

ARE WE READY?

A READINESS ASSESSMENT TOOL FOR CONGREGATIONS CONSIDERING CHURCH BASED COLLEGIATE MINISTRY

The oldest mission form of the Presbyterian Church is the congregation.

The second oldest mission form is its ministry in higher education.

Why not combine the two?

Does your congregations sense it is being called to the campus? Is it beginning to list the reasons for doing a ministry with an academic community?

Is your congregation building an inventory of resources needed for a ministry with students, faculty and staff at a nearby college or university?

Is your congregation making sure this ministry relates to the church's goals and objectives AND that it is true to the Gospel of Jesus Christ?

The intention of this congregational readiness assessment survey is to provide a congregation with a rational approach to answer the question of "How ready are we to engage in a church based collegiate ministry?"

For the sake of the congregation, its pastoral staff, members, and other ministry programs it would be better for this instrument to lead to the conclusion, "We're not ready" than to attempt to establish a collegiate ministry initia-

tive that likely would not bring about the intended results.

The readiness survey expects many people to be engaged in seeking answers to its questions. The order of the sections is intentional and should be followed one after the other. The conversations will be many and the results informative. Blessings on your efforts.

This tool was designed by Bob Turner, Associate for Collegiate Ministries, PC (USA) with help from church based collegiate ministry colleagues and the fine people at a 2006 Association of Presbyterian Church Educators workshop.

Address questions and comments to
PCUSA Collegiate Ministries
100 Witherspoon Street
Louisville, KY 40202-1396

pcc@pcusa.org 888-728-7228-5765
<http://www.pcusa.org/collegiate>

1. THE RATIONALE FOR A COLLEGIATE MINISTRY INITIATIVE

Why are we considering a collegiate ministry initiative for our church?

What are the motivations, the theology and the reasons behind this?

How did the idea come alive here, now?

Is our church truly called to do this form of mission outreach? If so, why?

1. What is the step by step process toward reaching a decision to initiate or not to initiate a collegiate ministry program by the congregation?

2. What were/are the collegiate ministry experiences of those directing this readiness survey?

3. What are the foundational theological statements for this initiative?

4. What Biblical teachings seem central to this initiative?

5. What's the difference between an "older youth" ministry and a "collegiate" ministry.

2.

6. How do we respond to the statement, "Plant sequoias" as it relates to a ministry to, with, by and for students?

7. What are 5 reasons to do this ministry initiative?

8. What are 5 reasons not to do this ministry initiative?

9. What do we want to accomplish?

10. How would the congregation respond to this question, "Is God already on campus or are we "taking God" to the campus?"

11. How do we understand the vocations of teaching and learning within a Protestant Reformed theological context?

12. How much is the survival of this church tied to this initiative?

13. Who can help us understand the challenges we will face? Be as specific as possible.

14. How have the purposes and potential outcomes of this initiative been written down and circulated to the church?

15. (For PCUSA congregations) How does this initiative relate to the fulfillment of baptismal covenant found in the Book of Order W-2.3013 "... on behalf of the Church universal, . . . (we are) nurturing the baptized person in the Christian life."

16. What other models of ministry of this type have been researched and what conclusions were reached?

17. How does this congregation include higher education ministry/campus ministry in its vision statement?

18. What is our reaction to this statement: "A student's primary vocation is to be a student" ?

19. How does the congregation's leadership respond to the statement "collegiate ministry is like a new church development project restarted each fall"?

2. THE CONTEXT OF THE COLLEGIATE MINISTRY INITIATIVE

This Collegiate Ministry Initiative will have an effect on both the college/university and the church.

What are the social, political, cultural and religious climates of both institutions.

Looking at these two settings helps to understand the contexts in which this ministry will occur.

1. What are the demographics and other descriptive characteristics of the school?

2. What contacts do we have already with the university, especially student affairs and/or faculty, and how will we approach them for involvement in our making this decision?

3. Who else will we talk to at the college or university to help us understand the context the ministry would relate to?

4. What is the "religious climate" on the campus?

5. What are the obstacles we will encounter and how will we address them?

6. What other Christian groups are serving the campus now? Which of them can we work with?

7. What is the congregation's current outreach ministry to the civic and academic communities?

8. What does this congregation have to offer the collegiate community that is not already present?

9. What do we have to do to obtain an on-campus presence?

10. Do we need to work through a student-originated group to obtain space on-campus?

11. How will the congregation's comments and ideas about this collegiate ministry initiative be gathered?

12. How is the college ministry considered an extension of the congregation's ministry to children, youth and other young adults?

13. What is the church risking to conduct a collegiate ministry initiative?

14. How would we describe/categorize the types of religious values and backgrounds of the students that might be attracted to our collegiate ministry initiative?

15. Will this initiative be promoted as a program only of our church and denomination or as an ecumenical operation with several churches/organizations supporting it or something else entirely?

3. THE RESOURCES TO CONDUCT A COLLEGIATE MINISTRY INITIATIVE

Resources include more than a ministry director, a room to meet in and some money to fund the program. Key among the needs is the absolute commitment of the pastoral staff and elected leaders of the church. Then the list starts to get long.

