

CONTINUING EDUCATION: The National Student Ministry's Perspective

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Developing and improving skills in order to be effective in student ministry has been a concern of individuals and groups of individuals for quite some time. The six seminaries of the Southern Baptist Convention have sought to provide a basic curriculum of study that would be worthwhile preparation for a person in any area of ministry. Some curricula have supplemented the basic program with specialized courses for training for particular areas of ministry, including student ministry. State directors of student ministry, as well as many local directors, have been concerned with more being provided. Out of these expressed concerns, as well as concerns of our own, National Student Ministries is developing a strategy for accomplishing a greater level of effectiveness in student ministry.

In May of 1986 a proposition paper was presented to the Student Ministry Advisory Group. It highlighted the need and concern. A program for accomplishing this task was presented. The provisional title for the approach is "Professional Excellence." Excellence should be the desire of everyone who serves in the profession of student ministry. Our desire is to develop a comprehensive program of continuing education that will accomplish this.

An advisory group met in the fall of 1986 to discuss and develop the direction of Professional Excellence. It was determined that it should include all persons who serve in positions of ministry with students whether they be full-time, part-time, US-2, Missions Service Corps, volunteer or some other designation. The advisory group discussed the various factors involved in developing a comprehensive program of continuing education. The areas of focus were determined to include personal, professional and spiritual (biblical/theological) needs.

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The seminaries are a key to providing continuing education. The six seminaries have been contacted concerning their interest. Each of the seminary presidents indicated an interest and desire to work with us. The persons who are responsible for the seminaries' continuing education program are very interested in providing courses that will meet the needs of student ministry personnel.

Directors National Workshops have been a meaningful and worthwhile means of providing specialized training opportunities. However, since it was determined to not be feasible for 1988 regional training workshops will be the initial step in providing continuing education. There will be four workshops in May, 1988. They will be held at four seminaries and in close proximity to most persons serving in student ministry. The dates and locations are:

May 16-20 Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary
Wake Forest, North Carolina

Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary
Ft. Worth, Texas

May 23-26 The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary
Louisville, Kentucky

May 26-29 Golden Gate Baptist Theological Seminary
Strawberry Point, Mill Valley, California

The programs are being developed to incorporate plenary sessions, seminars and meetings by states. More information can be obtained from state directors.

There has not been a listing of continuing education opportunities to which student ministers could refer as they sought to improve their ministry skills. A facet of Professional Excellence is the compilation and distribution of such a reference piece. The first of these will be compiled this fall for release after January 1. It will provide information concerning the various workshops, seminars, conferences which are offered by seminaries, denominational schools, the Sunday School Board and other agencies. As the program develops this listing will

take the form of a booklet which will be updated and amended each year.

The leadership program during the Student Conferences at Glorieta and Ridgecrest will continue to provide opportunities for training to improve ministry skills. The seminars which are offered as well as plenary sessions will be developed to provide updating and training in the areas of personal, professional, and spiritual concerns. The availability of personnel, the responsibilities of participants and the structure of the program will be limiting factors.

The advisory group will be meeting again in the fall of 1987 to further develop Professional Excellence. As developments occur, information will be released through state directors and NSM News.