



Reaching the Campus Tribes

(an opening inquiry)

Benson Hines

mobile version
part four: a road map forward

Dedication

*To the 300 who gave of their
time, space, wisdom, and resources.
The firstfruits are in this book.*

&

*To Steven H. & Audrey M. T.
who first helped me
become a minister to the campus tribes
& were there in this most recent adventure.*

Reaching the Campus Tribes by Benson Hines

www.reachingthecampustribes.com

This version was originally made for mobile users. All the original text has been “remastered” for smaller dimensions, with smaller pictures. Visit the site above for the primary version, other resources, or for ways to join in the cause. Important information and interesting tidbits can also be found on [the back pages](#).

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REASONS TO SHARE REACHING THE CAMPUS TRIBES

1. It's free!
2. It can get Christians talking about a really important issue.
3. It's got some great pictures.
4. A lot of people won't read something unless it's recommended by multiple pals, right?
5. This whole ebook trend could be really useful for Christian ministry...
6. This book impacts best only if it spreads beyond the campus tribes to other Christian leaders.
7. It's free!

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The "Overlook" building of Prince Avenue Baptist Church in Athens, Georgia, contains a student café and worship space. The church invested in creating the Overlook to provide a central college ministry location within walking distance of the Bulldog tribe. The church itself is located about 10 miles from campus.

into the harvest

a road map forward

from a road trip's findings

In earlier chapters, I included areas in which local college ministry and the entire field should improve, connected under the

banner of viewing college ministry as a true missions effort. But by seeing college ministry in action around the U.S., I've also had the opportunity to observe and consider specific steps that American Christians can take to develop this work.

Researching such a large cross-section of college ministry has given me the chance to think *big* thoughts and *broad* thoughts about where the field of college ministry can go from here. Big thoughts are important because we must make great strides to meet this great need. But breadth is also helpful, because strategies and tactics for moving forward should come from an understanding of the actual nationwide situation – not simply from knowing our own regions or our own networks. By encountering a wide variety of ministries – large and small, flourishing and struggling, well-resourced and lacking resources – I've had the chance to think about what steps for-

ward are both realistic and most helpful for reaching the campus tribes better.

As we more highly value college ministry, many new ideas will come to light – and many new efforts will be made possible. In the meantime, these are the steps I believe could bring the most help right *now* to the field of college ministry. Use the beneficial ideas; throw away the rest. Better yet, improve on these ideas!

Part One: Champions

we need a hero!

Actually, we need lots of heroes. The spread and improvement of college ministry will happen as hundreds of individual Christians help it happen.

We need parents to decide they want more for their children. We need pastors and other church leaders to look beyond their walls to the local campus tribes. We need

many to remember the students we send to college each year, our youth group graduates who need us to finish the job of discipling them.

We need other heroes, too: Denominational leaders who advocate for college ministry and make the decisions needed to support this missionary venture. High school kids who push their leaders to prepare a future college ministry for them. Churches with no youth population who still support campus mission efforts. Present college ministers who champion using greater means within their organizations. Others who brilliantly work out new and better college ministry models. Wise Christians who broker cooperation between college ministry efforts. College administration members, faculty, and staff who allow campus ministries to flourish. Generous Christians who give – perhaps even in field-changing amounts. Others who set up a meeting with

a leader in their church or community, simply to get the ball rolling for using greater means to reach college students.

Some heroes may do huge, obvious, field-affecting things. But thousands of heroes have the ability to change *their* local college ministry situations – and therefore to impact local campus tribes forever.

maybe even a super-sized hero

In the 1960s, youth pastors Mike Yaconelli and Wayne Rice began fighting for churches to better value youth ministry. Their eventual organization, Youth Specialties, helped catapult youth ministry to its position today as one of churches' primary (and best-supported) ministries. Youth Specialties has been a catalyst on two fronts: helping Christians care about youth ministry, and helping youth ministry improve.

It may be that college ministry will be best served in the same way – by a “super-sized hero,” an organization devoted to proclaiming the value of college ministry and helping the field develop.



Perhaps a church with particularly effective college ministry could champion the cause on a national level, much like Moody Church helped popularize Sunday School many years ago.

A similar umbrella organization for international mission work was the solution William Carey offered in his *Enquiry*. He urged the creation of a cooperative missions-sending agency, whether inside his

own denomination or otherwise. And ultimately, as we have seen, *plenty* of organizations devoted to missions development and mobilization have been created, to the glory

of God and the spread of His fame.

There are several present denominations, networks, and parachurch organizations which God could call to champion college ministry within the greater Christian community. Likewise, some individual college ministries around the U.S. could rise up as vanguards in this important field, sharing what they've learned beyond their walls, their regions, and even their denominations. A few ministries – like University Presbyterian Church in Seattle and The Mill in Colorado Springs – have already begun to have this sort of far-flung impact.

Or a heroic effort on behalf of college ministry may arise from a new organization altogether, a kind of “Youth Specialties” for collegiate ministry here in the twenty-first century. An independent organization like this could serve as a think tank, a resource producer, a collaborative network, a fund-

raiser, and a rallying cry for college ministry – across the branches of our field, across denominational lines, and throughout the country.

