

Connecting with and Ministering to your School's Administration and Faculty **by Scott Smith, BCM Director, Lander University, Greenwood, SC**

“Understand you minister to the whole college community and not just students!” That sounds like a simple statement, but I must confess that when I began on our campus, I missed seeing the whole campus as a mission field. I was young when I arrived on our campus ready to reach every student on this state university campus. While the priority is to reach every student with the Gospel, I missed somewhere that there were faculty, staff, coaches, and administrators that needed ministry and the Gospel. When the administration and faculty became a priority for our ministry, the Lord graciously allowed even more opportunities. How do you minister effectively to faculty, administration, and staff?

Make Your Administrators a Priority

For the last 30 years, every administration leader on our campus has gotten a report, a newsletter, and a personal letter twice a year from our ministry. Many do not respond, and that is okay, but after a couple of years I began getting responses – overhearing statistics sent from those newsletters or events that were in the newsletter mentioned on campus. Some thanked me for the personal letter sent to them thanking them for their work on the campus. I was invited to things that I had not been invited to. When students would wear BCM shirts on campus, administrators would ask them about their involvement. I began to make it a priority to walk around campus and visit in offices with administrative assistants and other staff (sometimes I would have food to share) and form a connection with them. I began a ministry of presence. Making sure to visit not only students on campus, but also faculty and staff. All of this did not happen quickly. Our university has only had twelve presidents in its long history (150 years) and our ministry has been here through the last four presidents. After several years of consistently investing and connecting with faculty, administration, and staff, one of our past presidents made a request one day that shocked me. He was asked to speak at a church, and he had no idea how to do this (he was Catholic) so he asked me to help him write a sermon. I did help him write the sermon and then I went with him to church where he spoke. That one experience began a friendship that lasted until his death.

Set Up “Professional” Meetings with Administrators

Administrators are accustomed to meeting with groups on campus. So, I began requesting these meetings. You can do this too. It helps build bridges. As you go, understand these are professional meetings to administrators. Dress nicely for these meetings (no tennis shoes or jeans). Do not go in with your agenda during these meetings. Talk with the administrator about their needs AND keep anything they tell you in confidence. This will take more than 1 or 2 meetings to establish a relationship. I set up at least two formal appointments a year with Vice Presidents, and our President. I ask the administrative assistant for 30 minutes (an hour is sometimes too much time). I usually ask for the appointments for Summer and Christmas time (these are less busy times for VPs and President). I learn so very much about our administrator's during these meetings. Usually, I also get information about future campus events and plans that might affect our ministry. Now that I have been doing this so long, most will ask me what they can do to help our ministry. I have been asked to do some really great things on campus because of these meetings such as deliver dedication prayer for new buildings, serve on school committees, be a part of Open House to talk with prospective students and their parents, deliver an invocation at graduation, hold a memorial service for students that have died and faculty and

staff that have died. Our university sees our ministry as having a positive influence on students (and helps in retaining students). I have asked our last two university Presidents to write a brief letter when they are leaving to the new incoming President telling them of the special relationship our ministry has with the University. I simply asked them to help give us an open door to connect with the new President. This has been so extremely helpful in our ministry when new Presidents have arrived on our campus.

Be a good neighbor

While it is sometimes inconvenient or slow, always follow the university rules. We are strict with that. Our university knows that we want to work within the university structure. We are very adamant about being seen as a team player. It may slow us down occasionally, but it also opens many more doors and helps us have a great reputation on campus. We show up to things that the administration does such as: awards ceremonies, campus meetings, events that administrator's lead, the President's State of the University address, special causes that we can agree on, etc. This university sees us very visible and involved in all facets of this university.

This summer, take some time to send a simple note or newsletter, set up a few meetings and start getting to know your faculty, staff and administration. They are people who need the Gospel and ministry, and they also may be your next advocate and friend on campus.