1. What non-financial resources are needed to start and maintain this initiative (people, equipment, skills, facilities...)?
2. What resources are present in the church, its leadership and the congregation that would support this initiative?
3. What does this church have to offer that is unique?
4. What is our level of commitment and how do we assess that commitment?
5. How committed is the senior pastor to this initiative?
6. What role, if any, does the head of staff expect, intend, or desire in relation to the ministry?
7. How willing is the pastoral staff to provide pastoral care for students?
8. How can we assess that the congregation's staff and others will have the time to devote to the collegiate ministry program and maintaining relationships with students?
9. Who else from the congregation would be enlisted to support this initiative?
10. How would they support the initiative?
11. What space in the church building is available for this initiative?
12. What space outside of the church building is available for this initiative?
13. Who among the congregation would be recruited for leadership of the initiative (list names and reasons)?
14. How long would persons from the congregation be expected to serve as leaders of the program?
15. How will students be involved in the development of the ministry and its program once it is started?
16. How does this church understand the use and authority of the Holy Scriptures?
17. What funding sources can be counted on from the church budget, gifts from individuals governing bodies, and other sources?
18. What current congregational activities can be expanded/modified to become components of the initiative?
19. What does our church have to offer a college student?
20. What is the evidence that the congregation is hospitable to non-members, especially those with no intention to become members or even to financially support the general mission of the church?
21. How is the congregation caring/teaching/discipling its own college student members where ever they are studying?
22. How will we incorporate worship, study, fellowship and service in our collegiate ministry?
23. How many ways can members of the church be involved in this collegiate ministry over the first three years?
24. Do we have volunteers/staff who will to be available at times the students want or are available?
25. How can our people to make a personal connection to students?
26. How will the congregation's lay and clergy leaders of be trained to help direct the collegiate ministry?
27. Which other groups could we partner with so we are not duplicating efforts?
28. How willing is the church to partner with the college chaplain's office or other campus ministries already serving on campus to enhance those ministries to students?
29. What other congregations involved in collegiate ministry (locally, regionally or nationally) has the church consulted for understanding and direction?
30. Which church based collegiate ministry programs can we actually go and visit?
31. How willing is the church to partner with other congregations in the community to initiate and support a collegiate ministry initiative?
32. Who in our congregation (faculty members or administrators) can give us an "in"?
33. What kind of help would the university/college offer with chartering a student organization, publicity opportunities, speakers, space for meetings, etc.?
34. Who else can help us?
35. How willing is the church to provide for paid internships for students interested in leadership positions within the collegiate ministry program?
36. How will food be a part of this collegiate ministry initiative and how will it be provided?

4. THE “WHO” THE COLLEGIATE MINISTRY WOULD SERVE

The rationale statements give a platform for making the decision about the collegiate ministry initiative. The contexts of the church and the academy clarified the settings for the work. The inventory of resources point the way to deciding who the ministry might best serve. Now it is time to determine how this ministry could become a reality.

1. How will we determine with whom this initiative will minister?
2. What will five scenarios of potential participants in the church’s collegiate ministry portray?
3. Who will this collegiate ministry initiative welcome?
4. How would Presbyterian (PCUSA) students be dealt with differently than others looking for a church away from home?
5. How do we describe/categorize the types of religious values and backgrounds of the students that might be attracted to your collegiate ministry initiative?
6. When the term “inclusive” is used to describe this collegiate ministry initiative, who or what is meant to be included?
7. How will this collegiate ministry initiative engage non-Christians?
8. How are faculty, graduate students, or staff included in the vision?
9. How willing is the church to integrate college students into the program, mission, and ministry of the church?
10. How willing are staff and members to work closely with those who feel a call to the vocation of ministry?
11. How do the planners/decision makers respond to the statement, “Expect nothing from students in terms of their contributing to the life of the congregation because they may not come to morning worship, lead the youth group, baby sit in the nursery, sing in the choir, or teach Sunday School.”?
12. What opportunities and positions could students take advantage of within the church?
13. How will students be involved in all phases of this initiative research and decision about this initiative?
14. How do we intend to generate a core group of students on which to build the ministry?
15. How willing is the church to host and care for students who need to be churched, but are not looking to switch denominations?
16. What kinds of relationships can our church imagine having with the students’ home churches?

5. THE ACCOUNTABILITY FACTOR OF THE COLLEGIATE MINISTRY INITIATIVE

This initiative will be costly in terms of time, resources and the commitment of dedicated people. For it to be an important and trusted mission of the local church the lines of accountability and assessment need to be clearly drawn.

1. How will this initiative be administered and held accountable?
2. What’s the time line to make a final decision about the initiative?
3. What assurance is there that this church will engage in this initiative for at least eight years?
4. Ultimately, who is responsible for this ministry?
5. How do we respond to the statement, “Expect to experiment and fail with whatever programming is done, but keep trying until you hit on something; each year it will probably be different.”?
6. What additional administrative/accountability/advisory structures will be needed because of this initiative?
7. What will the budget for the first three years of this initiative look like?
8. What possible changes could happen in the congregation as a result of this ministry?
9. How acceptable are these changes for the life of the church and its members?
10. What are the points of self-assessment and who will monitor that they are done?
11. What is the long-range plan for continued funding?
12. How will you define success, especially in the ministry’s first few years? How would a written prayer read that was prepared for the dedication of the collegiate ministry program by the congregation?
13. When the prayer of dedication for the start of this mission is written what will it say?