Cooperation and networking have allowed for better work among foreign tribes, and the same is needed for college ministry. We may need a super-sized hero or even *several* catalytic agencies to proclaim the value of college ministry and help increase its effectiveness.

heroes on the ground

Of course, many of college ministry's he-



National parachurch ministries can choose to impact college students as part of their overall work. Here, students and their families gather for graduation from the Focus on the Family Institute, a semester-long program exploring worldview, political, and family issues.

roes will be men and women called to impact students directly as college ministers. We need to pray for God to send more people into the harvest field of the campus tribes, whichever branch of college ministry they serve in.

And hopefully a number of these ministers will become college ministry “lifers,” those women and men who serve for decades in this noble cause. As I saw numerous times throughout my trip, veterans have a wisdom for other college ministers (and for their students) that simply can’t be matched. Having an increasing number of seasoned collegiate missionaries will be enormously powerful in helping our field develop.

College ministers also must do their part in helping draw others to this task, by sharing their stories with the greater Church. From early years, even children and teenagers should hear the stories of faithful efforts

among the campus tribes. Articles and books should be written about these missionary efforts, and local congregations and even larger audiences should be privy to the captivating testimonies. God may use those stories to call other people to join this noble missions effort – whether they are called to pray, to give, or to go.

we need a Hero

More than we need all these other heroes, we need one Hero to touch the campus tribes and to call people into this effort. While this book focuses on the means we might use to impact the collegians, there is no mistaking: Unless the Lord builds this house, we labor in vain.

William Carey's suggestions for international missions included an urgent call to prayer, and it would be silly not to do the same here. Just as Christians passionately pray for foreign fields that many of us will

never see, so we should pray earnestly for these mission fields God has placed immediately before us.

We should pray that God would rend His heavens and come down, that His Kingdom would come, and that His will would be done among the campus tribes. We should pray for purity and wisdom and cooperation among the workers and the Christian students who serve as indigenous leaders among their peers. We should pray for revival on campuses, whether it comes quickly or through God's steady work over time. We should pray for strength to serve and words to speak and love to give. We should pray for Christian adults to rise up and welcome college students, offering both warmth and wisdom. We should pray for protection from error and ineffectiveness and a willingness to sacrifice for the collegiate cause. We should pray for unsaved students to meet Christ and for

saved students to go deeper. We should pray for professors, administrators, students' families, and their classmates.

The future of American Christianity hinges on the future of American Christians. Many of those – and others who will soon come to Christ – are in college right now. Let us pray to the Lord of the Harvest to send laborers into His harvest field.

Part Two: Strategies

a College Student Plan in each church

One of the simplest and yet most revolutionary changes we need involves every church simply making a specific *plan* for the college students it encounters.

Forming a “College Student Plan” means making a prayed-through, thought-through, purposeful decision about how college students fit within a particular

church. Through this process, leaders answer key questions:

- ⊕ When college students are present, how should they connect to the community of our church?
- ⊕ How do our present structures (small groups, service opportunities, leadership opportunities, etc.) apply in their case?
- ⊕ How can we really serve college students best?

The Plan that results can take a multitude of forms. But it is shocking that an enormous number of churches appear to have absolutely *no* Plan in place, despite occasional or regular contact with college-age people.

The need to have a College Student Plan does not only apply to churches near large public universities or other major schools.

Thousands of churches are close enough to college campuses that local students sometimes darken their door, and churches must plan for those visitors. But the necessity of a College Student Plan extends even further; it applies to *every* church that has a youth ministry! Why? Because any church that had seniors in its youth group last year has college-age people in its family this year.

Perhaps some churches feel they must either have a full college ministry program or nothing at all. But this is simply not the case. In fact, if I began my trip with the



Park Street Church in Boston has long partnered with Campus Crusade as its primary college ministry conduit. By so doing, the church is able to impact about two dozen area schools. And Real Life (the Campus Crusade “movement” in the Boston area) receives the support of a major area church, a large investment for its ministry budget, and office and housing space.

faint illusion that every church should build a full-fledged college ministry program, my research quickly cured me of that notion. Not every church needs a standard, holistic college ministry, and obviously not every church will be able to support that level of investment. In fact, our Christian cause among campus tribes would actually be damaged if *every* local church began competing for the students on the campus.

But every church that encounters college students must plan for that encounter.

the many possibilities for a profitable Plan

Of course, the specifics of this Plan will vary between churches, as differences in context, resources, capabilities, location, and other factors are taken into account. Like any mission, the college ministry should fit both the recipients of the ministry and the “sending organization.” So the College Student Plan should be formed

through lots of prayer and a deep consideration of both the sponsoring group (in this case, the church) and the students being reached. This may require several weeks or months of exploration.

Some churches will, after much prayer and consideration of their context, create a classic, full-fledged college ministry that provides students with discipleship, fellowship, and ministry opportunities. While this will require a strong investment and the patience to let the ministry grow, that church could see an effective campus mission impact their community for decades.

