Campus Ministers in Public Higher Education: Facilitators of Student Development

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This article highlights the impact of campus ministers upon students within campus ministries at public colleges and universities. Data gathered for this qualitative study suggest that campus ministers serve as facilitators of religious development, personal development, and leadership development among the students with whom they work. Implications for student affairs practice are discussed in light of these findings.

Beginning with Harvard College, each of the first nine colonial colleges was founded by the dominant Christian denomination in the region. The intent of many founders of colleges and universities, prior to the twentieth century, was to promote Christian values and morals (Stamm, 2006) and to train clergymen (Rudolph, 1990). Over time, however, the influence of religion upon higher education has significantly declined, and secularization has become the prevailing force in the academy (Marsden, 1992). Though The Student Personnel Point of View, one of the first documents to set forth principles of student affairs, stated that higher education should “include attention to the student’s well-rounded development—physically, socially, emotionally, and spiritually, as well as intellectually” (American Council on Education, 1949, p. 1), many student affairs administrators on public college and university campuses are reluctant to address the spiritual aspect of student development (e.g., Moran & Curtis, 2004).

The reluctance on the part of many student affairs administrators to address student spiritual development has not diminished the desire of many students to explore the spiritual and religious dimensions of their lives. In fact, data from the Higher Education Research Institute at the University of California, Los Angeles suggest that today’s college students have very high levels of spiritual interest, and many are actively engaged and involved in religion (Astin, Astin, Lindholm, & Bryant, 2005). According to one scholar, the recent revival of student interest in religion and spirituality may represent one of the most vibrant aspects of diversity on college and university campuses today (Nash, 2001). Unfortunately, recent studies have demonstrated that some students who espouse salient religious identities have experienced significant challenges on some public college and university campuses. For instance, researchers have found that some evangelical Christian students report experiencing intolerance and antagonism from others on campus (e.g., Bryant, 2005; Hulett, 2004; Lowery, 2001; Moran, Lang, & Oliver, 2007; Schulz, 2005). For this reason, coupled with the declining Protestant influence in higher education (Winings, 2009 ~ VOLUME 28, NUMBER 1

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1999), many students who are interested in expressing their religious identity have turned to campus religious organizations in hopes of finding safe places in which to explore and to develop their spirituality. Christian students, in particular, are quite active in many campus ministry organizations.

**Campus Ministry Organizations**

Models of campus ministry have changed over the years (Brittain, 1988). From the mid 1960s to the mid 1970s, campus ministry was on campus as a passive voice, interpreting and responding to the changes and development of the academic community. In the late 1970s, the primary role of campus ministries was one of networking, to lead students to other activities. The church-on-campus model emerged in the late 1980s. During this time, campus ministries began to offer an increased number of study groups and worship services on campus, rather than within a local church. According to Brittain, this model describes the structure of the majority of campus ministries today.

A variety of campus ministry organizations exist at most public higher education institutions, though one commonality is that most are affiliated with the Christian religion. In regard to that religious tradition, Cawthon and Jones (2004) differentiated between traditional and contemporary campus ministries and suggested that both types are necessary. Traditional campus ministries are directly related to one denomination (e.g., Baptist Student Union) and typically involve significant interaction with a local church, a smaller setting for intimate time for reflection, and ordained leadership. In contrast, contemporary campus ministries tend to be non-denominational (e.g., Campus Crusade for Christ) and involve larger atmospheres for eclectic worship with peers, high energy and enthusiasm, and lay leadership. Though both types of campus ministries have recently experienced growth in visibility and numbers, contemporary ministries seem to be expanding exponentially. Groups that prioritize recruitment and evangelism (e.g., Campus Crusade for Christ, InterVarsity Christian Fellowship) have become particularly noticeable on campuses (Bryant, 2005).

**Campus Ministers**

Within most campus ministries, one or more campus ministers are employed to direct the activities and initiatives of the organization. People who have completed seminary training typically lead traditional campus ministries (Cawthon & Jones, 2004). Most are ordained and represent the doctrines and beliefs of the denomination. However, as mentioned earlier, contemporary campus ministries typically have lay leadership (Cawthon & Jones). In some cases, leaders who have recently graduated from college serve as campus ministers in contemporary campus ministries. Many of these ministers hold
Bachelors degrees from accredited colleges or universities, and most represent a variety of academic disciplines.

