

Siebert Lutheran Foundation

STUDY OF CAMPUS MINISTRY IMPACT

PRESENTED BY
Oversight Network

FEBRUARY 2020

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Siebert Lutheran Foundation engaged Oversight Network to conduct a study of campus ministry participation and the perceived impact it has on the lives of current and past participants.

We began by meeting with campus ministry leaders in Southeastern Wisconsin to develop the research questions. Following this meeting, we conducted a thorough literature search of existing studies and developed a survey instrument which we distributed to current campus ministry participants, campus ministry alumni, and a panel of Christians throughout the United States who attend church at least two times a month. A total of 532 respondents completed the survey.

Following the data collection, the research team cleaned and coded the data and conducted descriptive and multivariate analysis. The following is a report of the findings from this research.

Survey respondents are primarily white (87%), female (68%), and middle income (\$50,000 - \$75,000). The majority have attended some college, which is reflective of the sampling frame.

Respondents are highly engaged in church, with the majority saying they attend church once a week (72%). Even though there is a strong relationship between church attendance and campus ministry participation, we can't conclude that either one causes the other. Campus ministry participants are also more likely to have participated in church activities before college. Not only do they attend church, respondents tend to be involved in ministry and lay leadership positions in their church. Respondents also largely express a personal belief in Jesus as their Savior. Campus ministry participants are more likely to express this belief than those who did not participate in campus ministry.

Current campus ministry students say they are very likely to continue attending church (96%) and to pursue a personal relationship with God (63%), and they anticipate joining a church less than a year after graduation (65%).

We do see from the data that the majority of alumni campus ministry participants joined a church less than one year after graduating from college (78%), suggesting that current participants will follow suit.

There is a strong relationship between campus ministry participation and encouragement from respondents' home churches. Unfortunately, only a small percentage of respondents experienced this encouragement (16%).

Referral from friends is the most frequent way respondents hear about campus ministry (33%).

Worship services (77%), social events (48%), and small group Bible study (47%) are the most frequently attended activities for campus ministry participants, both past and present.

Not only do the majority of respondents say their campus ministry provided guidance and teaching about the Word of God (x = 4.5 out of 5), this statement is the strongest predictor of respondents' likelihood of referring campus ministry to a friend or family member.

Respondents say they were most impacted by campus ministry because it "kept me on a spiritual path" (x = 4.2 out of 5), and "Instilled the importance of participating in a worship community" (x = 4.25 out of 5). For respondents this far outscores academic or career impact.

When asked what campus ministry could do better, respondents would like more opportunities for spiritual development (x = 4.4 out of 5) and Bible study (x = 4.4 out of 5).

Deepening relationships, both with God and with a group of life-long friends, through campus ministry are the two greatest predictors of likelihood of referring a friend or family member to campus ministry. This measurement of referral is the most reliable way of measuring loyalty to an organization. This suggests that a focus on these two relationship elements will help to attract more students to campus ministry and keep them engaged throughout their college years.

Finally, a plurality of both students and campus ministry alumni would like to stay engaged and they see social media as an attractive way to do this (22%).

Introduction

The Siebert Lutheran Foundation is a non-profit, pan-Lutheran organization that works to advance the Lutheran church and its ministries. The Foundation “stewards its resources and relationships and fosters partnerships to enable the Lutheran Christian community to be more effective, collaborative, and innovative.” With a specific geographic focus on Wisconsin, especially Milwaukee, Waukesha, Racine and Kenosha counties, the Foundation wants to see “people, families and communities filled with the peace that passes all understanding that comes from Christ.”

The Foundation has been a strong supporter of Lutheran campus ministries in Southeastern Wisconsin, and as part of this support, the Foundation leadership has engaged Oversight Network to conduct a study of the impact of participation in campus ministry on both students and alumni.

Purpose of the Research

The purpose of the research is twofold. The first goal is to measure both the short and long-term impacts of campus ministry participation on the well-being and development of college students. The second is to determine what specifically about campus ministry is effective, what draws participants into the fold, and what these students are looking for in an on-campus faith community.

Hypothesis

If college students participate in campus ministry, they are likely to experience a positive impact, compared to their peers, in academic success, social and emotional well-being, personal spiritual growth, leadership skills development, and life-long engagement with a worship community.

Students are drawn to the sense of home and safety provided by campus ministries, which can serve as a sanctuary during the transition from living with parents to independent living. Campus ministries are effective, in part, because they bring together groups of similarly-minded students with a shared prioritization of their faith life, allowing them to foster and develop it together. This common ground provides spiritual continuity for students as they transition out of their parents’ homes and on to independent living.

Methodology

The research team began the project by meeting with Siebert Lutheran Foundation leadership and leaders of Lutheran campus ministries in Southeastern Wisconsin. The purpose of the meeting was to identify the research questions and assumptions to be tested in the research. Following this meeting the research team drafted a survey instrument.

We developed three separate versions of the survey: one for current campus ministry participants; one for campus ministry alumni; and one for a purchased panel of “active” Christians. For the purposes of this research we have defined active Christians as individuals who attend a worship service at least two times a month. We reviewed the survey instrument with Siebert leadership and fielded the final, approved versions of the survey.

Each campus ministry was asked to share its lists of current students and alumni with Oversight Network, as well as post a link to the survey on its social media accounts. Some ministries elected to send out the survey invitation themselves. Each campus ministry identified a current student leader to sign the email invitation so that constituents would be encouraged to respond to the survey. In addition, Oversight created a web URL, www.siebertsurvey.org, so that campus ministries could more easily direct alumni to the survey. ELCA campus ministry shared the survey URL with participants of the ELCA Synod Assembly held in May 2019. Upon completion of the survey, student and alumni respondents were invited to enter a drawing for one of three Amazon gift cards.

A total of 532 individuals completed the survey. A total of 58 individuals responded to the current student survey, 120 individuals responded to the alumni survey, and 354 responded to the panel survey, that was comprised of active Christians. Because we do not know the total number of individuals who were invited to complete the survey, we do not know the response rate. However, we know that with 532 responses, at a 95% confidence level, the database has a confidence interval of ± 4.25 . This means that if we repeated the study 100 times, 95 times out of 100, the results would vary by less than 4.25 percentage points.

Following completion of survey responses, the Oversight research team cleaned and coded the data and conducted thorough descriptive and multi-variate analysis.

The following report reviews findings from both the survey and the secondary research conducted by Oversight Network.

FINDINGS FROM SECONDARY RESEARCH

The Oversight Network research team has conducted a review of existing research and associated literature on the topic of campus ministry participation and its effects on students and alumni. The following is a summary of key findings from the research. A complete analysis of secondary research is included as an addendum to this report.