In other cases, the College Student Plan will be less complex – but it should still be specific. For instance, some churches may choose to incorporate college students into present structures, perhaps by starting a collegiate small group or class. While this option may not actively seek to reach a col-

lege campus, the college students who attend the church will truly be connected.



Prayer rooms have become a major trend among campus tribes. The rooms are often set up for 24/7 access, and students are encouraged to pray about many local issues and world issues – including those presented in the various requests placed around the room. This room among the Vandal tribe at the University of Idaho was hosted by InterVarsity Christian Fellowship.

Other churches may find that their college students are best served in combination with another ministry, like youth ministry, young adult ministry, or the regular adult programs in the church. This can allow for

helpful sharing of space and resources, and in smaller churches, this can help achieve a more beneficial group size. However, this option should be undertaken with care. College students should still be encouraged to seek discipleship relevant to their particular circumstances, whether in the church or elsewhere.

Still other churches' best College Student Plan will involve specific partnership with other local churches, campus-based ministries, or a local Christian college. Together, the cooperating ministries could potentially provide holistic discipleship while also having the opportunity for outreach. In my opinion, this is one of the ideas with the most promise for hundreds of churches who lack effective college ministry – or who would simply like to reach college students even better than they presently do. By partnering, ministries share the load; but more importantly, students receive the commu-

nity and discipleship they need.

Meanwhile, some churches may decide that college students will be best served by being directed to another church altogether. If a church is unwilling or unable to provide students with the ministry they need at this critical time (or to partner with others to do so), it is imperative that their College Student Plan involve pointing students to what they need.

This principle includes a church's "home-grown" college students. If a church can not make room for students who choose to at-



Under the leadership of Mark Dever, Capitol Hill Baptist Church has become influential for many churches in the area of local church health. CHBC has also strategically partnered with a campus-based college ministry, InterVarsity, to help its college students receive relevant, effective impact in the D.C. area.

tend a local college (or for those who return home during school breaks), then students should be encouraged to find another church that will meet these needs at this vital time. In fact, this might need to happen while those individuals are still in high school, so they can assimilate into the new congregation long before high school graduation. It is truly a loving church that recognizes its limitations and helps students find the best discipleship for this hinge moment of their lives.

For many churches, the College Student Plan will also need to take into account drastic seasonal differences, as students leave town for school, come to town to attend a local school, or both. Some churches' main focus will be students who graduated from their youth group; other churches will mostly minister to students who didn't grow up in that church. (Many churches will encounter – and therefore need to arrange for

– both of those groups.) Some churches may even be called to focus on a particular type of student or a particular segment of the campus.

Ultimately, hundreds of churches will develop an altogether *unique* College Student Plan for their situation, as God lends His brilliance for this very important mission work. I am excited to watch as new, creative models arise when churches become desperate to reach this generation. There can be as many College Student Plans as there are churches.

But what shouldn't happen anymore is thousands of Christian students finding *no* Plan in place in the home churches in which they grew up. Nor should students find themselves ignored by the churches they happen to visit during the college years. Each of these churches must do something, with purpose and precision, to

make room for the people from the campus tribes.

The Mill is the well-known college and young adult ministry of New Life Church in Colorado Springs. Their weekly Friday meeting is attended by several hundred, and they recently began a second version of The Mill at a church in the Denver area.



more strategy in other branches

I would also encourage this same sort of methodical, purposeful plan-making to occur within campus-based ministries and Christian colleges. In many of these college ministries, there is a strong bias toward ready-made programs that have been used

elsewhere. While these successful templates might be a helpful place to start the planning process, students will only be best served when campus mission efforts are tailor-made for the tribes they are reaching. Contextualization is key. This doesn't mean new ministries have to be untrue to their sponsoring organizations or fully "start from scratch" at each campus. But *form* should always serve *function*, not the other way around. Oftentimes that will require creative adjustments to the usual template.

Wise contextualization will also reveal that not every campus is right for every national ministry. Some parachurch and denominational organizations seem to assert a "manifest destiny" to place a ministry at every available college campus. However, I would urge all groups to consider planting ministries only where their work is truly needed. As with international missions, the cause of Christ must trump the cause of a

single group.



Tom Short, preaching here among the Cougars tribe of Columbus State Community College, is one of a handful of widely traveled campus evangelists.

making room for students elsewhere, too

This same sort of planning could take place at any level of ministry, within any group working for Christ's cause. Denominations, of course, should consider what role college ministry presently plays – and could play – throughout their churches and on campuses. (It is disappointing that many Evan-

gical denominations have little or no resourcing in this area.)

Other networks of cooperating Christians, from church-planting groups to missions-sending organizations to theological affinity networks, should consider whether they are including college student strategies as fully as they should be. Not all groups will need to create an altogether new collegiate program, but they might have opportunities to partner with or complement other student discipleship.

Further, parachurch ministries not already involved in college ministry could consider instituting special efforts to involve college students. How valuable would biblical financial principles be on a college campus, for example? Or what inroads might Christian media companies make with a collegiate strategy?