Though campus ministers may have expertise that could be valuable in terms of providing assistance to students in crisis or in need of counseling (Temkin & Evans, 1998), they are often treated as outsiders on some public college and university campuses (Walters, 2001). This lack of attention to campus ministers may result from a lack of understanding, on the part of student affairs administrators, of the appropriate role of religion in public higher education. The First Amendment provisions related to religious expression in public higher education institutions are summed up in two clauses: the establishment clause and the free exercise clause (Kaplin & Lee, 2007). According to the establishment clause, public higher education cannot support one religion over another; in effect, these institutions must attempt to maintain religious neutrality. The second provision, the free exercise clause, provides for religious expression that is free of governmental influence. The question of how to allow free expression of religious beliefs without “establishing” a religion is a common one among student affairs administrators. Many student affairs administrators may be too cautious about supporting any form of religious expression due to the fact that the “separation of church and state” doctrine is often mistakenly believed to mean that any type of religious expression on a public college or university campus will, in effect, “establish” a religion on that particular campus (Moran, Roberts, Tobin, & Harvey, 2008). It is likely that this lack of understanding may be the reason why some in student affairs are cautious about supporting the work of campus ministers.

Student affairs administrators should take note that campus ministers assist students in many ways. Beliak (1989) suggested that, through their work on campus, campus ministers often serve as catalysts for journeys of exploration and self-knowledge that help students find their voices in the midst of the campus and world communities. Also, Fidler, Poster, and Strickland (1999) conducted a study of campus ministers at the University of South Carolina and found the following contributions of campus ministers: new student orientation, educational programming, counseling, crisis management, teaching, staff training, committee service, and consultation. In spite of the knowledge gained from the aforementioned research, little is known about the specific impact of campus ministers upon students. It is for this reason that this research was conducted.
Sanford (1966) defined development as the "organization of increasing complexity" (p. 47), and numerous models of student development have been proposed since the mid-1960s. One dimension of development is that which relates to the content of development (Evans, Forney, & Guido-DiBrito, 1998); this dimension is referred to as psychosocial development. Among the theories of psychosocial development utilized by student affairs professionals is that of Chickering and Reisser (1993).

In their theory of identity development, Chickering and Reisser (1993) propose seven vectors that "describe major highways for journeying toward individuation- the discovery and refinement of one's unique way of being- and also toward communion with other individuals and groups, including the larger national and global society" (p. 35). The seven vectors, which are not rigidly sequential though which do build upon each other, are as follows: developing competence, managing emotions, moving through autonomy toward interdependence, developing mature interpersonal relationships, establishing identity, developing purpose, and developing identity. Chickering and Reisser argue that educational environments often facilitate identity development among those seven vectors. This theory forms the conceptual framework for this investigation.

Method

Constructionism is the epistemological framework that guided this study. According to Crotty (1998), this perspective is grounded upon the assumption that meaning is not discovered but "constructed by human beings as they engage with the world they are interpreting" (p. 43). Consistent with this epistemology, the theoretical perspective of interpretivism informed the methodology of this investigation. According to Schwandt (1994), interpretivism was conceived "as an effort to develop a natural science of the social" (p. 125). The interpretivist approach "looks for culturally derived and historically situated interpretations of the social life-world" (Crotty, p. 67). This study, which is a component of a larger, phenomenological investigation into the essence of campus ministries, highlights only one aspect of the campus ministry experience: the impact of campus ministers upon students within their ministries.

Participants

In order to gather rich data, the authors utilized a sampling procedure that involved identifying key informants from two groups of individuals: campus ministers and student leaders in campus ministry organizations. Key informants
are individuals who have experienced the phenomenon under investigation (Creswell, 1998) and, thus, are able to provide the most information-rich data (Patton, 2002). Throughout this narrative, pseudonyms are used for the participants in order to ensure confidentiality.

Campus ministers. The first author utilized maximum variation sampling (Creswell, 1998) to ensure representation of different types of institutions from which the campus ministers were purposefully chosen. All of the institutions are located in one of two states in the Midwest. As shown in Table 1, the final sample consisted of a diverse group of 14 campus ministers employed by campus ministry organizations associated with traditional, mainline Christian denominations (e.g., Baptist, Lutheran) as well as with contemporary, evangelical Christian organizations (e.g., Campus Crusade for Christ, InterVarsity Christian Fellowship). All of the campus ministers represented in this study are Caucasian, and at the time of data collection, all were full-time campus ministers.

