

THE CAMPUS LEADER OF TOMORROW ARE YOU EQUIPPED TO LEAD?

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Have you organized your student calendar for the year 2003? I assume that very few of us plan that far ahead; however, if you were to engage in such an assignment, in what ways would your responsibilities be different from those you have today? What activities would you plan? What needs will your students have? What outreach programs will you be developing? In other words, just how prepared are you for student ministry in the coming century, and why would such preparation be necessary? After all, students are students, their interests and needs are not going to change are they?

College campuses, like many areas of our lives, are experiencing rapid changes. Not only how we prepare to minister to students, but the type of student we will be encountering in the future will require us to address the need for change. My contact with college students occurs on a number of levels. I am a professor at a private college, a Sunday School teacher in the university department at my church, a licensed counselor, a student organization sponsor, and a sociologist with a professional interest in marriage, family, and culture. I am in regular contact with students on both a formal and an informal basis--inside and outside the classroom; I know their concerns and fears and I know their academic aspirations and capabilities. Research is informing me, however, that successful ministry and leadership in this field must change to accommodate the new students of the twenty-first century.

Let me introduce you to a student. Let's call her Rosa. Rosa is 37 years old. She comes from a Hispanic background, she is a single mother, and she is a part-time student. If you wish to contact her about your program then the most efficient way will probably be to leave an e-mail message at her home. (E-mail?) But you had better be prepared to have something to offer her. She is a very busy woman. Her job provides her with little income, but she must work to support her family. Her goal is to complete her degree in order to find a professional position, which offers her more fulfillment and a higher income. Some of her courses in college require her to submit a portfolio of her work, and her professors are constantly trying to assess how well these courses are preparing her for her vocational aspirations. A few of her instructors are using alternate methods to the standard lecture, and she is having to prepare for these

classes by exercising critical thinking and by synthesizing and applying information she has learned from other classes. In some courses, however, Rosa is not even required to enter the classroom. She simply sits at home, and through an interactive communication network she is in contact with her professor and other class members. She has some interest in spiritual matters, having become jaded by the hollow promises of science; however, she is not interested in the standardized and empty formulas of traditional religious practices. Rosa may be on your campus today; however, by the year 2003, she and those like her will be far more common.

Effective student leadership in the future will require a knowledge of the changing characteristics of the typical college student, the national culture and values, the technology and communication systems, and the direction of college education.

In fact, many of these changes are already upon us.

The Changing Student Body

Enrollment in higher education is expected to increase by 14% from 14.2 million in 1991 to 16.1 million by the year 2003. These students are going to be far less homogenous than in the past. The diversity of their backgrounds will be reflected in their interests and needs.¹

The Gender Shift

Women now represent approximately 55% of the total student body in the United States. They are expected to continue to be the majority of college students, increasing in numbers another 13% between 1991 and 2003. By 2003, they will still represent around 54% of the total student body. By the turn of the century, these women will have a generation of female role models who have entered the workforce and paved the way for them as they set their own goals. The influence of feminine perspectives is already being felt in the political arena. In the university setting it is affecting such areas as the directions in research, the development of new courses, the way textbooks are being written, the codes of conduct on campus, and the identification of social problems.

Two major problems found presently on campuses, for example, are date or acquaintance rape and sexual harassment. It came as a shock to many people when research in the 1980s revealed that around one in five females on college campuses were victims of date rape. Women and groups sensitive to women's issues supported and directed this early research.² My own research tells me that the rate of sexual abuse on

campus has not diminished, even at small conservative schools.³ We are, however, becoming more conscious of the problem, and we are pursuing more aggressively the solutions. For instance, prevention programs are now appearing on campuses to provide students with information on the problem and to help people intervene and offer victim assistance. Laws are beginning to change in this area to offer more protection to the victims, and university administrations are being forced to deal with the issue rather than try to ignore it. This enforcement is driven by the fear of lawsuits and The Student Right-To-Know and Campus Security Act of 1990, which requires university administrations to report all violent crimes on campuses. The same process of recognition, intervention, and social change is likely to occur over the next few years with sexual harassment, a topic that has only recently become a focal point of social debate on campuses. The higher profile given to these issues in recent years can be directly attributable to the fact that women are becoming more actively involved in problems that concern them. They are no longer content with maintaining the status quo and avoiding rocking the boat.

The implication for campus ministry is clear. If your ministry is to be successful, then consideration must be given to the concerns of female students. This may take the form of providing a forum for discussion of problems that face women on campus and in the job market, offering Bible studies on women's issues, or it may involve developing specific programs such as assertiveness training, or, perhaps more importantly, sensitivity training for men. Participation from female students in program development will be vital.