When we recognize that we have the chance to impact people at a true life-crux during the college years, it makes sense to aim to do so. Connecting college students with a denomination, parachurch ministry, resources, and anything else *now* might connect them for a *lifetime*.

there is no best strategy

The collegiate strategies we all put in place will vary widely in appearance, formality, investment, breadth of ministry, and size. There is no universally applicable, step-by-step approach to building a college ministry, whether in a church or on a campus. Every group must discover independently the very best way to impact students in their context, and anyone claiming to have “the” method for college ministry is wrong. (I have, sadly, run into several people who come close to claiming that very thing.)

Further, each college ministry can only do

what God allows it to do; the *amount* of ministry is not the key issue for this point. But it is vital that our efforts, however small or large they might be, reflect a missiological understanding and a clear respect for the people we seek to reach.

taking the strategy-first approach

While we should end up with different models and methods based on our varying contexts, I would argue that most new college ministries should actually *begin* with the same focus. For any group hoping to start a new effort among college students (whether large-scale or with more focused aims), one missionary practice worth heeding is attending to strategy *before* building those ministries.

Oftentimes a collegiate effort – in any of the three branches of college ministry – begins with some sort of leader assigned simply to “grow the ministry.” Yet as I noted earlier,

this “just try something” approach often leads to real difficulties establishing truly solid college ministry work. In other cases, ministries begin their work on campus by copying the strategies received from other contexts. This, too, does not hold much promise for helping a campus mission reach its *full* potential.



Not all college ministries are found in sprawling, house-sized buildings. Some, like the Lutheran Center’s Chapel on the Ave. near the University of Washington, use less traditional environments. Of course, most campus missions have no dedicated facility at all.

What if instead we spent the first several months of every new college ministry *developing our strategy*? This is how many missions efforts begin their work among new people groups. Why shouldn’t we take the same approach?

Depending on the situation and the resources available, a special “College Ministry Strategist,” a team of volunteers, a passionate layperson, or the eventual college minister could strategize the new campus mission. They would spend the time needed to get to know the mission field, its students, and the community. They would also get to know the identity and desires of the overseeing organization and their hopes for the mission. The strategist(s) would visit present college ministries, spend lots of time on campus, interview leaders and students, study, collaborate, and pray continually.

If the ministry already had students present, they would be welcomed and ministered to purposefully. But the focus can't be on recruiting (recruit to what?) or building the ministry (since the blueprint isn't in place yet). The focus at the front end would be seeking wisdom, even if that led to a

brand new model for college ministry in this place – or to a decision not to create a new ministry at all. The question should always be, “What is God’s brilliant plan for *this* ministry in *this* place at *this* time?”

In the end, the “sending organization” and the strategists would arrive at what they believed to be the best possible ministry to students.

A strategy-first approach would have numerous benefits.

In the case of a church, the congregation would now

fully own this “mission to the campus,” regardless of present or future leadership. For a campus-based ministry or Christian col-



Sometimes campus tribes choose to change their names for various social reasons. Arkansas State recently changed their identity from the Indians to the Red Wolves.

lege, the mission would fit the campus better than any preconceived plan or replicated methodology ever could. And in many cases, this might be the only way to ensure there is time to form strategy at all; many college ministers do not have the time or resources needed to build *and* plan a ministry simultaneously. But by first discovering the new ministry's particular role in the campus tribe, a mission would be blueprinted to impact students for decades to come.

Across the world, regional and local missions strategists examine the best ways to reach foreign tribes. Already, some denominational and parachurch workers fulfill this role within college ministry. Ultimately, local ministries may find volunteers to strategize their missions, or they may even hire experienced ministers as short-term College Ministry Strategists. But however we do it, there is much to be gained by separating

the *building* of a college ministry from the initial *planning* of the mission.



Like many California campus tribes, the Tritons of the University of California San Diego enjoy a beautiful and moderate climate, have a high Asian population, draw many surfers, and use the Quarter System schedule. Differences among campus tribes in widely diverse aspects like these allow for unique experiences and call for unique ministry efforts.

we must fix the transitions

Finally, one more area in great need of better, more strategic planning is the area of Transitions. As I've said before, we have great difficulty helping Christian kids transition from high school to college, as well as helping Christian collegians transition to

the young adult world following graduation. Fixing the transitions on both sides of the college years should receive an enormous amount of Christian attention and effort.

Regarding the transition from high school, college ministers must work with youth ministers, parents, and others to help end this difficulty. While college ministers do not have the primary responsibility for helping youth transition successfully, this is certainly a job large enough for an “all hands on deck” approach. Further, college ministers do have wisdom about what students face when they arrive on campus – information critical to helping prepare them for that time.

College ministers *should* feel most responsible for helping their students successfully transition to young adult life. Many college students are in a very unique environment

during their years in school, so college ministry needs to be rather specialized to be relevant. Yet the very act of providing this tailored ministry means students can end up ill-prepared for Christian spirituality in the “real world.”

