

Yellowstone Presbytery Mission Statement for Ministry in Higher Education

Introduction

Ministry in Higher Education is a partnership among the Synod of the Rocky Mountains, the Presbytery of the Yellowstone and its congregations, and higher education ministries within Presbytery's bounds.

The congregations of the Presbytery of Yellowstone are involved in higher education ministries through:

- Providing higher education ministry,
- Working cooperatively in ecumenical settings to provide higher education ministries,
- Nurturing its college students and helping them connect to higher education ministries.

The Presbytery is annually requested by the Synod of the Rocky Mountains to review the grant proposals and validate the ministries from the higher education ministries within our bounds.

The Yellowstone Presbytery is the governing body of the PCUSA that supports and refers students to the various ministries to higher education within our bounds to which we relate. Current Presbytery financial support is substantial (\$18,496 in 2007), as is the funding, though scheduled to decrease, from the Synod (\$15,750 in 2007).

This document shall outline the Presbytery vision for campus ministry and the ways in which we will support and communicate with the higher education ministries within our bounds. This document shall serve as a guide to the Presbytery for assessing campus ministries that apply for Synod grants or receive Presbytery funding.

Part I: Historical Overview (Available on request.)

Part II: Foundations for Ministry

Our history, mission, and ministry in higher education stand firmly rooted in the Reformed Tradition. From the very beginning, the Reformed faith has valued the life of the mind for faith, recognizing the challenges and gifts of learning for the church. Our ministry must be involved with the entire campus community: faculty, administration, and students, as well as the political and cultural systems that undergird this work.

Specific to our ministry to students is a call to:

- Honor students as full partners in the church's mission to develop communities of discipleship, compassion, hospitality, love and grace;
- Carry out the call of the Christian community to tell the good news of the gospel;
- Help people know the teachings of Christ, the Christian Scriptures, and how to live them with joy and commitment;
- Provide mission opportunities;

- Strengthen students, those aligned with as well as those alienated from the church, through Christian fellowship and ties with the whole household of God;
- Speak prophetically with the “Good News” in the intellectual and campus settings.
- Encourage the Holy Spirit’s liberating and transforming power.

Part III: Today’s Ministry

From a log house to a log-on password, the church has kept this mission alive by adapting new strategies for outreach to successive generations of students. Ministry on today’s campus is as challenging and diverse as any other ministry context. This challenge needs to be met by the resources of our congregations and institutions united in mission. There is a connectional relationship between every congregation of the Presbytery and those campus ministries supported by Presbytery and Synod. This relationship is made manifest:

- When a person from a congregation attends a college with a Presbyterian affiliated ministry;
- When professors, administrators, and college staff attend and join our churches; and
- Where congregations are located near a college campus.
- Most often when our campus pastors develop relationships with and mentor students.

The challenge of ministry on the campus, along with our historic and connectional relationship to higher education, calls for ministry partnerships in the name of Jesus Christ. This Christian ministry, to which we bring the reformed heritage, is both ecumenical and congregational. We work with ecumenical partners in order to affirm the unity and ministry of the one holy catholic apostolic church, with the goal of carrying out the call of ministry to students. Congregational partnership is affirmed as individual congregations develop their own campus ministry and as they partner with and support ecumenical campus ministries. We affirm that all campus ministries, in the end, are supported by, rooted in, and accountable to congregations. Nevertheless, Presbytery plays an important and valuable role in ministry to higher education as we interface, support and evaluate the campus ministers and leaders.

The task before us involves the very future of the PCUSA as we join together to claim, honor, and sustain the work initiated through the Holy Spirit. In our partnerships we are called to tell the Good News of Jesus Christ to all.

Part IV: Method of Assessment

Presbytery has established the Committee for Higher Education, which reports through the Presbytery Council.

The Committee for Higher Education shall do the following (in addition to Duties outlined in the Administrative Manual, Section 4):

1. Assess Higher Education ministries and recommend Council to validate particular ministry partners which apply for Synod and/or Presbytery grants.
2. Develop methods of communicating with the Presbytery and its congregations, including requesting time at Presbytery meetings for the reports of ministry partners.

3. Request names of students attending college from member churches and refer them to appropriate campus ministries and churches.
4. Assess ministry partners and recommend Council to validate grant proposals using criteria including, but not limited to, the following:

Does the ministry:

- Make Christian disciples of students?
- Enhance the spiritual well-being of the students and those in the campus community?
- Encourage student involvement in the life of the local congregation?
- Join with ecumenical partners, other denominations and individual congregations to advance the Gospel with students?
- Foster a safe environment for responsible exploration of and growth in the faith?
- Provide opportunities for putting faith into action through mission and service?
- Challenge the institution of higher education through its prophetic voice and presence?
- Provide appropriate value for the dollars spent?
- Uphold a theology compatible with the Ecumenical Creeds of the Church (Nicene Creed and Apostles' Creed).

This committee shall consist of 9 members elected by the Presbytery and divided into three classes. Care should be given to ensure balanced representation between clergy and laity, male and female, and the geographic areas of the Presbytery. This committee shall interface closely and seek representation on the Boards directly responsible for any Presbyterian affiliated campus ministry within Yellowstone Presbytery bounds.

By 2008 the committee will begin to reconstitute in the following way. Of the 9 members there shall be at least one member from each of the Billings and Bozeman churches. The other six members should be elected for their interest in Campus ministry from the general geographical distribution of the Presbytery. Campus Pastors shall be *ex officio* to the committee.

Resources:

“A Church Wide Mission Strategy for Ministry in Higher Education, Report of the Overture 98-63 Response Committee”, 2001 General Assembly (pcusa.org/collegiate/renewing.htm).

“Standards for Campus Ministers: PMHE”, PCUSA

“Code of Ethics, PMHE”, PCUSA

“Plan of Ministry – 1991-1996”, Colorado Commission/United Ministries in Higher Education

“Mission Statements for Ministry in Higher Education”, (Document A), Presbytery of Plains and Peaks”

“The Administrative Manual of Yellowstone Presbytery, including Mission Statement adopted September 18, 2001”