

CHURCH MINISTRY TO COLLEGE STUDENTS SURVEY

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In 1985, National Student Ministries of the Sunday School Board commissioned the Research Services Department to do *Church Ministry to College Students Survey*. Findings of this September 1985 survey have been published in a report made available in March 1986. The purpose of this survey, as stated in the introduction of the report, was twofold: "(1) to determine what kinds of church ministries to college students are 'successful'; and (2) to explore what type working relationships exist between pastors to college students, college ministers, and BSU directors of student ministries." What follows is an attempt to summarize the raw data as outlined in the published report, drawing some personal conclusions and implications, especially focused on those questions that address the relationships between pastors, church staff, and campus ministers.

METHODOLOGY AND RESPONSE

Sample—The sample for this survey took on two phases. Phase one included selection by the staff of National Student Ministries of three college communities as focus group interview cities. One city represented a pioneer area, one included a large Baptist campus, and one a large metropolitan area. The function of the focus groups was to examine a proposed survey form and to discuss the relationship between campus ministries and church ministries. The second phase was a mail survey among two groups: (1) a sample of 200 local BSU campus ministers; (2) a sample of 100 church ministers to students and 400 pastors of churches with a ministry to students.

Data Collection—Phase one: The project analyst from Research Services traveled to the three selected cities, each in a different state, where a total of five focus interview groups met. Each group had pastors, church staffers, and campus ministers participating in the discussions. Phase two collected the following response to the mail survey:

Survey Group	Mailed	Number Responses	Net Percent Usable
Campus Ministers	200	176	88.5
Church College Ministers	100	65	73.0
Pastors with Students	400	226	58.7

SUMMARY OF THE FINDINGS

What is the general attitude of church staff members in your community toward Baptist campus ministries?

Respondents in all three survey groups reported that the general attitude of church staff members was positive toward Baptist campus ministries (BCM). Only ten percent of the responding church ministers to students indicated no familiarity with BCM, with just over 13% of the pastors responding likewise.

This positive attitude is reflected in that about three-fourths of the pastors and staff ministers said that they had been contacted by the campus director during the past year; 40% of the church-student ministers having been contacted 4 or more times, and 37% of the pastors contacted with the same frequency.

From a practical standpoint, attitudes toward BCM and campus ministers are often measured in terms of how helpful the BSU is in reaching students for local church involvement. Just over one-half of the church ministers to students indicate BSU is helpful in reaching students for church involvement, with pastors showing a somewhat stronger support by the 80% that said BSU is helpful. The 13% (church ministers) and 17% (pastors) who indicated BSU is *not* helpful in reaching students compares closely with the 10% (church ministers) and 13% (pas-

tors) that previously indicated no familiarity with Baptist campus ministries. Could the two be related? As church staff are made aware of the vitality of the ministry approach of BCM with its established contacts among college and university administrators and make honest efforts at cooperative ministry, the possibilities for reaching students for church involvement are tremendously increased. This is further shown in that 97% of the responding campus ministers indicated BSU is helpful in reaching students when it comes to church involvement.

While on the one hand contact among church staff, pastors, and campus ministers remains frequent, and open discussion concerning student ministries does occur, almost 60% of the pastors indicate church leaders are not asked to work with the BSU leaders in joint planning of the calendar for campus ministry. Again, while just over 38% of the church ministers to students say they are asked to jointly plan the calendar, over 56% of the campus ministers indicate they do not involve church staff in planning the BSU calendar. Admittedly, it is easier to do "in house" planning only, especially in communities with a large number of churches. However, there is nothing more frustrating than having planned the perfect retreat only to discover one's constituents must choose between two retreats scheduled for the same weekend. Calendar coordination can help to break down the spirit of competition that arises at times between church and BSU.

Do pastors, church staff, and campus ministers relate to students a concept of "cooperative ministry" between the local church and the BSU?

Almost all campus ministers said they try to relate to the students a concept of cooperative ministry between local churches and the BSU program. While 96% of the responding campus ministers indicate a relationship of shared ministry, not all pastors and church staff do. This compares with 69% of the pastors and 81% of church ministers to students indicating support of a cooperative ministry concept.