While I would not argue that we should decrease our efforts at college-specific ministry, we must begin viewing “real world” spiritual training as part and parcel of our discipleship of college students. Not only should teaching and small-group discipleship be devoted to this preparation, but we should work to develop resources to aid this transition. Students’ ability to prosper – and to *continue* to grow – in the “young adult” years must become one of the main criteria for evaluating college ministries.

Part Three: Collaboration

let’s get together

As may have been evident throughout this

book (or by the fact that I spent a year meeting with hundreds of college ministers), I have a deep belief that college ministry thinkers should connect and *collaborate*. The development of any ministry field depends on its ability to stand on the shoulders of former leaders – while also learning from those presently discovering better methods. Yet as I discussed in Chapter 3, collaboration is sorely lacking in the field of college ministry.



Several denominations and other fellowships do have annual training and collaboration opportunities. Here, college ministers from some Church of Christ ministries meet for the Campus Ministry United workshop at Harding University in July 2008.

One immediate solution would be the production of printed materials discussing college ministry. It is a bit surprising that college ministry texts are lacking even among those publishers with roots in the world of college ministry. We need books touting specific methods and stances, introductory primers, and even compilations of helpful articles and past works. Perhaps periodicals – even academic journals – would help just as much as books. Even additional blogs or internet “knowledge bases” covering college ministry could help enormously.

Likewise, conferences and other forums designed to allow for heavy collaboration would be helpful. While present college ministry conferences do allow for some of this, many college ministers report either difficulty attending these forums or difficulty finding conferences that provide the help they need.

Of course, individual ministers also need to make far greater efforts to collaborate with each other, both through one-on-one connections and by using the resources mentioned above. We who serve in this pioneering area must understand the great benefits of collaboration, and we must be willing to invest resources *and time* to that end.

connecting the dots, nationwide

Another “next step” for better collaboration is initiating better communication among those ministries that are *already* connected. Oftentimes college ministers connected by denomination, affinity, or other relationship still have little idea of what is happening within their own ranks. Surprisingly, I regularly have to share with ministers about activities within their own circles!

So one of my *top* suggestions for any national network is to facilitate connections between its own college ministries. This

sort of networking would have benefits far beyond only sharing wisdom. For instance, a well-designed network would easily pay for any original investment; better communication pathways would lead to greater effectiveness, better attendance at events, greater use of opportunities provided by the national group, increased purchasing of resources, lasting connections with college students themselves, and so on.

Meanwhile, likeminded ministries not presently connected within a denomination or similar network might find value in joining forces for college ministry. Just as the specialized demands in international missions have led to special partnerships, college ministries could find value in that kind of cooperation. College ministry is a pioneering effort, and there is much to be gained by walking forward together.



A Sunday night “Vespers” service is hosted by the Royals of Bethel University, but it apparently draws college-age individuals from throughout the Twin Cities and beyond. “City-wide” studies sometimes grow organically, as ministry activities held for one group draw individuals from beyond their own organizations.

collaboration across lines

We should also be willing to forge collaboration across the lines of geography, denomination, branches of college ministry, and other divisions. In my interactions with college ministers, I have had numerous occasions when I realized that what I was learning would be beneficial to other ministers in quite different situations. Both in our similarities and our differences, there is much to be gained by collaborating across

our usual lines.

It is disappointing how little is known by college ministers about the practices and principles of those outside of our own circles or regions. I discovered during the trip that *many* highly successful and college ministries remain widely unknown, even if they draw hundreds or thousands of students. I have also commonly encountered college ministry assertions, theories, and stances that do not take into consideration the entire national collegiate ministry scene. Certainly, even after working for eight years in college ministry prior to my trip, several of my own notions had to be “adjusted” once I saw the true national picture. With greater collaboration, the breadth of activity and contexts would be made more familiar to the whole field.

thought, theology, dialogue, debate

From a national standpoint, taking college

ministry seriously should also mean approaching it with the same kind of theoretical rigor that we have learned to do with missions. This will involve delving together into the theology, ministry theory, research, and other academic concerns connected to our field. If *any* ministry demands this sort of intelligent discussion, it is work on college and university campuses.

Presently, it is rare to find this sort of academic focus applied to college ministry-related topics, but I hope that is changing. For instance, I have heard clear academic approaches reflected in interviews with chaplains at Christian colleges. Meanwhile, the Fuller Youth Institute and Talbot Seminary's Christian Education Journal have both published college ministry-related studies in recent years. Some seminary professors, too, are bringing this approach to college ministry – and more seminaries are joining this cause. There may be a day soon

when seminaries not presenting a college ministry-related emphasis are in the minority.

We also need much more college ministry-related *research*. My own research during the yearlong trip was purposely anecdotal, not statistical. But we lack both kinds of research, which would help us evaluate ministry effectiveness, better understand students, better understand the national scene, and learn from each other. Even *historical* research of college ministry organizations, situations, and leaders would inform and encourage today's college ministers. We should also make use of the available secular research that sheds light on college students and the state of religion on campuses. Just as all these types of research have improved international missions efforts, a strong research component will help drive health and growth in college ministry.