Students in campus ministry organizations. All of the student participants were leaders in at least one contemporary, evangelical Christian organization on their respective campuses. As mentioned earlier, constructivist assumptions suggest that key informants who have experienced the phenomenon under investigation and, thus, have information-rich experiences to share should serve as participants in this type of research (Creswell, 1998). Using criterion sampling, the first author chose student leaders of the campus ministries based on the student leaders’ high degree of involvement with campus ministers. The final sample of students consisted of 25 students. The participants included nine males and 16 females, representing all undergraduate, academic classifications. All were enrolled at one of two public, doctoral-granting universities in the Midwest, one of which was a site from which the campus ministers was drawn as well. All but one of the students represented in this study are Caucasian.

Procedure

The first author accessed the website for each institution represented in this study in order to identify the campus ministry organizations, campus ministers, and student leaders of campus ministries at each. Using the e-mail addresses found on those websites, she then contacted the campus ministers to invite them to participate in the study and to request the names and e-mail addresses of the student leaders in their ministries. This process allowed her to identify the majority of the final group of participants. She purposefully selected other students through the use of snowball sampling (Patton, 2002). The data collection process ended at the point of data saturation (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).
Interviews

The first author conducted each of the interviews in quiet locations chosen by the participants. Most of the campus ministers were interviewed in their own offices, while the majority of the interviews with the students were conducted in a quiet location in the student union on their particular campus. The interviews ranged in length from 45 minutes to one hour, and all were audio-recorded. A standardized, open-ended interview (Patton, 2002) was used to guide the conversations with the participants.

Due to the lack of a similar study from which to model the interview protocol, the strategy used for developing the protocol followed that of Lincoln and Guba (1985) for examining the individuals’ “constructions and reconstructions” (p. 268) of their experiences in the context of the relationship between the campus minister and the student. The interviews provided the participants with the opportunity to thoroughly discuss the breadth and depth of their experiences. Sample interview questions for the campus ministers included: To what extent do you impact students in this organization? Will you share some stories of times in which you have influenced a student in your campus ministry? Similarly, the student participants were asked questions such as the following: Will you describe your relationship with your campus minister? How has your campus minister influenced your life during your experience in college?

Data Analysis

As mentioned earlier, the data set for this study consisted of 39 interviews: 14 with campus ministers and 25 with student leaders of campus ministry organizations. After all of the interviews were transcribed verbatim, the first author developed data charts from the transcripts. A total of 87 pages of typed, single-spaced charts were analyzed. Each chart contained the respondents’ exact comments about specific topics discussed in the interviews.

Because the first and second author had prior involvement in campus ministries, they needed to “bracket” (Creswell, 1998, p. 32) their own preconceptions in order to accurately present the meanings of the participants’ responses. In an attempt to alleviate the possibility that the first and second authors’ experiences or latent biases might lessen the credibility of the results of this research, the third author provided assistance with the data analysis phase of the project. The third author did not previously have any involvement with a campus ministry, and thus, she was able to provide the critical questions and comments necessary to prevent possible individual biases held by the first two authors from impacting the data analysis and interpretation process.

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To analyze the data, the authors utilized Lincoln and Guba's (1985) inductive method. From the data charts, they unitized the data by searching for an element (phrase, sentence, or paragraph) that was heuristic, or "aimed at some understanding" that they needed (Lincoln & Guba, p. 345). By utilizing the constant comparative method, they grouped the units that related to the same content together into provisional categories. Each category was reviewed for consistency, and categories were compared to make sure each was unique. Finally, they met as a group to reconcile differences in their work. From discussions among the authors, themes emerged that accounted for the cross-analyzed, categorized data; these themes form the headings in the presentation of the results.

**Trustworthiness**

Several techniques were used to enhance the validity of this study. First, the inclusion of the voices of students as well as of campus ministers resulted in a form of triangulation of data sources (Patton, 2002). Furthermore, the strategy of analyst triangulation was utilized to increase the trustworthiness of the results. This form of triangulation involves the use of two or more people who independently analyze the same qualitative data and compare their findings (Patton). Member checking, another strategy used in this study, involves taking the data and interpretations back to the participants in the study so that they can confirm the credibility of the information (Creswell & Miller, 2000). To this end, respondents were each sent, via email, a copy of their interview as well as the summary outline of the final results of the study. Finally, an audit trail was established. An audit trail is the maintenance of "precise records of who said what, when, where, and under what conditions" (Whitt, 1991, p. 45). The first author documented all research decisions and activities throughout the course of the project and maintained files of all interview transcripts and data charts.