The Racial and Ethnic Shift

By the year 2000, one in four Americans is expected to be nonwhite. Major increases in minority populations are expected in the south and west, particularly Texas and California. In Texas, for example, nonwhite racial and ethnic groups will represent a numerical majority. College campuses will also be experiencing these changes. Minority enrollment at public four-year universities in 1988 was 16.9% (private colleges: 15.3%); but by 1992, this figure had risen to 20.3% (private colleges: 18.7%). Accompanying this shift in recent years are voices agitating for a multicultural curriculum and recognition for historical and contemporary minority contributions. Many of these concerns have been codified. The regional accrediting agencies for schools and universities now insist that campuses address global minority and multicultural issues, and the U.S. Department of Education requires that all colleges report the number of

minorities on their staff and faculty. The keyword now is diversity.

Critics argue that multiculturalism and diversity have become smokescreens for attempts to undermine traditional education and replace it with esoteric courses on such things as witchcraft and vase painting; ethnocentric courses, which seek to discredit the contributions of western civilization; and politically-correct courses, which offer anything anti-eurocentric, anti-male, and anti-heterosexual--examples here would include courses on lesbian writing and literature, gay male representation, and racism. These courses, the critics claim, often are based upon dubious scholarship and are designed to promote a left-wing political agenda. Despite questions concerning the quality of these courses and the veracity of the arguments by opponents, the fact still remains that college curriculums are changing. In the future, the racial and ethnic makeup of both the faculty and the student body will probably mean that minority interests and issues will influence the content of many courses as well as the type of course offered.

Effective campus ministry must face this changing environment. We must be prepared to minister in a pluralistic environment and be ready to address issues that challenge our moral and biblical values. In particular, a complete ministry must acknowledge racial and ethnic concerns. At least three areas need to be addressed. Are you, as a campus leader, aware of the issues and problems that confront minority students? Resources for improvement here can come from literature, but perhaps more importantly, help can come from friends and leaders in the minority communities who are willing to assist you in understanding their cultural and social perspectives. Second, are you actively seeking and developing minority student leaders in your program? Minority students are going to participate in activities where they feel comfortable. More than a lukewarm welcome is needed for these students to join an organization. Campus leaders must be willing to seek out and nurture relationships with minority students. In particular, campus leaders should look for the opportunity to become a mentor to those students who show an interest in leadership. Third, is your program designed to accommodate the special interests and concerns of minority students? After all, if you have nothing to offer them, then why should they come?

The Part-time Student

Between 1978 and 1991, the number of students enrolled part-time at colleges increased 38%. (Full-time students, in contrast, increased 20%.) Projections from 1991 to 2003 indicate an additional 11% increase to a

total of 6.8 million part-time students. In 2003, they will represent approximately 42% of the total student body. Most of these students are employed; many of them are married. Administrators are trying to be more flexible in accommodating these students. At my university, for example, departments are encouraged to offer courses at night as way of providing more course options for these students. If part-time students are going to be reached in campus ministry, then planning must incorporate the different needs of these people. Part-time students often feel as though they are on the periphery of the campus community; particularly, since most organizations and campus programs are oriented toward the full-time student. Programs may have to be offered at odd hours, and efforts made to identify and to address issues peculiar to the part-time student.

The Age Factor

In the late 1970s and early 1980s, older students, primarily women and part-time students, began enrolling in greater numbers in colleges. In recent years there has been a decline in the 18 to 24 year-old student population; however, this age group is expected to begin to increase again in 1997. The 30 to 34 year-old age group is projected to decline by 13% between 1991 and 2003; but the outlook for those students aged 35-44 years is one of rapid increase. In fact, projections indicate that only 57% of college students will be in the 18-24 age cohort by the year 2003. These older students will bring with them different experiences and needs from those of their younger counterparts. Balancing employment, family, and class requirements, as well as balancing budgets will be of more interest to these students than biblical guidelines for dating and mate selection--unless, of course, the latter topic is directed toward helping them advise their teenage children.

The Changing American Ethics

While the structure of American society remains relatively stable, its culture and values are in a constant state of flux. Several years ago, Daniel Yankelovich, a social researcher, identified three major shifts in American values. In the 1950s and 1960s, the primary ethic was one of denial of self. Following the Second World War, many people sought to build a better life for themselves and their families. They invested their time and energy into providing security, shelter, education, and material possessions. The desire of many parents was to build a better life for their children than the one that they had experienced. In order to achieve this,

they were expected to sacrifice for their children. The children of this generation entered adulthood in the 1960s and 1970s, and along with these offspring came a new ethic, one of duty to self. The emphasis had shifted to immediate gratification and self-serving behavior. By the beginning of the 1980s, Yankelovich was predicting another shift in culture, this time to an ethic of commitment, where people were seeking self-fulfillment in preservation and conservation and in meaningful work and relationships.⁴