How do the students themselves respond to this concept? This survey reports that among those relating a concept of

cooperation, the majority of students agree with the concept and want the church and BSU to work together. This feeling of agreement is slightly higher on the campus than those reported through the churches. But less than 6% total among the three survey groups were students who disagreed with the concept and wanted to work separately.

To "invite church staff/BSU leaders to speak at BSU meetings/church" was listed most frequently as specific actions taken by each survey group to encourage the shared ministry approach. Besides this "exchange of pulpits" idea, other popular actions listed included providing meals for the BSU, coordination of program calendars, encourage student participation in church/BSU, and a whole host of other verbatim responses.

Which of the following elements of ministry (Bible study, worship, witness, missions, evangelism) do you see as relating to the church, and which as relating to the BSU?

Most respondents felt these elements of ministry should be emphasized by both the churches and the BSU program; however, more among those in church ministry felt that "worship" should be related to the "church only."

Nine out of every ten campus ministers felt that all five elements listed should relate to both church and BSU.

Almost all of the church staff ministers felt these elements should relate to both church and BSU, but just under 28% felt that worship should relate to the church only.

The pastors viewed all five elements as relating to both churches and BSU, with the exception that slightly more than one in ten felt that worship related to the church only.

The questions that come to mind here are: "What influence will this information have on NSM's anticipated development of materials designed for the worship task of the BSU program? Will this have a limiting effect on the possibilities for creative worship experience through the BSU community?"

In a follow-up concerning evangelism, the question was asked, "How much emphasis do you place on evangelism in your ministry with students?"

The campus ministers were almost equally divided between "very strong" and "mild", with almost three percent saying "little or none."

The church ministers to students had slightly over one-half giving "mild" emphasis and almost 14% reporting "little or none."

Most of the pastors place at least some emphasis on evangelism in their ministry with students: approximately 13% place "little or none" and just over 10% did not answer the question.

It would seem, then, that the concern for evangelism is felt strongest among campus ministers rather than from those in the churches.

What unique event(s) do you plan specifically for students in your ministry?

The intriguing word in this question is "unique." Why include "unique" in the wording of the question? Does the term imply listing those events found in no other ministry? Or is it to mean those events that are planned for no age group other than students? Is it suggesting there might exist some events "unique" to the church and others which are "unique" to the BSU?

Perhaps these questions are insignificant as all three survey groups indicated they provide for students most frequently mission opportunities and retreats as "unique" events in their ministries. Howdy parties and social events, banquets, and suppers received the next highest percentages. "Work with churches/BSU in sponsoring a church vocations day" received some mention from campus ministers and pastors, but received no mention from the other church staff.

Do you offer training in churchmanship for students?

Slightly more than one-half of the campus ministers stated that they offer some form of training in churchmanship for students. Among these campus ministers, 70% said this training is done specifically by encouraging students to join a local church through a "join-the-church emphasis."

Approximately 46% of the church ministers to students and just over 27% of the pastors reported that training is offered in churchmanship through such means as new church member orientation, retreats, seminars, study courses, and Masterlife or discipleship training.

About one-third of the campus ministers indicated they had a way of knowing if a student drops out of Sunday School or church attendance. However, among those who do have a way of knowing, 87% contact the student personally.

A higher percentage of church ministers to students (86%) and pastors (78%) said they had a way of knowing if a student drops out of church involvement, which is not terribly surprising. The most frequently listed action taken by these two groups was to ask other students to make contact with the dropouts, indicative of the feeling among church growth experts that students (and others) are more likely to take an active role in church life at the personal invitation of their peers.

OTHER HIGHLIGHTS

1. "Visits to individuals" was the most frequently indicated way that churches use to reach students. "Welcome party" and "letters to students" were the next most observed methods.

2. Some respondents suggested that the size of a church does not relate to its success in reaching students, while many others felt the number one attraction for students was "a large number of students." Warmth of fellowship, good Sunday School teachers, and the pastor being a good speaker were other appealing characteristics, which could be found in smaller churches.

3. A majority of the respondents indicated that students participate in their ministries more during the fall season than during any other time of the year.

4. More campus ministers than church leaders reported that they offer specialized ministries for international students.

5. Considerably more campus ministers than church leaders reported that they offer specialized ministries for ethnic students.

6. Some 59% of the campus ministers report they have used (or plan to use) *The Student* magazine in their ministries this year.