Academic Success

- There is no direct link between campus ministry participation and increased grade point averages for current students.
- Students' aspirations to pursue an advanced degree are largely unchanged by campus ministry participation, but more specific measures of spiritual growth reveal a varying impact.
- Growth in "Equanimity" is associated with increased grade point averages.
- Taking service-learning and study abroad courses were found to have a positive impact on students' grade point averages.
- Participation in campus ministry leads to spiritual development, which is shown to improve academic performance.

Social/Emotional Well-Being

- Participation in social organizations such as campus ministry has positive effects on the mental and emotional health of students.
- Emotional health is a driver for other positive outcomes.
- The difficult existential questions raised through religious discourse can be unsettling for students, creating a negative emotional impact.
- Growth in "Equanimity" positively impacts emotional well-being, while growth in "Religious Struggle" has a negative impact.
- Peer groups like campus ministries provide an important emotional support system for students.

Leadership Skills Development

- Participating in campus ministry helps students develop empathy and learn to work well with others.
- All types of ecclesial activities, and in particular Bible study, can help develop leadership skills among students.
- Campus ministries provide important leadership opportunities for students to develop skills.

Spiritual Development

- Campus ministries exist to steward the spiritual development of students.
- Participants are more likely to be spiritually focused later in life.
- Participants rate themselves high on spirituality relative to their peers.
- Spiritual development allows students to form more meaningful social relationships and aids the development of leadership skills.

Engagement with a Worship Community

- Participation in campus ministry is a major predictor of worship community involvement later in life.
- Participants are more likely to attend weekly worship and be involved with their local church.
- Participants are more likely to provide financial support to their church or another religious organizations.
- Campus ministries provide continuity in the spiritual routines of students as they transition out of their parents' homes, which significantly impacts their worship habits later in life.

Future Leaders of the Church

- Participants are more likely to consider a vocational life in service of the church and are also more likely to encourage others to do so.
- Campus ministries provide a path to entry for young adults to serve in the church.

Conclusion

Campus ministries are the only institution dedicated to the spiritual development of college students. Students who participate in such social organizations experience positive emotional impacts, and spiritual development has been shown to drive academic success. Campus ministries also provide opportunities for students to develop leadership skills, as well as continuity in their worship practices, that informs their habits later in life. The students who participate in campus ministry will become educated, leading thinkers of the future church, and are likely to serve directly as pastors, etc.

FINDINGS FROM THE SURVEY

Profile of survey respondents

The following is a profile of demographic and behavioral characteristics of the survey respondents.

Personal Profile

Survey respondents are spread across the United States, however nearly one-third (31.2%) live in the Great Lakes region (Table 1). This is not surprising as the survey methodology specifically targeted current students and alumni of Lutheran campus ministries in Southeastern Wisconsin. The table below shows the geographic distribution of respondents based on the 9 regions defined by the first digit of one's zip code.

Region	States	%
New England (0XXXX)	ME, NH, MA, CT, RI, NJ, VT	4.0%
Northeast (1XXXX)	NY, PA, DE	8.9%
Mid-Atlantic (2XXXX)	MD, VA, WV, NC, SC, DC	7.8%
Southeast (3XXXX)	AL, FL, GA, MS, TN	14.7%
Midwest (4XXXX)	KY, IN, MI, OH	7.6%
Great Lakes (5XXXX)	MT, ND, SD, MN, IA, WI	31.2%
Central Plains (6XXXX)	IL, MO, KS, NE	6.7%
South Central (7XXXX)	TX, OK, LA, AR	6.0%
Rocky Mountain (8XXXX)	AZ, CO, ID, NM, NV, UT, WY	4.5%
Pacific Coast (9XXXX)	CA, OR, WA, HI, AK	8.2%
International	Outside the United States	0.4%
Total		100%

Table 1: Geographic dispersal of respondents

More women responded to the survey than men, which is expected for this type of survey research (Figure 1). We typically see a gender split of 60% women and 40% men for most surveys.

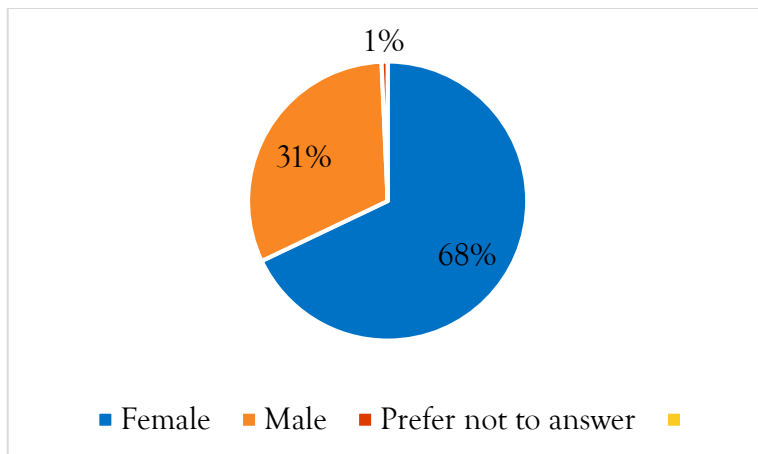


Figure 1: Gender

A large majority of survey respondents report their race as White (87%), while no other ethnicity reports at more than 6% (Figure 2).

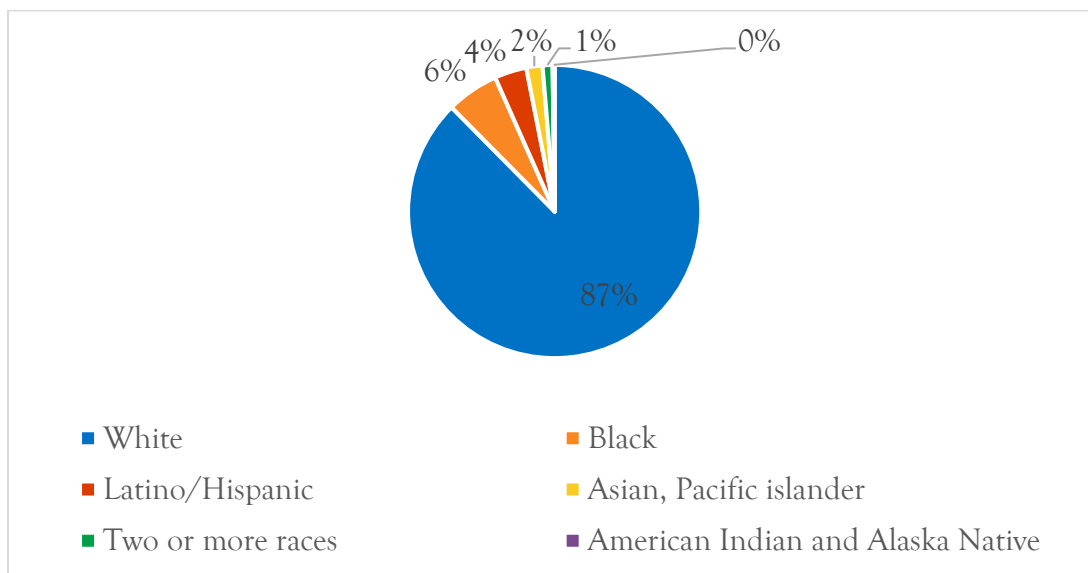


Figure 2: Ethnicity

We asked panelists and campus ministry alumni to report their annual household income. The figure below shows their responses. Here we see that the largest percentage of respondents report household income between \$50,000 and \$75,000 per year.