**Limitations**

The primary limitation of this investigation concerns the lack of representation of students involved in traditional, rather than contemporary, campus ministries. Due to the slightly different structure and focus of traditional ministries, the impact of the campus ministers therein may be somewhat different. A second limitation results from the overrepresentation of female students within the sample. It is possible that the impact of campus ministers may be perceived differently by gender, thus making the results of this study less relevant where the impact upon male students is concerned. An additional limitation of this study concerns the difficulty in identifying the unique impact of the campus ministers themselves, rather than of campus ministry

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involvement in general, upon students. In spite of the limitations, however, useful information can be gleaned from this research.

Results

As mentioned earlier, the campus ministry experience was the focus of the larger, phenomenological investigation of which this study was a part. The themes that follow are those that resulted from the analysis of the portion of the data that was focused on the impact of campus ministers upon student leaders within campus ministry organizations.

Religious Development

Not surprisingly, the campus ministers and the students in this study often mentioned the impact of the campus ministers upon the religious development of students. Specifically, they discussed how the campus ministers facilitated growth in the Christian faith. For many of the students, their Christian religious identity was solidified, strengthened, and developed as a result of interactions with their campus minister(s).

Most of the campus ministers spoke of the intentionality with which they assist their students in learning about and growing in the Christian faith. The terms "disciple," "discipling," and "discipleship" were frequently used by many of the participants to describe this phenomenon. According to the participants in this study, this process often starts prior to a student self-identifying as a Christian. For instance, one campus minister, Carl, shared the following in this regard: "There are times when I meet with someone who doesn't know Christ and am able to baptize them and see them accept Christ." Carl went on to say, "[After students self-identify as Christians], we do a lot of Bible study together . . . just kind of going through verse by verse." Similarly, another campus minister spoke of his role in the religious development of students as being one that involves studying and teaching about the Bible:

One of my students became a Christian here. If you saw him now, he's totally different. I didn't necessarily know that I was impacting him that much. He was in my Bible study at the time, but he is just always talking about that impact. He just thought that I was very good at relating the scripture [Bible] to people. (Fred, campus minister)

Additionally, many of the students also shared examples of how their campus ministers have served as role models and teachers in the Christian faith in a way that has facilitated their religious development. Eric stated, "She's [campus

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minister] a good scripture [Bible] teacher. And we’ve done some Bible studies where I’ve learned a lot more about God.” Additionally, Michelle commented upon the impact of one of her campus ministers through their one-on-one times together:

We met once a week to talk about what’s going on. We went through what is called the “Foundations” book. It’s a little Bible study that has about twelve lessons, and it’s pretty much the foundations of the faith. And, that was really good. (Michelle, student)

Still another student, Laura, spoke of the impact of her campus minister as a Christian leader, teaching her critical spiritual principles related to her identity:

She started disciplining me about a year ago. During that time, I was going through the breakup of a relationship. She just really helped me. She allowed me to talk about it, and she talked to me. She helped me to base my identity on Christ and not on a relationship that I had been in. (Laura, student)

Clearly, from the statements and stories shared above, the religious development of students was a primary way in which the campus ministers impacted the students within their ministry organizations. Through their interactions with students, these campus ministers assisted students in developing their Christian religious identity.

Personal Development

In addition to religious development, campus ministers and students alike spoke of the impact of the advising and counseling roles of the campus ministers upon various dimensions of personal development. The most common dimensions of personal development mentioned by the participants were that of the ability to cope with and to grow from unresolved past and/or present hurtful events and experiences as well as with challenging college-related experiences.

