

# *The Training of the Campus Minister*

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It has often been said that the minister to students is a "jack of all trades . . ." without the proverbial last half of the statement, though many times it may also be true to add ". . . and master of none." Gratefully, however, Southern Baptist campus ministers (BSU Directors) have moved more and more into the kinds of training which give them certain skills and specializations, in addition to the multiplicity of areas in which they are supposed to be knowledgeable.

Take a look at some of these areas:

- Christian theology and apologetics
- Biblical studies
- Philosophy of religion
- Christian ethics
- Religious cultism
- Administration of facilities and finances
- External and interpersonal relationships
- Organizational development
- Higher education and student trends
- Establishing priorities
- Goal setting
- Time management
- Personal and crisis counseling
- Life planning and career development
- Family planning and enrichment
- Group process
- Program planning, conducting and evaluating
- Church and associational staff training and support
- Discipling of students
- Enlistment and involvement
- Leadership training
- Evangelism training and modeling
- Creativity and motivation

Lest the above list scare prospective directors away and send some seasoned veterans of the work scrambling for their "resignation pencil," let me hastily add that there is *no way* any one person can become "master" of all these areas (or of others more or less important which are not listed here). More will be said later in this article about "shared ministry," whereby the special training, experience, gifts, and abilities of some individuals are made available to others whose specialties are in different areas.

However, out of my own experience and background, I would like to suggest that there are five major areas in which all directors need some training to be most effective in their work. Not all of the needs in these five areas have to be met through a formalized degree-reaching program. Example: in my own experience, the "recommended" degree program for BSU directors when I was in seminary was the religious education degree, which is what I received. Out of experience, however, I have become convinced that the kind of questions students are asking today can best be answered theologically and biblically, which demands more personal and short-term study in those areas to compensate for the voids in formal studies.

The five basic areas which I would like to suggest are theology, administration, programming, training and development, and counseling, and not necessarily in that order of importance. In fact, order of importance will differ from person to person, as well as from campus to campus, depending on the individual director, and on the "climate" of the campus on which one works.

Basic to training in these five areas, in my own opinion, is a rather broad undergraduate training primarily in the liberal arts and sciences. This is not to suggest that other academic disciplines are not important, but most of the ultimate questions of life are grounded in the liberal arts and sciences, and directors need to be able at least to relate to what is happening in the lives of students.

### *Theology*

Let us look first at the broad area of theology. At no time in my own life has there been such interest as there currently is in religion. From Guyana to Mr. Moon, and all the other cults and fads which include themselves under the umbrella of "religion," there are groups which represent most of these on or near the college and university campuses today. Add to that the loosening of moral and ethical

standards on the one hand, and the tightening of a puritanical ethic in some circles on the other, and you have a highly complex theological/ethical situation. Campus directors do not need to know all the complexities nor have all the answers, but they *do* need to know enough about some of the movements to help their own students deal with confrontation, and to be a more effective Christian witness.

All of this, added to the basics of the christian faith, and the need to be able to deal with conflicting ideas and ideologies, makes theology loom large in the "must" area of training for directors.

### *Administration*

When it comes to administration, again the diversity of demand is in relationship to the local campus situation. For some of the larger programs there is a building to administer, perhaps a van or bus of some sort to care for, and a budget of several thousand dollars. Knowing how to get the best prices on insurance coverage, cleaning materials, and paper products may not seem too important to some, but can be a real headache without some help from those who are "in the know." A briefing from someone in business administration without taking the "full course" may be all the training needed, but it *is* needed.

One's knowledge of student trends and the whole higher education scene should be of more concern to us, and directors need to know what these are and how to keep up with changes.

Organizational development, establishing priorities, and goal setting are a part of administration which one may learn on the job, but some help from sources other than the *Baptist Student Union Guidebook* (as good as that is!) could make it all a lot easier. Know-how in these areas just doesn't come naturally. And, everyone needs a good introduction to more effective time management.

One area of administration which has been too often neglected is that of relationships. Part of this is our "public" relations, which probably takes a sizeable hunk of the local director's time and energy, especially when you consider both the campus community and the church. This is not publicity, but what happens as you are in touch with all the "publics" we are reaching in local areas.

Coupled with our external relations, and even more important to our program, is the development of good interpersonal relationships among the students with whom we are working. Student leaders

From its beginning, Baptist Student Union has been "student led" insofar as student leaders have been given training in "doing BSU" and in the principles and qualities of leadership. And we all need to grow in our ability to help students become more effective leaders. We need to help them see the possibilities of and positive approach to leadership.

We also need to know and to do more in the area of disciplining students. My personal opinion on this subject is that much disciplining is done by some who have a limited, one-sided approach, and that it is usually neglected by others who resist that approach. So what are we talking about?

By the term "discipling" I mean the training and development of others in what it means to be a follower of Jesus Christ in faith commitment, in Christian growth, and in Christian service. And to neglect any one aspect of this is less than discipleship. "The disciple is willing to follow the Lord, not only into the desert and onto the mountain to pray, but also into the valley of tears where help is needed and onto the cross where human agonies are shared."

### *Counseling*

Counseling is what every Christian leader should have as part of their training if he/she has any compassion at all for others, or any sensitivity to their feelings, thoughts, and needs. Therefore, training in counseling is one of the most important needs for directors.

Directors need to know how to counsel with students in their personal problems day by day as well as in crisis situations. They need to know how to provide help to students in life planning and career development. And they need to be able to counsel with them at the point of dating, marriage preparation, family planning, and family relationships.