Other social critics were not as optimistic as Yankelovich. Christopher Lasch, in his book The culture of narcissism, lamented what he saw as the replacement of competitive individualism with a narcissistic preoccupation with the self. The self-centered culture of the 1970s devalued the past, ignored the future, and engaged in trivialization, self-promotion and banal pseudo-self-awareness.⁵ Daniel Bell contended that American capitalism was caught between two competing contradictory sets of cultural values. On the one hand was the traditional Protestant work ethic, which stressed hard work, frugality, moderation, and individual achievement; on the other hand, Americans were being blitzed by media and advertising which emphasized instant pleasure, spontaneity, and impulsive free-spending behavior. Hedonism appeared to be winning, and it threatened to subvert our economic system.⁶

In the mid 80s, Robert Bellah and a team of sociologists published an analysis of American values in which they agreed, along with Yankelovich, Lasch, and Bell, that self-fulfillment was the principal value in contemporary culture; however, Bellah's group saw this value as an extension of the traditional American value of individualism. The problem is that, while individualism in the past was tempered and constrained by strong family, church, and community bonds, the present form of individualism has lost its social foundation, which had encouraged seeking and protecting the common good.⁷

What does this have to do with campus ministry? Knowing the character of American culture can open up possibilities for leadership and ministry. I find it interesting that Jesus shifted the form (but *not* the content) of his message depending on the audience he was addressing. In Matthew 13, for example, Christ presents the parables of the sower, the wheat and the tares, the mustard seed, leaven, the hidden treasure, the pearl of great price, and the fishnet. Every parable was an illustration of the kingdom of heaven, yet the audience was apparently a mixture of sowers, farmers, cooks, women, merchants or businessmen, and fishermen. Listeners heard the message in a way that was significant and applicable

to their own particular interests and lifestyles. What, then, is the American character or ethos, which shapes our contemporary and future campus audiences, and what effect could this have on our ministry?

I believe that the 1990s could be characterized by an ethic of ease. We look for ways to avoid the difficult decisions and the tough work. States are now turning to casino gambling and lotteries for solutions to economic problems. Individuals envision winning the lottery, the lawsuit, the game show, or the publisher's sweepstakes. In the classroom, students have higher expectations for an A grade than ever before. The grade does not necessarily have to reflect the content and the quality of the student's academic work. Only recently has Stanford University changed its grading policy. In the past, a student was almost guaranteed an A or a B grade in a course, with no chance of failure. Even the revised policy is designed to avoid stress (and lawsuits?); for, now a student can fail a course, but the grade is an NP--"not passing." The underlying individualistic ethic that permeates American culture is now expressed in ease, in comfort, in avoiding upsetting anyone, and in living in hope of the *deus ex machina* solution. Ironically, this ethic has nurtured a culture of victimhood, where individuals are encouraged to identify areas in their lives where they have sustained real or perceived injury and to seek immediate redress. Accompanying the changing American ethic are a number of social trends, which are affecting colleges and, of course, campus ministries.

Aggressive Consumerism

Consumers are far less passive than in the past. They are more willing to challenge authority, particularly when they believe that they are victims of an injustice. College administrators must now be more responsive to student concerns, or face a student-consumer backlash. As campus leaders, we no longer have the luxury of assuming that our authority will be respected and our programs unconditionally accepted. We must be prepared to offer programs that fit their needs.

Increased Accountability

Students as consumers are now holding colleges accountable, not only for the quality of the education that they receive, but also for their personal safety. The Student Right-To-Know and Campus Security Act of 1990 mentioned earlier is an example of one legal vehicle students have been given to enforce protection of their interests. College administrators, in turn, have altered the way that they evaluate their programs. In the past, management by objectives and other methods were popular. Today, it is outcome objectives, outcome assessments tied to goal and mission

statements, and total quality management. Underlying these changes are requirements that each course or program at a university be evaluated for effectiveness in terms of its content, its appraised contribution to the mission or purpose of a university department, and its measured value to the student following graduation.

Achievement of an effective student ministry will require developing means of assessing programs in a way that shows an awareness of and an accountability for student needs. This does not mean uncritical acceptance of the evaluative methods now being employed by educational institutions. Criticism has been leveled at the weakness of total quality management methodologies, for instance, which apply statistical concepts to what are fundamentally moral issues. Underlying all our programs should be basic moral principles, especially integrity, and a spiritually empowered mission with clear biblical goals.