One campus minister shared the story of her interaction with a student concerning a hurtful experience from the past. The provision of a safe space and listening ear was all that was required for this student to move forward in resolving this horrible experience:

One student came to me last spring wanting to talk. And what she shared with me was something that she had not shared

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with anybody else prior to that time. She had been sexually abused from the ages of thirteen to sixteen by a youth pastor in her church. That was such a beautiful time in some ways and so heartbreaking in others. It was beautiful in that God had freed her enough to be able to come and share that. (Tina, campus minister)

Moreover, Carl, a campus minister, spoke of the grief counseling in which he and many other campus ministers are regularly engaged:

There was a student who mysteriously died. Another girl whose father died of brain cancer... And just being a support for them and helping them deal with their grief... Just to be there with them and listen to them... Unfortunately, there have been lots of instances of that type of thing. (Carl, campus minister)

In most of the situations in which discussions of unresolved hurtful situations arose during meetings between campus ministers and students, the campus ministers typically referred the students to a community-based, Christian counseling center after spending time listening to the students' concerns.

In addition to assisting the students in coping with unresolved, hurtful events and experiences, many of the participants in this study mentioned the impact of the campus ministers' advising and counseling upon the ability of students to resolve challenging situations related to their collegiate experiences. Dale, a campus minister, stated that he does "lots and lots of counseling about staying in school, making the grades, what to do, how to make it, and what the system's about... probably two to three times a week." Additionally, one student spoke of the assistance provided by her campus minister when she approached him with a problem concerning her relationship with her roommate:

I first got to know him my freshman year, because I had a really, really crappy roommate situation... like the worst you could ever imagine type of thing. At one point, I went to talk to him. I didn't know what to do at all. He gave me some advice on how to handle being around her. (Sheila, student)

Interestingly, another student sought the advice of her campus minister as to whether to study abroad, and her interaction with the campus minister unearthed a significant personal challenge that was related to her decision-making process:

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Last fall, I was trying to decide whether to apply for a scholarship to go to Germany or not. And, I asked him what he thought about that. And, I ended up spilling more of my guts than I expected. It was neat that he would listen and give advice on that. (Julie, student)

In the process of discussing the possibility of studying abroad, Julie and her campus minister ended up focusing on the challenges that Julie was facing with her family. Familial pressures provided Julie with additional challenges where that particular college-related decision was concerned, and her campus minister was able to assist her with those challenges in an effort to facilitate her personal development.

**Leadership Development**

The campus ministers in this study also spoke of their desire to develop students to be “agents of transformation” within their campus ministry organizations. Ultimately, these campus ministers shared that they were working hard to develop students into leaders who would have a positive impact upon others within the campus ministry. Jon, a campus minister, provided a detailed description of the goal of most campus ministers within the organization for which he works:

What we are committed to, in terms of our leadership development, is not simply taking a student... It's kind of like the difference between taking somebody, putting them in a factory, and teaching them to make widgets. They can do a particular job, or do a Bible study, in a particular way. We give the materials and say, “Make sure you are doing this, and make sure you are doing that.” You teach them to make widgets. Well, once they graduate from school, they no longer need widgets. And, if they don’t know how to transfer those skills into leadership principles, you are really doing them a disservice. So, what we try to do is first teach them about leadership principles.

Another campus minister explained his focus on the leadership development of students by sharing the following:

I feel a responsibility to students, because of our calling, to develop leaders. That would be through first introducing them to the claims of Christ. If they are Christian, then we try to build...
them, biblically, but also in terms of personal leadership abilities. (Tom, campus minister)

Many students proudly shared about the impact of the campus ministers' focus upon leadership development. For instance, Lizzie, spoke of the leadership abilities that she has gained as a result of her interactions with the campus ministers:

I've learned a lot about being a leader from the student leadership and how it's set up. Last year, I was able to lead a Bible study with one of our campus ministers. I've learned a lot about how to lead, how to develop relationships with other people, and things like that.

Another student spoke of her own development as a leader as well, in particular, regarding her ability to delegate responsibilities to others:

I've learned how to delegate to people and how to bring people into the responsibilities that I have so that they feel more ownership in the ministry. I've learned how to say "no" to people when I need to. (Sheila, student)

Michelle, a student, stated, “Our ministry is really into raising up leaders and helping people to grow. So, now, I'm not at all the person I was when I first came.” That statement aptly summarizes the impact of campus ministers, within various campus ministry organizations, upon student leadership development.

Discussion

Throughout the interviews, the campus ministers and student leaders repeatedly mentioned the idea of the overarching role of the campus ministers as being that of "investing" in students. Campus ministers choose to devote time and energy into their relationships with the students within the campus ministries in hopes of observing positive outcomes from their efforts. The results of this research suggest that those outcomes, for the individual students within the campus ministries, may take the form of religious development, personal development, and/or leadership development.