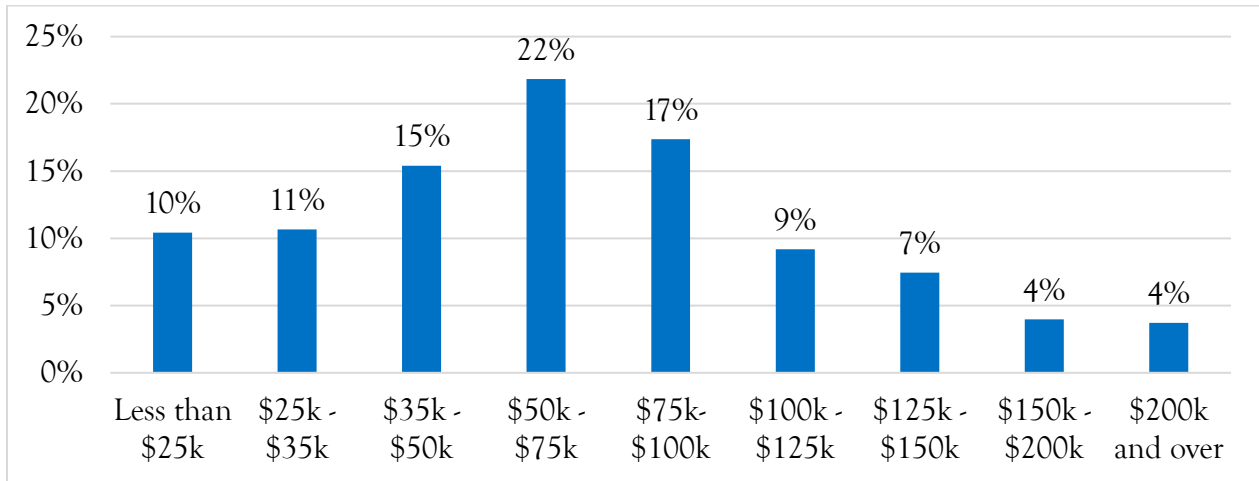


Figure 3: Annual household income before taxes

*Only asked of Panelists and campus ministry alumni respondents

In comparison, the annual household income for all US households is shown below. With the exception of households with annual income less than \$25,000, respondents to this survey largely reflect average household income levels in every category.

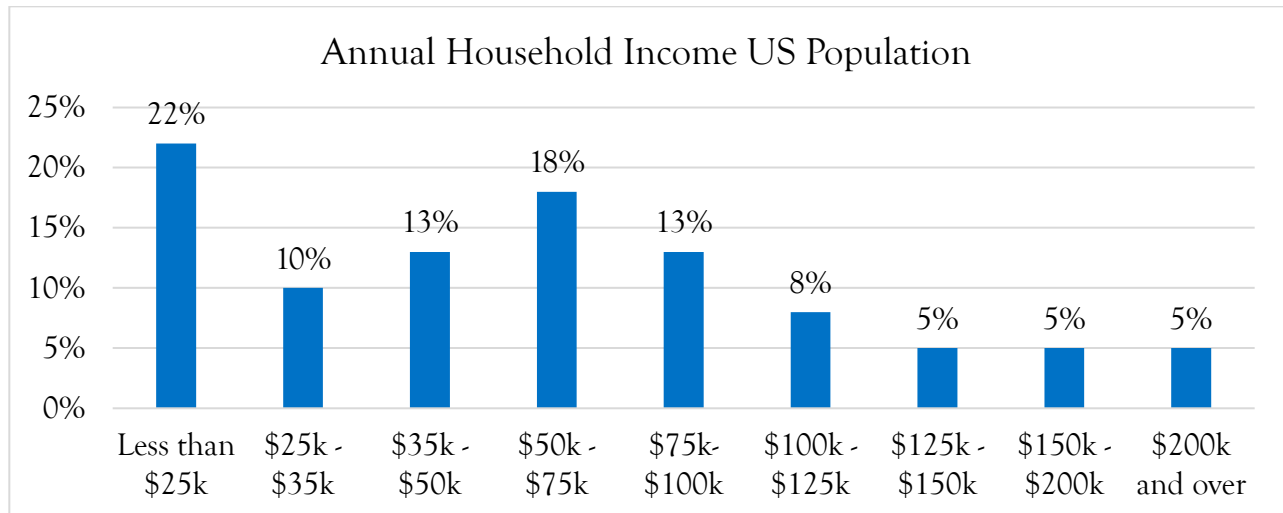


Figure 4: Annual Household Income for US Population

Educational Profile

As we might expect, survey respondents are highly educated. This reflects the survey sampling methodology in that we selected current college students, college alumni, and screened out any panel members who had not attended college. The 20% of respondents who say they have a high school degree represent those who received a survey invitation but had not attended college. These respondents only answered the demographic questions in the survey and are not represented in the rest of the survey data.