Many major universities have multiple college ministry buildings situated on or very near campus, usually housing different denominational ministries. This Baptist Collegiate Ministries structure, located among the Tiger tribe of Memphis, allows for highly accessible meetings, ministry events, and office space.

students, church, and the great tension

After examining the national situation, it's clear to me that one of the most important areas in need of this kind of rigorous inquiry is the issue of college students' local church involvement. There is no greater tension within the field of college ministry than the tension that surrounds this concern. While it is natural for college ministers to have differing opinions on how stu-

dents should connect to local churches, the present *tension* leads to disunity, unnecessary competition, and duplication of ministry efforts.

I believe the main reason this tension continues is that few college ministers have a clear grasp on the situation itself – regardless of whether they are church-based, campus-based, or serving at Christian colleges. As far as I can tell, many college ministers have not spent much time developing their own beliefs about the biblical rules and principles in this area. And a large number of ministers seem misinformed about the purposes, methods, and theology held by ministers in the other branches of college ministry. (This was clear as I talked to many in all three branches.) Thus in many cases the tension is caused more by these problems than by any actual theological conflict.



The Purple Door serves the Huskies of the University of Washington by housing students in a “learning community.” The building, itself a former fraternity house, is nestled among the many fraternity and sorority houses directly across from the school. Other formal and informal discipleship communities can be found at various campuses around the country.

So this is one area in which college ministers need rigorous study to better understand God’s truth. We need dialogue to understand each other – and even well-reasoned debate. As college ministers work through these issues, this will ground their teaching and shepherding of students in truth rather than experience. And it will

better enable ministries to complement and cooperate with each other.

rigor in every area

But the issue of church involvement is simply one example of the need to rigorously contemplate issues of student discipleship, college ministry practice, and theology.

Whether a pressing issue is thorny or just trendy, serious study and collaboration are needed. Of course, on some issues, mature Christians will arrive at different conclusions. But *everyone* will grow stronger in ministry as well-reasoned arguments on many topics are presented, debated, adjusted, and improved. And college students will ultimately benefit.

When those uniquely suited to this kind of examination lend their gifts to the field of college ministry (or rise up from within the ranks), this area will see the same sort of advances that missions has seen from the

same pursuit. Thoughtful discussion can ultimately produce great *practical* value by solving actual problems and bringing us ever closer to the ideals God has for our mission work.



Organizational fairs present an opportunity and a challenge for Christian ministries on secular campuses. These gatherings may be the best opportunity to recruit new students, but a ministry is often competing for students' attention with hundreds of other organizations, including other college ministries. Here, InterVarsity presents itself to the Flames of the University of Illinois at Chicago.

Part Four: New Models

there are many different ways to do this

As suggested throughout this book, a

greater creativity and flexibility is needed in college ministry. Ultimately, a multitude of new models may be necessary to see increased effectiveness – in church-based settings, campus-based settings, and even at Christian colleges. And some of those models may blur the lines between college ministry's branches altogether!

I have had the immense privilege to see some models and ideas for college ministry that already depart from the norms. These include:

- ⊕ Campus-based and church-based ministries tightly partnering
- ⊕ Local networks helping multiple college ministries complement each other
- ⊕ Niche-based college ministries focused on reaching a particular segment of the campus population (future educators, international students, athletes, fraternities, etc.)
- ⊕ Complementary ministries focused on

particular areas of student discipleship (i.e., leadership training, missions mobilization, prayer rooms, study libraries, or one-on-one discipleship)

- ⊕ Coalition for Christian Outreach, a national college ministry that empowers ministers to target a different niche in every city they reach – and always partners with another local ministry
- ⊕ “Metro” ministries that focus on a geographical region and multiple campuses rather than a single campus
- ⊕ Adjustment of traditional church forms (Sunday school classes, worship services, etc.) to better correspond with students’ needs and schedules
- ⊕ Collegiate churches organized primarily to reach college students
- ⊕ Campus Outreach, a national campus-based ministry that “franchises” its ministries into the oversight of local churches
- ⊕ Christian housing ministries located

near (or on) college campuses

Just because a model is non-traditional doesn't mean it is effective or healthy, but I do appreciate that some leaders have tried structures they felt fit their situation better than standard forms. We will need enormous creativity in creating new models to best reach college students. Just as with international mission work, there are major variations in the ways each tribe will best be reached. (In fact, we may even find that some of the ministry models used overseas have helpful parallels among campus tribes, too.)

We will also need brand new models to reach a changing student climate. Not only do worldview shifts affect our work, but even shifts in higher education may require changes. For example, as colleges are developing new ways to deliver education to students online, we may need to adjust our

own efforts. Attendance at community colleges appears to be a growing trend; new models and methods should take that trend into account. Other changes will likewise require our flexibility and creativity.