Interestingly, all three of those outcomes are embedded within Chickering and Reisser's (1993) theory of identity development. At least four of the seven vectors within their theory describe outcomes that are similar to those highlighted in the results of this study. For instance, the first vector is that of "developing competence" (p. 38). Interpersonal competence, one of three dimensions of this vector, demonstrates an increase in students' ability to trust
their own abilities, to receive accurate feedback from others, and to integrate their skills into a stable self-assurance. This sounds remarkably similar to comments from the participants in this study about how students gained confidence as they developed into leaders. Moreover, Chickering and Reisser suggest that effectively communicating with others, aligning personal agendas with the goals of a group, and choosing from a variety of strategies to help a group function are also hallmarks of the interpersonal dimension of competence. The authors believe these competencies mirror the leadership principles and delegation skills gained as a result of the impact of campus ministers upon students.

“Managing emotions” is the second vector of Chickering and Reisser’s theory (1993, p. 38). They stated, “The first task along this vector is not to eliminate them [strong emotions] but to allow them into awareness and acknowledge them as signals, much like the oil light on the dashboard” (p. 46). Many of the personal development outcomes described by the participants in this study can be found within this vector. For instance, as campus ministers spoke of their work in assisting students with dealing with sexual abuse from the past as well as with grief caused by deaths in the family, they were detailing how their relationships with students had facilitated the increased awareness and acceptance of strong emotions on the part of the students. Moreover, this vector of the theory describes the ability of students to integrate feelings with responsible action; the personal development challenges related to classes, a roommate, and the decision to study abroad all exemplify this ability.

Responses from the participants in this study also described the impact of campus ministers upon students in ways that resemble aspects of the fifth vector of Chickering and Reisser’s theory: “establishing identity” (1993, p. 38). This vector involves students’ ability to create a sense of self in response to feedback from valued others. As they participate in various roles of their choosing, students move from confusion about who they are to clarification about their self-concept. This clarification often involves “defining self as part of a religious or cultural tradition” (p. 49). Within the interview responses, participants spoke of students developing a sense of self as related to their Christian religion (e.g., becoming a Christian, basing one’s identity on Christ) as well as that related to their roles as leaders within the campus ministry organizations.

Finally, the “developing purpose” vector, which is vector six of Chickering and Reisser’s theory (1993, p. 39), involves outcomes that are similar to those described by the participants in this study. Developing purpose “involves a growing ability to unify one’s many different goals within the scope of a larger,
more meaningful purpose, and to exercise intentionality on a daily basis” (p. 50). Growth along this vector involves the ability of students to engage in sustained, focused activities, and to develop strong interpersonal commitments related to their vocational interests. In the realm of religious development, campus ministers impacted students by leading them in following the teachings of the Bible. This, then, led to their decisions to engage in leadership and relationship building within that chosen vocational path.

Implications

Several implications for the practice of student affairs emerge from this study. First, student affairs administrators are encouraged to reframe their involvement in the realm of religious development among students. Furthermore, professionals in student affairs may consider how to build relationships with campus ministers and how to engage in collaborative efforts to facilitate student development.

Reframe Involvement

The first implication for student affairs is that the involvement of student affairs administrators in facilitating religious development may be reframed in a way that is less focused on the specific religious identity of the students. By reframing their involvement in religious development as that which is congruent with the development described by Chickering and Reisser (1993), student affairs administrators could play a significant role in that dimension of student development. During professional development sessions, for instance, a student affairs administrator, higher education researcher, or campus minister could distribute research and lead a discussion about the role that religious development plays in students' identities and sense of meaning and purpose in life (Young, Cashwell, & Woolington, 1998).

When discussing a “developmental approach” to working with students related to their spirituality and religion, Estanek (2006) stated, “We ask them to learn more about their own faith tradition, if they have one, and those of others, not only in a religious sense but in the active sense of meaning-making” (p. 279). In fact, the ability of campus ministries to address issues of identity, meaning, and belonging in ways sensitive to the concerns of young people is what Perry and Armstrong (2007) have suggested is a significant reason for their success.