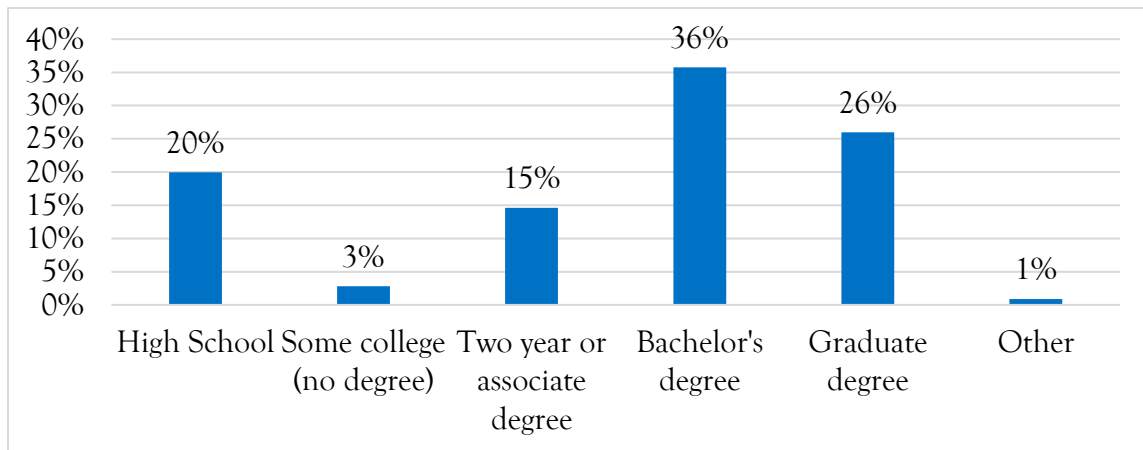


Figure 5: Education level

*Only asked of Panelists and campus ministry alumni respondents

The largest percentage of survey respondents graduated between 2010 and 2019. Again, this reflects the campus ministry student participants and recent alumni. There is a large group of respondents who graduated in the 1960's, which is largely reflective of the initial wave of Baby Boomers, followed by the second half of Baby Boomers who graduated in the 1970's. The smaller percentages of respondents in the 1980's through the 2000's also reflect the relative size of the general population in that generational cohort.

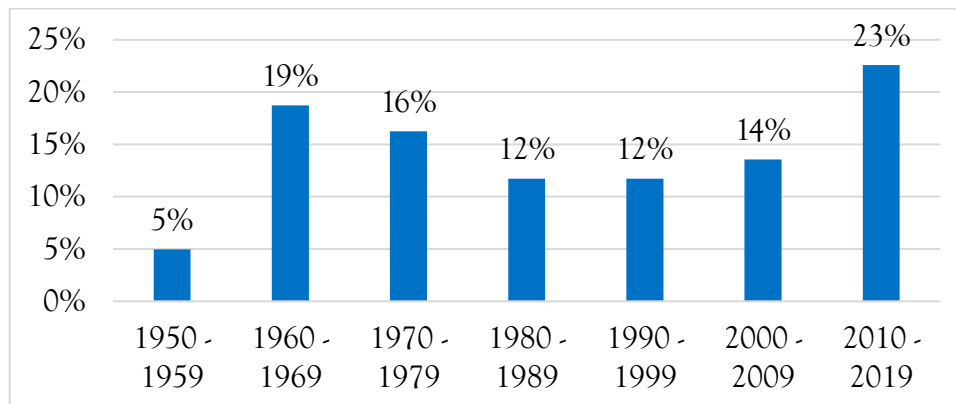


Figure 6: High school graduation year

In order to look at these data from another perspective, we inferred approximate age ranges from high school graduation years. The following figure shows this breakout. Here we can also see the impact of the relative size of age cohorts in the United States, with the Baby Boomers and Millennials representing larger populations than Generation X in the middle.

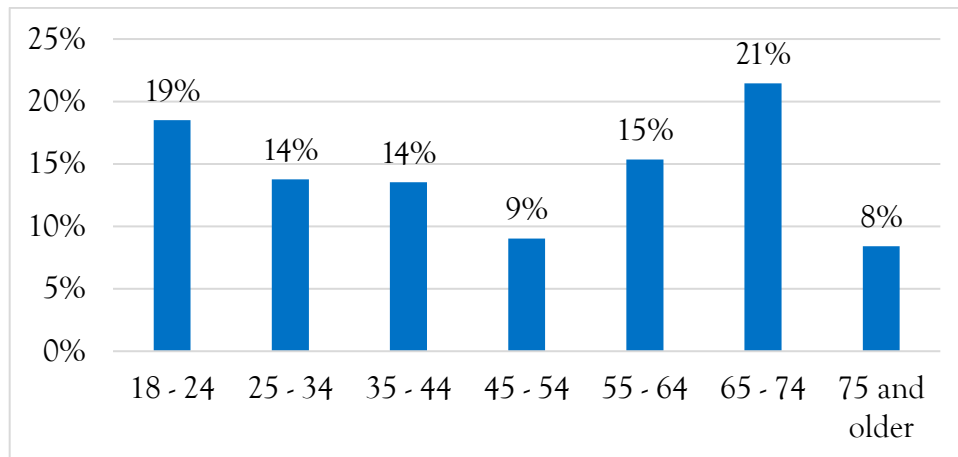


Figure 7: Inferred age

Current student survey respondents attend eight universities across Southeastern Wisconsin. The universities are a mix of public, Lutheran, and Catholic schools. Two-thirds of all student respondents (66%) attend a public university, and a small minority (2%) attend a Catholic university (Table 2).

College / University Name	College / University Name
1. UW Madison (29%)	5. Concordia University Mequon (3%)
2. Concordia University Wisconsin (26%)	6. Wisconsin Lutheran College (3%)
3. Milwaukee School of Engineering (MSOE) (19%)	7. Marquette University (2%)
4. UW Milwaukee (16%)	8. UW Platteville (2%)

Table 2: College or university attended

We also asked panel and alumni respondents what year they graduated from college. For current students, we asked what year they expect to graduate from college. These data are shown in the figure below.

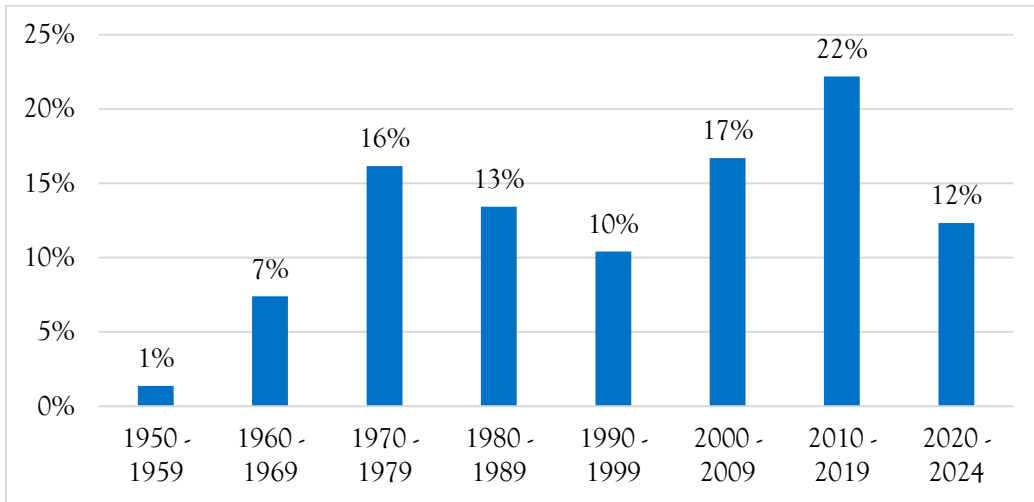


Figure 8: Actual or expected college graduation year

Worship Practices with Home Congregation

Almost three-quarters of respondents report they attended church at least once per week. Fewer than one-fifth say they attend twice per month, and a small number (5%) say they attend less than once per month (Figure 9). This is significantly higher than the national average weekly church attendance of 39% based on a study by the Pew Research Center in 2013.

