

The Campus Minister as Administrator

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Like many of my colleagues in campus ministry, I often begin my workday by making a list of the administrative details that need immediate attention. There are bills to be paid and funds to be deposited at the bank. There is a leak in the men's room and another in the ceiling of the fellowship hall. Conferences are scheduled with the custodian, intern, choir director, and president. There are five telephone calls to be returned and the newsletters need to be at the post office by five o'clock. Plans must be made for a BSU Council meeting, a dinner meeting with local pastors, and a luncheon for the association's Student Work Committee. And then there is that fund-raising letter that must be written and sent to all the alumni. When do I have time to get around to the "real ministry"—the important "stuff" like counseling, study, teaching, and preaching?

Often administration is looked upon as a "lesser calling," and yet if we are honest, it takes up most of our time. It can be very frustrating to spend the majority of your time doing that which you feel is unimportant.

I have not been able to come up with any suggestions as to how to unload our administrative responsibilities. There seems to be no way to avoid them. However, I believe that we can make our administrative role more fulfilling by understanding its importance and relevance to everything we do.

In this day of ministerial specialization, many churches are hiring administrators and other staff members in order to free the pastor's time for visiting, studying, praying, and speaking; however, no minister ever escapes all administrative responsibilities, nor should he desire to do so. Most campus ministers do not have the opportunity of delegating responsibilities to a diversified staff. We must be teacher, preacher, counselor, public relations director, treasurer, program coordinator, custodian, coach, social director, travel agent, etc.,

etc., "all rolled into one." All of our ingenious administrative ability is called upon in managing these various responsibilities. I have often said that I went into campus ministry because I could not make up my mind as to which ministerial roles I preferred. As a campus minister I have the chance to do it all!

Out of necessity, we have to be creative in our use of facilities, programs, staff, and budget. And what a challenge that is since all of these things are usually limited! The irony is that when we get new or larger facilities, additional personnel, larger budgets, and new ministries, this only adds to our administrative load of overseeing the buildings, supervising the staff and their ministries, and maintaining relationships with the source of our funding.

As I have compared the ministry of BSU to the other religious organizations on our campus, I have made the following observation. These other organizations are not so very different from us in that they also may have a noble purpose, committed leadership, and contagious enthusiasm. The difference most often is in the administrative organization. Because of our creativity in developing financial resources, leadership training, and ongoing programs, our ministry has consistently grown over the years. Those other organizations have emphasized "religious" things like witnessing, teaching, and studying, with little attention to administrative detail, and they have all "folded" after only a year or two at the most. Our ministry as administrators is what gives continuity to our programs, building a base upon which the other aspects of our ministry can be built.

So perhaps we would all admit that administration is an important role for the campus minister, and we do enjoy some aspects of that supervisory function, but it is all the little details that bother us. We often prefer to come up with the over-all idea and let someone else tend to the details. We look to such role models as our nation's president or the president of a large corporation or even the senior pastor of a large church. These people seem to be policy makers who leave the details to others. If you examined their activities carefully, however, you would find that they are very interested in the details of projects or programs that are of special interest to them.

Then there is the example of Jesus. Our Lord did not seem overly interested in building an organization. Was he not more

concerned with his ministry of teaching and healing? Did he not spend his time praying and counseling? It is important to note that the Bible gives us at least a glimpse into Jesus' apparent interest in the details of life. He wanted to be involved in planning the particulars of a parade into Jerusalem, a dinner meeting with his disciples, and a breakfast on the seashore that he prepared himself. Such administrative details offer each of us the opportunity to place our personal "mark" upon our ministry. The colt upon which Jesus rode into Jerusalem was a statement of his own style of simplicity and humbleness. His interest in providing meals at appropriate times showed his practical concern for all aspects of life. His attitude toward the woman who washed his feet with expensive perfume demonstrated his approval of appropriate extravagance in celebrating the good things of life.

Jesus was obviously planning for the future when he spent so much of time preparing his disciples for the leadership roles they would need to assume in his church. Christianity has since been dependent upon the "organization" to carry out the church's Great Commission.

You can be the greatest teacher, counselor, and worship leader in campus ministry today, but without the administrative skills to build a program, there will be no students to teach, to counsel, or to lead in worship.

Perhaps the campus minister's creative energies are most challenged in the area of leadership training. We must deal primarily with volunteer workers, most of whom are untrained students. Few college students have had prior experience in leadership roles, especially in the local church or other religious organizations. The campus minister has to develop a keen sense of judgment in recognizing the potential within promising students and helping to build their sense of self confidence.

It can be discouraging to realize that you can only harness and use that creative energy for a few short years before the student will graduate to another phase of his life. It is important for the campus minister to keep in perspective the fact that the student is being prepared for a lifetime of service to the church. Perhaps the greatest reward in campus ministry is to see the results of our ministry in the lives of our students years after they have graduated. Hopefully, many will become

active leaders in their local churches and involved participants in community life.

Leadership development may be seen as part of the campus minister's role as teacher, but before one can teach by word and example, relationships must be developed. With over two hundred student members to see after, hundreds of alumni to keep up with, prospects to enlist, and relationships to cultivate with parents, faculty, pastors, and other church staff members, I have a difficult job of administering my time.

No doubt my biggest headache is in scheduling. What a nightmare! I must plan around all the individual schedules of the students, the churches, the other organizations on campus, and between the three schools with which I work. There must be time for BSU Council meetings, luncheons, Bible studies, family groups, music rehearsals, impact team meetings, athletic events, staff meetings, officer conferences, mission projects, social activities, retreats, church engagements, *ad infinitum*. And in between there must be time for personal study, time for counseling with students, and quality time with family. There are inevitably conflicts that call upon all the creative administrative juices within me to solve. This requires the ability to distinguish priorities and plan a diversified, balanced program.

I have touched upon two administrative skills—leadership development and time management. I want to briefly call attention to another. It takes money to run a program, and there never seems to be enough. The campus minister really needs to be creative in developing new sources of funding and in stretching the available money to go as far as possible. One has to be flexible enough to make cutbacks during the year to compensate for over-spending in other areas. And always we must be responsible in our financial reporting to those who to whom we are accountable.

Finally, I want to mention the importance of attitude. A positive administrative attitude will stress the fact that much can be accomplished through creative use of resources, and everything in our ministry can be done with quality on a "first class" basis! A poor administrator or weak campus ministry is one that emphasizes the limitations: "We can't do that because it's too involved." "That task is too difficult for my students." "This program would be too expensive." "That

idea didn't work the last time!" "I'd be afraid to try it."

Creative administration repudiates the "status quo" and is constantly seeking improvements in leadership development, program planning, budget planning, fund raising, public relations, and time management.

I think it would be accurate to say that in order to be an effective campus minister, one must be an able administrator. Administrative duties should not be underestimated or seen as a necessary evil, but rather as one of our most important roles—one that is a challenging opportunity to exercise our creativity and resourcefulness.