational issues, and human needs within and beyond the hallowed halls of the college or university.

These reflections translate into specific action for student services personnel: spend time with a campus minister. Find out her or his goals and strategies for campus work. Discuss areas of mutuality and possible approaches to working together. Agree on regular channels of communication that will keep you in touch with each other's work. If it seems appropriate, provide access to campus organizations like international student groups and racial/ethnic student associations and student activist organizations. Encourage attendance at your staff meetings. And offer to be available to visit with their faith community sometime during the semester.

Conclusion

Complex patterns in populations and special needs often correspond to different types of institutions of higher education within a region or community. The major faith traditions have approached this complexity with a community-based campus ministry that uses volunteers and professional staff members working only part of the time on any given campus. These persons can, however, be a full-time resource for the institution if this approach is understood and fully used. Staff members in both student services and religious programs on campus can become distracted by administrative and programs demands, but, perhaps, with increased understanding and appreciation of mutual aims, they can help

each other stay focused on the primary mission: serving students in ways that will contribute to the students' well-being, learning process, and participation in creating a more just and peaceful world.

Reference

Thomason, R. "Synergism: Church and College in Mutual Ministry." Unpublished paper for the Blue Ridge Community College Consultation, 1987.

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