Blackhawk Church in Madison has chosen to minister widely to the Badger tribe without having a traditional, full-fledged college ministry. They point students to campus-based ministries like InterVarsity and Campus Crusade while organizing regular, special ministry efforts. These activities include fellowship events at the church, teaching series on campus, a collegiate leadership team, and a Finals study day each semester with free food and shuttles from campus. This Study Day in May 2008 drew around 1100 students.

partnership

Readers might notice that some of the models listed above suggest some sort of *partnership*. There are superb opportunities

for various Christian groups to choose to partner together to reach campuses, rather than striving only to create a larger number of individual ministries. For multiple reasons, a smaller number of partnered ministry efforts may fare better and impact more effectively than a greater number of standard college ministries.

This sort of partnership seems to have been the origin of many denominational ministries we see today; groups of churches joined forces to reach students, and to reach them better than they could as individual congregations. Some seem to have lost that mentality, and that is hurting our efforts to reach campus tribes.

Among church-based ministries, I realize that some of the biggest fans of local church autonomy might squirm at talk of “partnership” with other churches or with campus-based ministries. Meanwhile, cam-

pus-based groups with strong ministry identities and persistent methodologies might balk at joining forces with churches or other campus groups. And Christian colleges might not immediately recognize any value in letting “outsiders” help impact their students.

But it is important for us to remember that *this model parallels what we often do in missions*. Even the most diehard proponents of independent ministry often join forces at the international level, knowing that mission work often happens better with cooperation. In *that* missions arena, partnership aids specialization, training, financing, growth, and administration. Why not in collegiate missions?

As with any model, this kind of partnership is not the best plan for all college ministry endeavors. The ultimate concern of any college ministry is determining God’s best plan

to reach *this* context at this time. But partnership, like every other model, should be seen as an option whenever possible.



The Varsity is a classic and famous diner hangout serving the Yellow Jacket tribe and other citizens of Atlanta since 1928.

smaller pockets for deeper impact

Through partnership, individual groups have a chance to get “bigger” together. But through niche ministry, groups have a chance to target *smaller* pockets of students

– with the hope of better impact among these student segments.

As noted in the list earlier, some ministries have begun targeting campus niches. Many of these niche ministries take this approach from the start, when an individual or group is called to a segment of students. But niche ministry can also come about within more classic college ministry structures, as those ministries gain inroads with particular groups of students. So even though an established college ministry might not abandon its broader work on campus, they can still take advantage of any niche possibilities God might reveal.

Just as partnership holds much potential, niche ministry could be another one of the greatest “growth markets” for college ministry. I would love to see what would happen if numerous churches, campus-based ministries, and even individuals “adopted” seg-

ments of campuses they felt called to reach. Reaching campuses more broadly *and* more deeply may mean reaching students more *specifically*.

Of course this practice, too, is paralleled within foreign mission work, as missionaries sometimes seek to reach segments of populations or to reach cultures through very specific avenues.

avoiding wheel-reinvention

A college ministry model similar to niche ministry is complementary ministry, in which ministries try to complement other student impact taking place.

Duplication of ministry efforts seems to be rather commonplace at many college campuses. In fact, Christian students often work their way from ministry to ministry within a given week, receiving the same sort of discipleship from multiple ministries! So

while college ministry *activity* increases, there will often be no net increase in either the total number of students reached or the depth of impact.

But during my yearlong trek, I began noticing a phrase used by several of the ministers I interviewed; they often expressed a hope of “not reinventing the wheel” as they ministered to students. In other words, they desired to supplement and complement what others were doing, instead of simply duplicating ministry efforts. This was exciting to hear.

Some college ministry efforts will best help reach campuses by approaching those mission fields with an eye toward *complementing*. In fact, a fully complementary college ministry may focus on only one area of students’ discipleship, allowing for specialized impact in an important area. Other ministries may not limit their work to this extent,

but complementing may still be a key component of their structures and activities.

For example, complementing has been the aim of the Navigators, one of the best-known but least-visible national college ministries. Local Navigators campus ministries often remain unseen to the casual observer, because their focus, one-on-one discipling, is neither crowd-drawing nor event-driven. But for decades, Navigators members have discipled students and trained students to disciple others, a practice that is one of the most effective means of impacting collegians. But this discipleship often *complements* the spiritual impact those same students receive from other college ministries on campus.

Likewise, some large, city-wide Bible studies seem to have worked well because they *complemented* students' impact from other ministries. By concentrating only on what

they could do best – perhaps providing a strong worship experience and solid, foundational teaching – these studies freed other ministries to connect students to deeper discipleship, service opportunities, and leadership. In the same way, efforts to organize service projects, to help students join international missions efforts, to emphasize prayer campus-wide, to bring major speakers to campus, or to perform other college ministry activities may sometimes be accomplished best by single-focus, complementary college ministries.

This doesn't mean there won't be room for traditional, large-scale college ministries. It simply means that any ministry should consider the entire Christian mission taking place on the campus already. As we get to know our context, we may find that working in concert with others will be best.

so there you have it

So there you have it: the first inquiry following my exploration of the campus tribes.

There will be much more to come, and there are ways you can be involved in helping us all reach the campus tribes better.

(Be sure to check out the back pages for some of that info.)