Build Relationships

A significant amount of intentional interaction between student affairs professionals and campus ministers is critical in order to establish rapport.
Because mistrust between campus ministers and some student affairs professionals has been reported (Aten & Tucker, 2002; McMinn, Chaddock, Edwards, Lim, & Campbell, 1998), the importance of interactions designed to build relationships cannot be overstated. Relationships may be built by intentionally reaching out, one-on-one, to the other. Also, Butler (1989) suggested that student affairs practitioners should consider serving on campus ministry boards and should invite campus ministers to serve on student affairs committees. Additionally, each group could become involved in the other’s professional associations. Only through authentic interaction that leads to trusting relationships will opportunities to collaborate be made known.

Consider Collaboration

After establishing trusting relationships with campus ministers, student affairs administrators may create opportunities to collaborate with them for the benefit of the students on campus. As mentioned earlier, many student affairs administrators might be hesitant to collaborate due to their uncertainty regarding relevant legal freedoms and constraints concerning religion. In fact, Clark (2001) found general confusion about the expression of religious beliefs at public higher education institutions. Administrators may be concerned about overstepping their bounds where “separation of church and state” is concerned (Moran, Roberts, Tobin, & Harvey, 2008).

Collaboration with campus ministers does not constitute the establishment of a religion on campus; therefore, student affairs administrators need not fear such a perception. Moreover, administrators in public higher education need not be concerned with offending others due to such collaboration. Nash (2001) suggested that we need to resist succumbing to the “temptation to avoid giving offense” (p. 199) when discussing or participating in controversial issues. All three aspects of development highlighted in the findings of this research may be facilitated as student affairs administrators and campus ministers engage students in the out-of-classroom environment. Some suggestions for collaboration fall into three categories: diversity programming, counseling and advising, and student organizations and leadership initiatives.

Diversity programming. Student affairs professionals could request the assistance of campus ministers to plan and to implement programs in the realm of religious diversity (Temkin & Evans, 1998). In many ways, such programming could assist the religious development of many students by either increasing their awareness of others’ religious beliefs or by facilitating students’ growth and development in their own religious identity. Similarly, Dalton (2004) encouraged student affairs administrators to publicize the spiritual resources and activities of
the campus, including religious organizations, student groups, speakers, and events with a spiritual focus or content. Whether these endeavors are initiated by student affairs professionals or by campus ministers should not be the primary concern, but rather, the emphasis should be upon the goal of facilitating religious development among students.

Counseling and advising. Specifically in the areas of counseling and academic advising, student affairs administrators could share their religious beliefs and values with campus ministers, and vice versa, in order to facilitate proper referrals. In the realm of counseling in particular, Aten (2004) suggested that counselors could designate one professional to be a liaison to the campus ministers, and counselors could work hard to make their services known and to expand their method of delivery to include having a presence at campus ministry sites or events. Likewise, academic advisors might consider referring students to campus ministers should religious issues surrounding students’ academic progress become apparent. Ultimately, as students gain assistance from campus ministers as well as from student affairs administrators, their personal development is likely to be positively impacted.

Student organizations and leadership initiatives. As this study suggested, leadership development is one way in which campus ministers impact students in campus ministries. Perhaps student affairs professionals working with student organizations and leadership initiatives could invite campus ministers to various leadership training events. Through this type of inclusion, campus ministers may be able to share some useful information about student leadership development. Many student leadership initiatives already exist within various campus ministries (e.g. InterVarsity Christian Fellowship), and ideas could easily be shared with others who aspire to develop students into leaders.

Conclusion

In conclusion, Butler believes that “most assumptions and goals of students services professionals for students, the institution, and the society are shared at the core of their meaning and in their daily implementation by those in religion on campus” (1989, p. 80). Indeed, this research suggests that campus ministers assist in facilitating the religious development, personal development, and leadership development of students in campus ministries. Unfortunately, as Dalton and Crosby stated, “In their efforts to be tolerant and respectful of differences, colleges and universities can mistakenly promote an atmosphere of benign neglect, indifference, or even hostility toward religion and spirituality” (2007, p. 2). Campus educators need to look specifically at the ways in which different religious practices take shape in and shape their contexts and to notice the new and changing forms of religious communities in all of the great
traditions (Casanova, 2006). Campus ministers' interactions with students may initiate a life-changing chain reaction that transforms those students. For that reason, student affairs administrators are encouraged to take the initiative to collaborate with these facilitators of student development for the benefit of the students.

References


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Table 1

**Characteristics of the Participating Campus Ministers**

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