

Introduction to Article By Gary Boyd

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I have been involved for the past three years in this heated controversy related to the continued viability and feasibility of on-campus ministries to students - BSU as we have known it. I have met with special study committees, the standing student ministry committee in our association, written a "position paper in defense of traditional student ministry in our city, and had numerous conversations with pastors and lay people on this issue.

Several months back I was asked by the Editor of the Journal to write an article. In my preparation I was reminded of an oral presentation made by Gary Boyd, a local pastor, at one of our student minister- committee meetings. So I contacted Gary and asked for a "hard copy" of his remarks. The following article is what he gave me. After reading it, I realized I need not write another word. It is a concise, well-written, and powerful exposition of the position I hold and I commend it for your reading.

Why This Pastor favors An On-going, Paid Staff Presence On Campus

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San Antonio is famous for last stands. Each year thousands of people pay to come to San Antonio to see the historic remains of the most famous symbol of Texas Battles, the Alamo. But not all struggles are so public and visible. Within the San Antonio Baptist Association there rages an ongoing debate over an issue that when settled, could change the way Southern Baptists conduct Student Ministry. The issue under discussion can be summarized by the question, "Should Baptists continue to have an on-going, paid staff presence on campus, or should these positions be eliminated and the work done solely by area churches?" Current debate seems to have thus far generated a great deal of heat, but has shed little light. Presuppositions and pre-set agendas have forced a tabling of issues for now. But time is not necessarily on the side of the student needing ministry.

The issue is far broader than this brief statement can encompass. I can here address only the philosophical thinking behind campus ministry. As a member of

the current Student Ministries Committee and an area Pastor, I will state my personal opinion. I strongly favor not only leaving the existing, paid BSU Ministers in place, but would suggest we increase their numbers over the next five years.

Origin

Even a cursory view of the history of universities and colleges in America shows that the original intent of nearly all leading educational institutions included as their stated purpose the training and education of ministers. At the very least the curriculum designs showed a desire to educate non-ministry students in issues affecting the building of a life, not just the making of a living. This, I remind you, was in an era when most every student attending college also maintained strong church ties. They came from Christian families and lived in a land which still heralded Christian values. Although times and trends have certainly changed, human needs have not. The college scene should still be a place to find influence or building a godly life. If this is not provided in the curriculum, then it must be provided by Christian campus organizations.

Direction

Along with a view of the past we blend a look at the present. This look should frighten even the most casual observer. The directional drift of most colleges and universities is certainly not towards strong Christian values.

Students with unsettled values and often unhealthy life-styles, leave from shattered homes with weak or nonexistent church ties, and walk across the campus in post-Christian America to register for classes designed to meet only degree requirements. The anti-Christian, ultra-humanistic and new age proponents have certainly not given up their campus presence! If we do not reach these students in some way while they are on campus, then they may never be reached. Many are now part-time students, with full-time jobs and non-church participation.

Importance

Mark it down. Remove the paid on-campus ministers and it will prove to be a forerunner for the removal of effective student ministry on campus. Sure, churches will still struggle to have effective College Ministries, but one focused and paid minister on campus is worth fifty struggling church attempts off campus. We must not separate campus BSU presence from the education process. To remove this direct influence is to imply at least three negatives.

- a. Non-relevance - This tells college students that Christianity is not relevant to the education process. It is a separate "religious" thing and were it really important, the reasoning would go, then surely Southern Baptists would be full-time on campus.
- b. Non-importance - This tells the student that the place of Christian values was

not historically important. Humanists, whose presence is on campus, are strident in citing historical evidence to show their relative importance. Not only will the student be led to believe that Christianity held no important sway in the shaping of our nation, but it must therefore hold no importance for the future. This is dangerous thinking and must be countered.

- c. Nonintellectual - This leads students to disconnect Christian thinking from the intellectual process. Rather than feeding on the godly thought of a Francis Schaeffer or Richard Land (Head of the Christian Life Commission), students hear from mostly non-Christian professors.