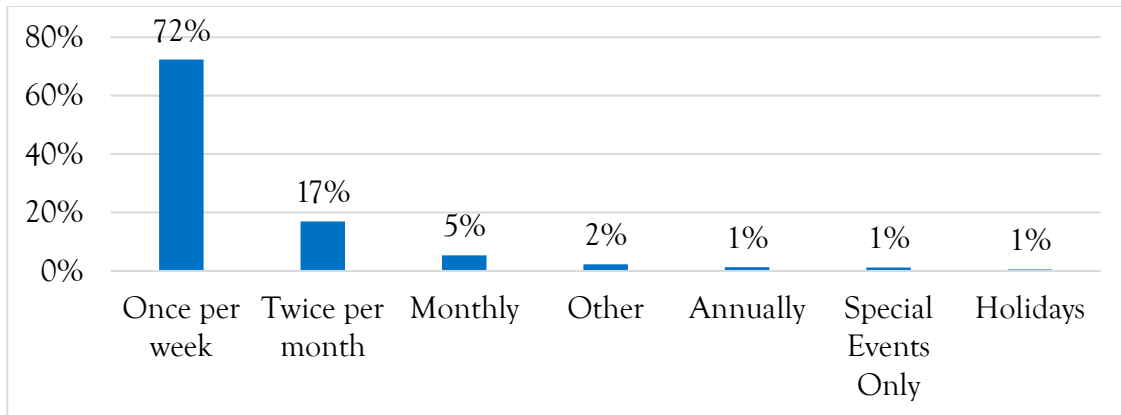


Figure 9: Frequency of church attendance

As part of our analysis of the data, we used Analysis of Variance to test if there are statistical differences between groups within the database. This type of testing compares the mean scores of two or more groups for a specific question and indicates if there is a statistical difference between those mean scores, greater than would be expected by chance.

When we compare the three groups in the data – 1) current campus ministry students, 2) campus ministry alumni, and 3) active Christians – we see that active Christians are significantly less likely to attend church once per week than either campus ministry students or campus ministry alumni.

When asked which ways they have participated in their church in the past 12 months, more than three-quarters of respondents (78%) report having “attended a Sunday morning worship service.” More than two-fifths (44%) report having “served in another volunteer role in the church,” almost one-third (29%) report having “volunteered for a service project in the community,” and more than one-fifth (21%) report having “taught a Sunday School or Bible Study class” (Figure 10).

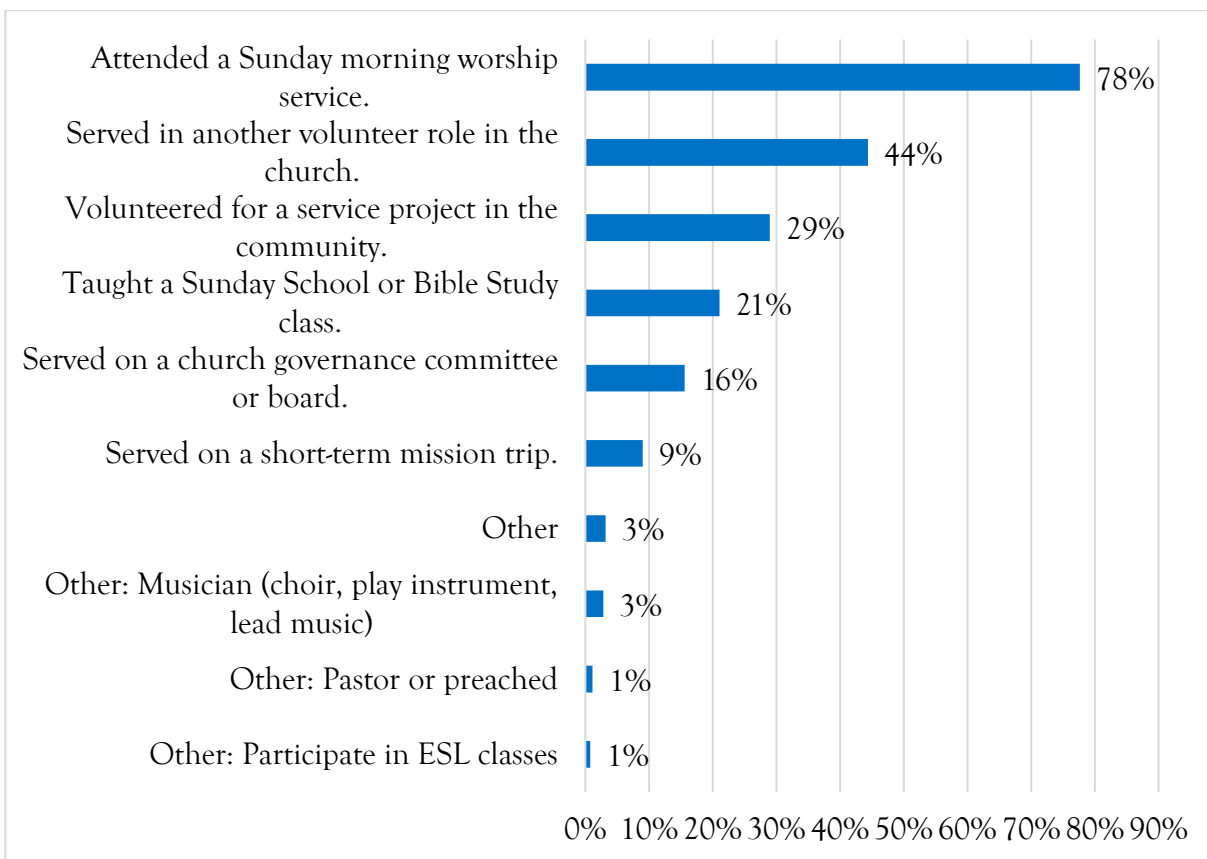


Figure 10: Home church participation

Those respondents who say they are currently participating in a campus ministry, or those who say they participated in a campus ministry while in college, are significantly more likely to have engaged in a larger number of church activities in the past 12 months, than non-campus ministry participants.

When asked which ecclesial activities they participated in prior to attending college, half or more of respondents said they had participated in either Confirmation (53%) or a Youth Group (50%). More than one-third (36%) report having participated in a Church Camp (Figure 11).