Increased Fragmentation

We live in an age of the hyphenated American. African-American, Mexican-American, Asian-American, Native-American; our emphasis on diversity has led to an exponential increase in ways that we can be divided. People and issues can now be principally associated with a gender, a sexual orientation, a racial or ethnic group, or a disabled or challenged group. The downside of our emphasis on diversity is that it can lead to fragmentation. Suspicion, skepticism, and distrust permeate relationships at all levels of our society. The major challenge for ministry here becomes one of trying to convey the ultimate unity we all have in the gospel of salvation (Gal. 3:28) in a way that acknowledges an individual's sense of self-identification. Christ's encounter with the woman at the well (John 4) is a good place to start with this one.

The Changing Field of Technology

In September 1994, The Chronicle of Higher Education reported that the popular topics of conversation among academics had changed. When college representatives gathered together in the past they would complain about budgets and parking, now their conversation revolves around electronic on-line college admissions, conferences, electronic journals and mail, remote-linked two-way video connection classrooms, and Internet. Access to information and communication systems via computer technologies is bringing revolutionary changes to the college campus. Now, even the poorest student (and professor) can browse through the

great libraries of the world, whether they be located in the United States, Canada, England, Italy, or Australia, while sitting at a computer terminal. Electronic messages or e-mail are replacing the postal service (derisively referred to as snail-mail).

Campus ministry of the future will have the opportunity to benefit from the forthcoming "information superhighway," an integration of computer and communication technologies. If you are serious about effective campus ministry, then you need to be preparing for this technology now. Imagine utilizing this technology for conferences with students, outreach programs, Bible studies, counseling and assistance ministries, meetings with part-time and homebound students, and contacts and conferences with peers at other campuses and locations. The possibilities are endless.

The Changing Religious Climate

Our era has been described as post-Christian and secular. Indeed, if television programs, movies, and other media are to be believed, it would appear that religion is no longer important to many Americans. In fact, there appears to be a concerted effort to remove all traces of religion, particularly Christianity, from textbooks and from public places. Movie studios and news networks make exceptions when it involves cultic conflagrations and the sins of televangelists, but the apparent message is that people are no longer interested in spiritual matters. Despite a slight decline in membership among mainline Protestant denominations, including Baptists, the reality is that spiritual concerns and religion are still a significant part of our culture. Surveys reveal that most Americans attend church, pray regularly, and believe in such supernatural forces as angels. Since the 70s there has been a continued interest in eastern religions and alternate religions such as the New Age movement. People are searching for answers and meaning in their lives. But what is happening on college campuses?

A survey of first-year college students in 1993 found that, in the previous year, 59% of them had visited an art gallery or museum, 55% had consumed alcohol, and only 16% had studied in a library. However, 82% of these students had attended a religious service.⁸ This does not appear to me to be a wholesale rejection of religion. Quite the contrary. In reality, there are indications that people are turning from science and pro-forma religious rituals to find more meaningful answers in their lives. Students are responsive to ministers who have a dynamic faith, a clear

message of hope and salvation, an affirming or sensitive spirit, and a willingness to explore ideas without being defensive.

Our challenge as we enter the twenty-first century is to address the changes going on around us and be prepared for those to come. Failure to do so will result in an ineffective ministry, and a generation of students who are unprepared to deal with some of life's basic questions.

NOTES

1. Statistical information in this article is drawn from: Debra E. Gerald, & William J. Hussar, *Projections of Education Statistics to 2003* (NCES Publication No. 92-218) (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education, Office of Educational Research and Improvement, 1992); *The Chronicle of Higher Education: Almanac Issue*, 38 (1) (September 1991); *The Chronicle of Higher Education: Almanac Issue*, 41 (1) (September 1994); *U.S. Bureau of the Census, Current Population Reports* (1990).
2. See, for example, Robin Warshaw, *I Never Called It Rape*, (New York: Harper & Row, 1988).
3. Ian F. Jones & Amy T. Dodson, *Initial Implementation of a Date Rape Program on a College Campus*. Paper presented at the meeting of the Southwestern Social Science Association, San Antonio, TX. (March 1994).
4. Daniel Yankelovich, *New Rules: Searching for Self-Fulfillment in a World Turned Upside Down* (New York: Random House, 1981).
5. Christopher Lasch, *The Culture of Narcissism: American Life in an Age of Diminishing Expectations* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1978).
6. Daniel Bell, *The Cultural Contradictions of Capitalism*. (New York: Basic Books, 1978).
7. Robert Bellah, Richard Madsen, William Sullivan, Ann Swidler, & Steven Tipton, *Habits of the Heart: Individualism and Commitment in American Life* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985).

8. "Attitudes and Characteristics of Freshmen, Fall 1993," *The Chronicle of Higher Education: Almanac Issue*, 38 (1) (September 1994): 17.