These negatives must not rule. At a time when Southern Baptists should be flexing our muscles at the campus beach, we have some hundred pound armchair administrators who want to leave the campus with sand in their faces and declare the cause better handled elsewhere. We must maintain, support, and even increase the paid, on-campus BSU ministers. We must not recoil. Nor retreat! Attend any BSU luncheons, or ministries, and you will observe the Holy Spirit at work in the lives of students. Here are some points worth pondering:

1. Some students never get as close to Christians as they do through the BSU.
2. We must catch students while they are cogitating life's issues and are formulating their ideas and values. It may be too late afterward.
3. A strong on-campus BSU presence encourages tentative university professors and helps them muster the courage to speak up and show up. I saw this when I was the Director of Petroleum at Odessa Texas College. When someone, anyone on campus dares to stand and deliver the truth of God's word, then other shy ones come out of the secular wood work.
4. BSU's hard won presence on campus gives churches and parents input into the university scene that they could not have alone. As a Pastor I have tried to lead our ministry on campus. Unless you are properly registered, trusted and proven, no church can simply walk on campus and hold forth. BSU already has this rapport. Why re-invent an effective wheel? Further, why leave the sensitive diplomacy of liaison with college officials in the hands of well meaning, but often untrained Pastors?
5. An ongoing campus ministry provides a much needed, daily reminder to the Faculty and Board of Regents that it is a basic constitutional right, freedom and privilege for BSU to be there. Many administrators need a fresh reminder that the same Constitution that allows secular groups to meet on campus also

allows the BSU to share the Gospel on campus.

6. It is a documentable fact that other cults, religions and non-Christian groups are strengthening and increasing their campus presence. Why should we take a back seat or be rooted out or even reduce our funding for BSU ministers'?
7. Students experience Christian leadership, many for the first time, while in BSU on campus. This doesn't happen because churches post posters. It comes about through the constant, thorough and weekly influence of an on-campus, paid BSU minister. If you could meet Shawna St. Julien, John Johnson or Anna Rojas in our congregation on any given Sunday they would gladly tell you how they learned to be leaders through the campus ministry of BSU. And they would point, not only to a program, but to a person – the BSU Director, who personally recruited, encouraged and trained them.
8. Students transferring from city to city can be assured of BSU incorporation and ongoing Christian growth. A young Christian moving to a new community needs nurture and guidance. We can be sure that a BSU will follow up on a student who has transferred from another school.
9. Most campus ministries, if left strictly to the efforts of churches, would falter or fizzle. If we want proof then just look at the efforts being made by churches on campus now. Strict volunteerism for campus ministry is a nice ideal, but it will not happen effectively and with longevity. Sure, for a while someone might lead a campus effort, but when that individual is gone then there goes the work. Further proof can be seen on campuses by looking at other parachurch, Christian groups. Attend a meeting set by another Christian group who has no paid campus workers. What you will find, and I have been there, is that the work is sparse and weak, dependent upon finding a good student or having a helpful church. The last such meeting I attended had ten people there. Compare that with the ninety-four that were present at a BSU meeting I attended the same week. The former group was well funded, but not represented by a full-time campus minister. BSU was.

Finally, the best rationale for maintaining a paid, on-campus student minister just walked down the aisle of my church on a Sunday morning. Morad Kasiri, a former Moslem and current dental student at the University of Texas Health Science Center got saved. I had the privilege of meeting Morad many months ago when I was asked to address a noon luncheon of students on campus. There he sat among a hundred other students gathered on a busy Thursday. There we were, meeting right in the heart of the dental school building - with permission, gained through

years of work by our BSU Minister. There I was, an ordained Baptist minister and Pastor, with the freedom to preach the gospel of Jesus Christ to those students. I did so without fear of personal reprisal or BSU program removal. And preach I did. I even gave a calculated invitation. Having each student hand in one of three color-coded cards we had handed out at the beginning of my talk. Morad Kasiri indicated that he wanted to know more about life with Christ.

Try as I would, I could not arrange to see Morad. Dental school is tough and Morad also has to work to support his family. I invited him to church, but to no avail. Enter Roger Matkin. Roger is the paid, on-campus BSU staff member. Roger met with Morad weekly. He loved him, he helped him understand his school stress, marital stress and personal stress. This went on for months. I had almost lost track of Morad and was to see him only one more time during the invitation, he came down the aisle crying out his desire to accept Jesus Christ as his personal savior. We wept together with Morad. Sunday night's invitation brought his wife Regina down the aisle. Her commitment was real, her tears were sweet. Soon we will have the privilege of baptizing Morad. I will ask BSU staff member, Dr. Roger Matkin to baptize Morad because without BSU, we could not have reached Morad Kasiri.

Our current struggle is no repeat of the Alamo. We are fighting not for a piece of real estate, nor for the glory of Texas, but for the souls of young people and the glory of God. For the pliable minds of thousands of students on campus across our nation.

Our son Dillon will be attending college in two years. God willing and strong supporters don't lose heart, Dillon will not only have a BSU on the campus of his choice, but gain a closer walk with God through the godly, persistent, and loving ministry of an on-campus, full-time, paid, BSU staff member.