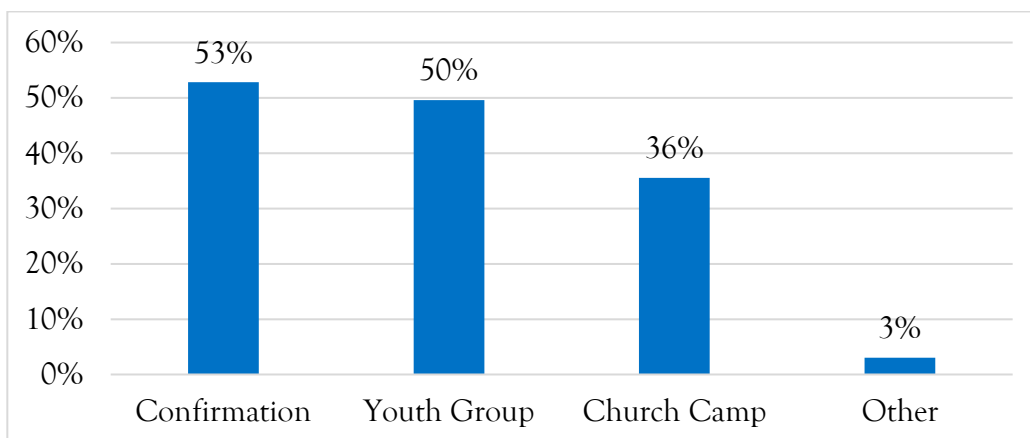


Figure 11: Ecclesial activity participation

Both campus ministry students and campus ministry alumni are significantly more likely to have participated in all of these activities than are the active Christians in the database.

In addition, campus ministry participants, both current and past, are significantly more likely to have participated in each of these activities before attending college.

Spiritual Beliefs

Overall, respondents are affiliated with a large variety of church denominations. Lutheran denominations account for more than two-fifths (44%) of all respondents, compared to just under one-fifth who report as Catholic. This is reflective of the survey sample, a large portion of which was recruited through Lutheran campus ministries.

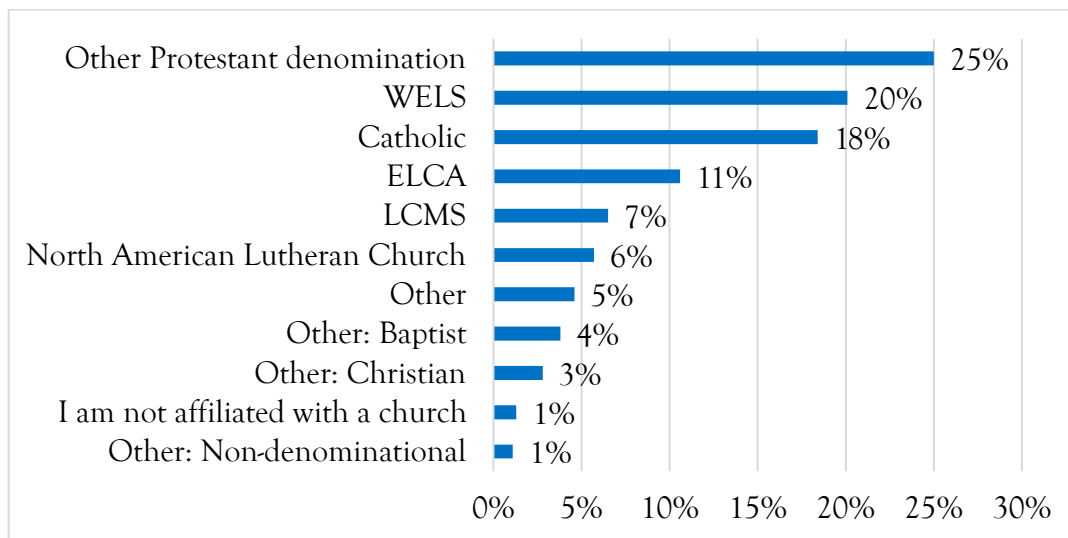


Figure 12: Denomination

Of all of the denominations represented in the database, those respondents who identify as WELS are significantly more likely to be either current or past participants in a campus ministry.

When asked to describe their own spiritual beliefs, almost three-quarters of respondents (74%) said that they “believe Jesus is my Savior.” The second-largest majority, almost one-tenth of all respondents (9%), say they “believe there is a higher power” (Figure 13). This scale of belief systems is based on the Engel Scale. The Engel scale was developed by James F. Engel in 1975, as a way of representing the journey from no knowledge of God through spiritual maturity as a Christian believer. The model is used by some Christians to emphasize the *process* of conversion and the various decision-making steps that a person goes through in becoming a Christian.

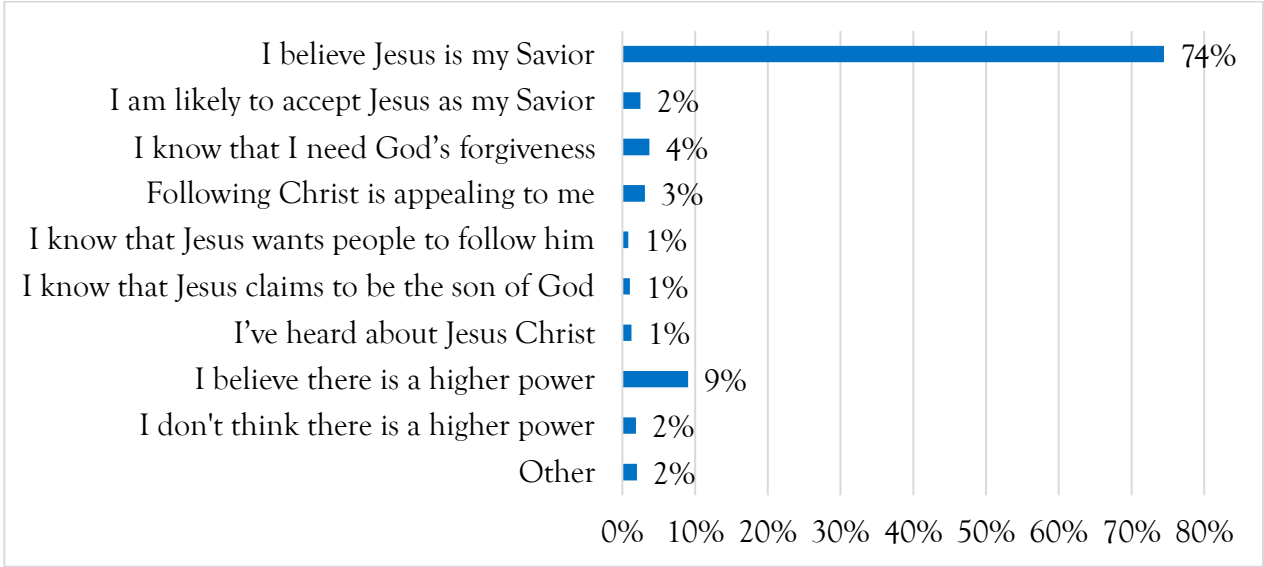


Figure 13: Personal beliefs

Using Analysis of Variance testing, we see that current campus ministry students and campus ministry alumni are significantly more likely than active Christians to say they “believe Jesus is my Savior.”