Directors also need to know when, where and how to make referrals to others more skilled in certain areas than they are.

The care and nurture of the lives of students is an awesome privilege with which directors of student ministries have been charged. At no point is this responsibility greater than when students trust themselves to us for the "care and feeling of their souls."

### *What kind of training?*

Early in this article I stated that a theological education was important for the director of student ministries. That may or may

not presuppose a seminary degree in theology, but is what I would recommend if one is still "looking toward" or involved in the training process. But for those who are currently in student work without the theological degree, there is the need to find ways of securing theological training in other ways. And the same thing could be said in regard to training in the other basic areas outlined in this article. So what are some of these "other ways" for training?

To begin with, let's begin at home, the area where the director lives. Many state directors of student work have a policy regarding the enrollment of the director in one class in the local college/university each semester. Some states do not allow this. But where possible, I would encourage the director to take advantage of such study in the field of his/her greatest need and/or interest.

An occasional "study leave," ranging in time from four to eight weeks in the summer (or "January term") to a full year should be investigated and planned for, program-wise, family-wise and financially.

Several of our seminaries have one- or two-week programs of "theological update," designed basically for the pastor, but certainly helpful to the director of student ministries as well. And some Seminary Extension courses would be worth investigating, either taught locally, or done by correspondence.

Some state directors have been trying to provide additional training in certain studies for local directors during their annual meetings with them.

National Student Ministries has been trying to provide more worthwhile help in recent years through state and regional seminars, the Church Program Training Center in Nashville, and the Glorieta and Ridgecrest Directors sessions during the Student Conferences, as well as through the occasional Directors' National Workshops. And NSM staff is always open for suggestions regarding interests and approach.

Let me return to an early suggestion regarding "shared ministry." And I use this for lack of a better term. But what is meant is this: Many local directors have done special studies in certain disciplines and have become somewhat "expert." We have been trying to do some things along the line of developing a system whereby directors with expertise in one area can share with those who most need help in that area. Some sharing is being done at Glorieta and Ridgecrest,

and some through "special workers" as NSM consultants. And, to a lesser degree, some is being done within states where state directors have caught a vision of this possibility.

And, on top of these suggestions, let's not rule out the personal study of each one of us. Perhaps a better thing to have done with this article would have been to provide an extensive bibliography in each of the five areas of training suggested. But since that was not done, maybe this Association could arrange for such a bibliography, annotated, and prepared by subject of study.

Last, but not least, my own conviction is that persons can be extremely "prepared" for student ministry and still lack the one most important ingredient of all — a genuine Christian love for students. Without this love, all the training and expertise one can amass is of naught. We are, after all, ministers to *students*, and "without love, the director's work is empty and meaningless."<sup>2</sup> All the training possible is helpful, "but the greatest of these is love." (I Corinthians 13: 13b, RSV).

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1. Henry J. M. Nouwen, Douglas Morrison, and Donald McNeill, in "Anchored in God through Prayer," p. 21, *Sojourners*, April 1978.
  2. "Director of Student Ministries," Vocational Guidelines Series, prepared by Art Driscoll for Vocational Guidance, Church Administration Department, Baptist Sunday School Board.

## Response

Nell Magee suggested five "areas of training" that are important in equipping campus ministers for their profession. Three of these, theology, administration and counseling, are indeed distinct from one another, but the other two, programming and training and development are inseparable—programming is useful as it relates to the training and development of students. With Magee's "areas of training" thus narrowed to four, I would add one more—ministry. Much of our job as campus ministers consists of pastorally caring for not only our students, but the university community as well. Moreover, we are also teachers of ministry in that we are part of the process by which our students them-

selves become ministers of Christ.

Magee observed that "the kind of questions students are asking can best be answered theologically and biblically." This observation may be the motivation behind Southern Seminary's decision to provide a special track of studies, including a campus internship, for prospective campus ministers in the fall of 1979. The seminary's intention, as set forth in a letter I received from them, is to combine the best features of a regular Master of Divinity degree program with those of the Master of Religious Education degree program, *i.e.*, the group work, teaching, recreation, *etc.*, of the M.R.E. with the content study of the M. Div. in biblical, theological and historical fields.

In addition, both campus ministry and our local churches would greatly benefit from a required offering of courses in administration, counseling, interpersonal relations and ministry practicum.

Southern's innovation is a welcomed one, but the question for those of us who have been on the field for several years is not one of primary but continuing education. Brochures laden with exotic seminars, workshops and conferences inundate us, and we can easily become frustrated in not knowing how to wisely invest our time and money. National Student Ministries, in conjunction with the Association of Southern Baptist Campus Ministers and perhaps state directors' offices, could ease some of this frustration by becoming a resource for campus ministers in at least the following four ways:

1. by compiling the bibliography suggested by Magee;
2. by compiling an extensive list of seminars, workshops and other continuing education opportunities;
3. by implementing the "shared

ministry" concept discussed by Magee; and

4. by providing *graduate-level* mini-courses at Glorieta, Ridgecrest, workshops and state staff conferences.

The list of seminars could be accompanied by evaluations written by campus ministers who have participated in a particular workshop. "Shared ministry" should include the mechanism for sharing information as well as abilities. The classes at the conference centers and elsewhere could range from cultural anthropology to ethics, and could include any of the subjects listed by Magee, but their approach should be concept rather than memory oriented.

The above suggestions should not be viewed as a means of abdicating the responsibility of each campus minister to design his or her own continuing education program. They could, however, provide a solid base and a higher rate of return for her or his investment.

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