I hope that this book has provided an impetus to value college ministry more and to think about it in new ways. And I hope this chapter's "road map" has provided ideas that either call us to action or lead to even better ideas. It would be phenomenal not only for some of these ideas to be used to better reach campuses, but also for people to take many of these ideas and improve on them!

But my biggest encouragement is simple: *Let's quit sitting still!* Whether through heroes, plans, collaboration, or new models,

American Christians must work hard to develop the field of college ministry. We should indeed expect great things from the God who loves these college students even more than we do. And we should attempt great things for the God who has placed these mission fields before us.

The campus tribes are waiting.



Thanks for reading this chapter of *Reaching the Campus Tribes*!

To read the earlier chapters of the book, go to reachingthecampustribes.com/mobile. Those chapters describe how I ended up on a yearlong road trip, specifics I learned about the present field of college ministry, what happens when we approach this as missions, and why college ministry matters!

The next pages contain important info from the back pages of the full book.

The Back Pages

About the author. Benson Hines started serving college students in 1999, while attending Texas A&M University, and he has been involved in college ministry ever since. Following the research trip (August 2007 to August 2008), he continues to research college ministry, meets regularly with college ministry leaders, speaks to college ministers and college students, and blogs daily about college ministry at www.exploringcollegeministry.com. Ben received his M.A. in Theology from seminary.

The book site. Updates, new versions, corrections, and other goodies are located at the book site: www.reachingthecampustribes.com.

Acknowledgments. This trip could not have been accomplished without the hundreds of amazing people who gave their time, hospitality, finances, and wisdom during the trip. A special thanks also goes to the several “editors” who gave great suggestions and helped this book become much better. And I praise the God who gave me an amazing adventure and the opportunity to see my heroes in action as they labor among the beautiful campus

tribes.

Provision. I took the yearlong research trip believing God was calling me to it, and that call has been confirmed as I've seen the impact this kind of exploration has for college ministers and for college ministry as a field. But I'm still watching to see how God wants to provide the money the trip required. Finances will also help me continue to serve college ministers in other ways. If this book or my research is helpful to you, donations are always appreciated! Or, if you know someone who might like to invest in the future of college ministry in this way, please consider passing on this need. (All my contact information can be [found here](#).)

Why an ebook? Why did I put this in a free ebook rather than talking to publishers about a standard book? Three considerations were key: availability, time, and creativity. I wanted this book to be as widely available as possible, so if cost might be a barrier to it spreading among Christians... then free is better! Also, I wanted to pass along these findings as soon as possible, and a self-published format allowed for that. Finally, I loved the opportunity to present pictures and

other contents that might not make it into a traditional, “formal” book.

I do hope to publish (in standard book form) other findings and adventures. If you’d like to help that happen, one of the best things you can do is share this ebook with others! As more people value college ministry and want to learn about it (especially those outside of college ministry – like pastors and other Christian leaders), we’ll *all* have more chances to share our ideas.

Joining the cause. The best way to receive updates is to join the “[Exploring College Ministry with Benson](#)” Facebook Group. If you need to receive updates via email instead, let me know and I’ll add you to the list! Either way, I won’t spam you... you’ll get *occasional* updates as this project continues, as I take more trips, and when there are ways you might be able to join in! We’re all in this together, and we really can change the world as we help college ministry become better valued and better practiced.

Specific help. Let me know if there’s any way I can help as you think about college ministry in your context. I’m always glad to answer questions

or point people to resources. Be sure to check out my daily blog about college ministry, too, at exploringcollegeministry.com. Certainly, I'm also open to paid opportunities; if you'd like to ask about speaking, consulting, ministry work, or other jobs, all my contact information can be [found here](#).

The lurking X. At nearly every campus, I took a picture of a red "X" (as in, "X marks the spot.") A few of those pictures ended up in this book, and the particularly observant might find them! Through the year, the X also got filled with stickers from the various campuses, so be sure to check it out sometime. It's pretty neat.

The facts. Clearly, college ministries and campuses themselves can change rapidly. All facts in this book are included as reported to me during the trip (between August 2007 and August 2008). Please let me know about any inaccuracies. All photos were taken by Benson Hines on the year-long trip. A complete itinerary of the trip's activities can be found at www.exploringcollegeministry.com/itinerary.

The cover and final page tribal photos. The

cover pictures are from the following tribes, beginning with the top left: Row 1—University of Wyoming, Stanford University, Judson University, University of Oregon; Row 2—Saint Louis University, Furman University (larger middle picture), Houston Baptist University; Row 3—Vanderbilt University, University of California Berkeley; Row 4—University of Kentucky, Connecticut College, Multnomah University, University of California Santa Cruz.

The pictures on the final page, beginning at top left: Row 1—University of Illinois, Oral Robert University, New Mexico State University, University of Colorado; Row 2—Reed College, Colorado School of Mines, Indiana University, Pepperdine University; Row 3—University of Nebraska, University of Louisville, Minnesota State University Moorhead, California Baptist University; Row 4—George Washington University, Furman University, University of Arizona, Baylor University.