More than three-fifths of student respondents (63%) say they are very likely to cultivate a relationship with God through other activities outside of attending church.

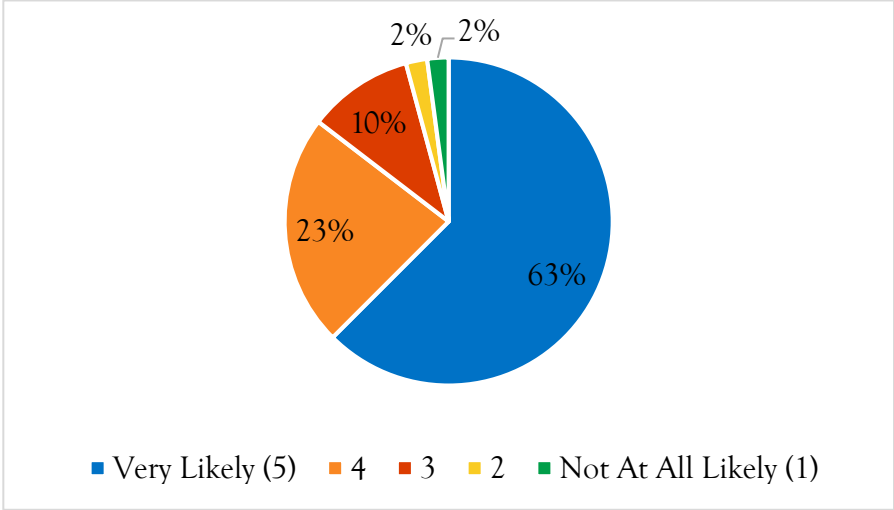


Figure 14: Likelihood of cultivating a relationship with God

*Only asked of current campus ministry participants

We asked campus ministry students about their likelihood of attending church after college. Almost all respondents (96%) report being very likely to attend church after college (Figure 15).

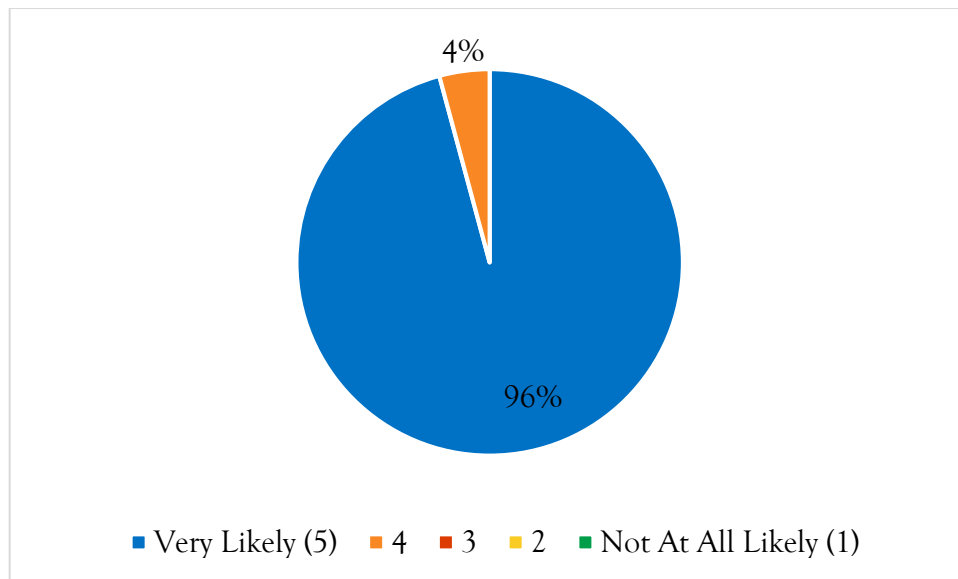


Figure 15: Likelihood of attending church after college

We then asked campus ministry participants about their expectations of how long it would be after graduation before they joined a church. Almost two-thirds of respondents (65%) report that they expect to join a church “less than one year” after graduating from college. Fewer than one-tenth of all alumni respondents (8%) say they “did not join or attend another church” (Figure 16).

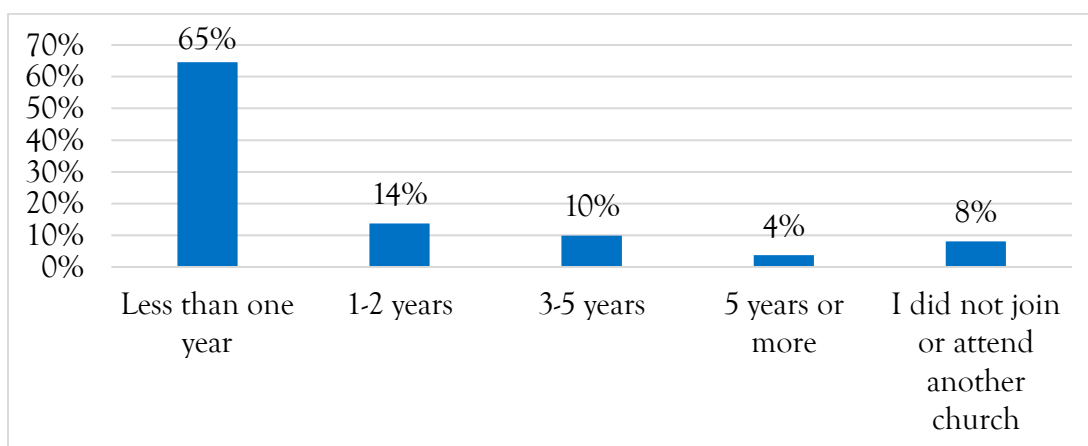


Figure 16: Expected time between graduating from college and joining a church

*Only asked of campus ministry participants

In comparison, we asked campus ministry alumni and active Christians how long after college graduation they joined a church. The following table shows these results. As we can see from the data, campus ministry alumni are significantly more likely to have joined a church less than a year after graduation. However, they are also significantly more likely to have not joined a church at all.

Length of Time to Join a Church	Active Christians	Campus Ministry Alumni
Less than 1 year	55%	78%
1 - 2 years	19%	6%
3 - 5 years	14%	5%
More than 5 years	6%	0%
Did not join a church	5%	12%

Campus Ministry Involvement

Just over half of all respondents* (51%) report having participated in a campus ministry program while attending college (Figure 17).

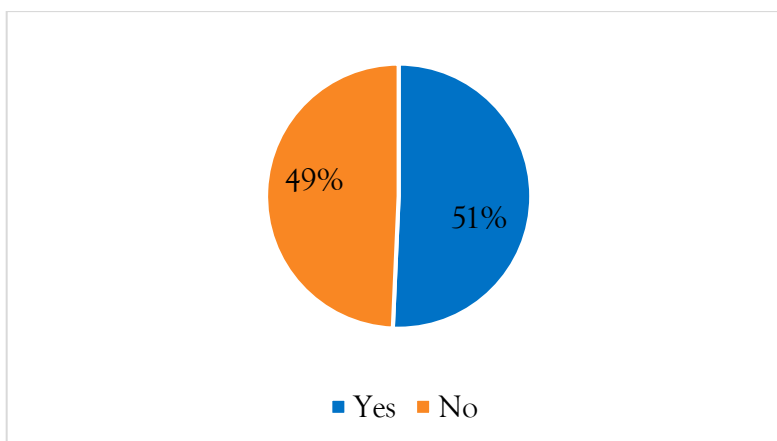


Figure 17: Campus ministry participation

*Only asked of Panelists and campus ministry alumni respondents

It is interesting to note that 42% of the active Christian group of respondents say they participated in a campus ministry while in college.

When asked how their home church encouraged their campus ministry participation, fewer than one-sixth (16%) say their “pastor encouraged me to participate in campus ministry” while almost the same number of respondents (15%) say their “home church did not encourage me to participate in campus ministry” (Figure 18).

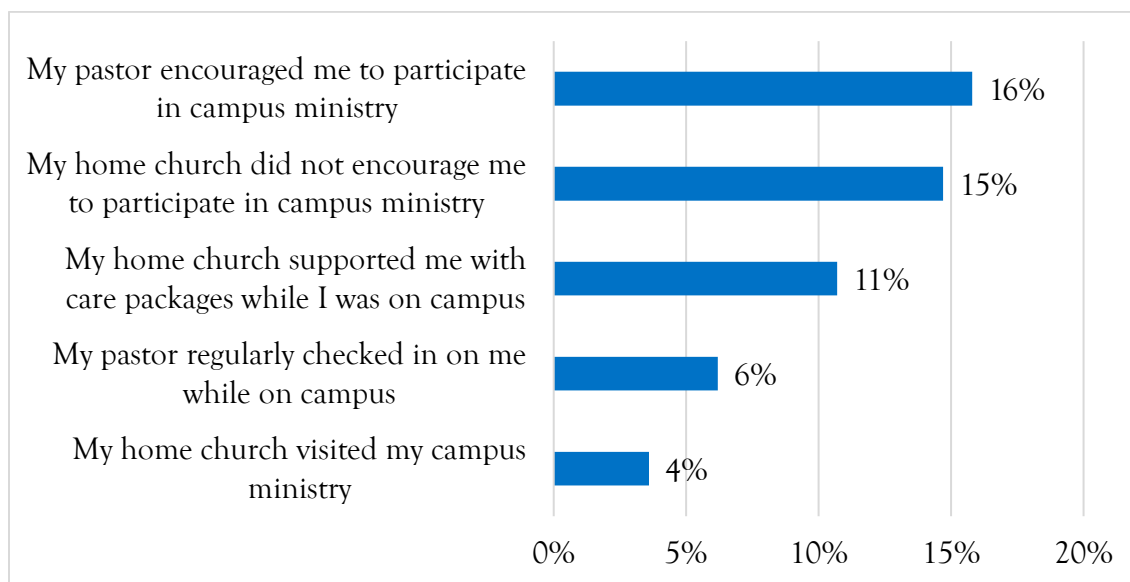


Figure 18: Home church encouragement

Current students are significantly more likely to say that their pastor encouraged them to participate in campus ministry.

Those who participated in campus ministry, both currently and in the past, also are, and were, more connected to their home church, as they are significantly more likely than other respondents to say:

- Their home church supported them with care packages;
- Their pastor regularly checked in on them while on campus; and
- Their home church visited their campus ministry.

While we can't claim that these events cause campus ministry participation, we do see a strong relationship between the two.

When asked how they first heard about their campus ministry, one-third of respondents (33%) say they were referred by friend(s). Almost one-fifth (19%) say they heard through ministry outreach, and fewer than one-sixth (16%) say they heard through their home pastor (Figure 19).

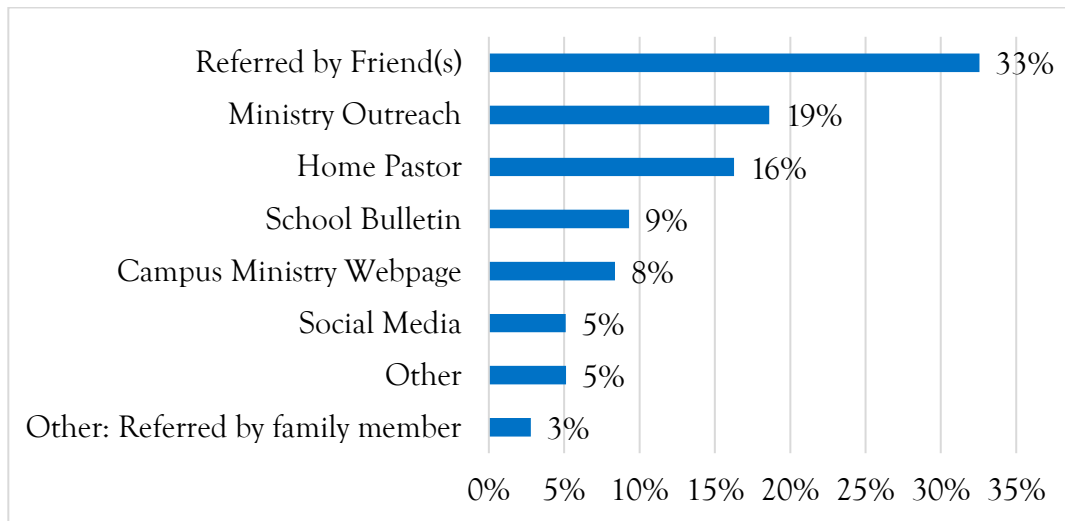


Figure 19: Learning about campus ministry

Current campus ministry students are significantly more likely to say they first heard about campus ministry from friends.

Respondents were also asked how often they take part in each of their college's campus ministry activities. More than three-quarters (77%) say they attend worship services frequently. Fewer than half of respondents say they frequently attend social events (48%) and small group Bible study (47%) (Figure 20).

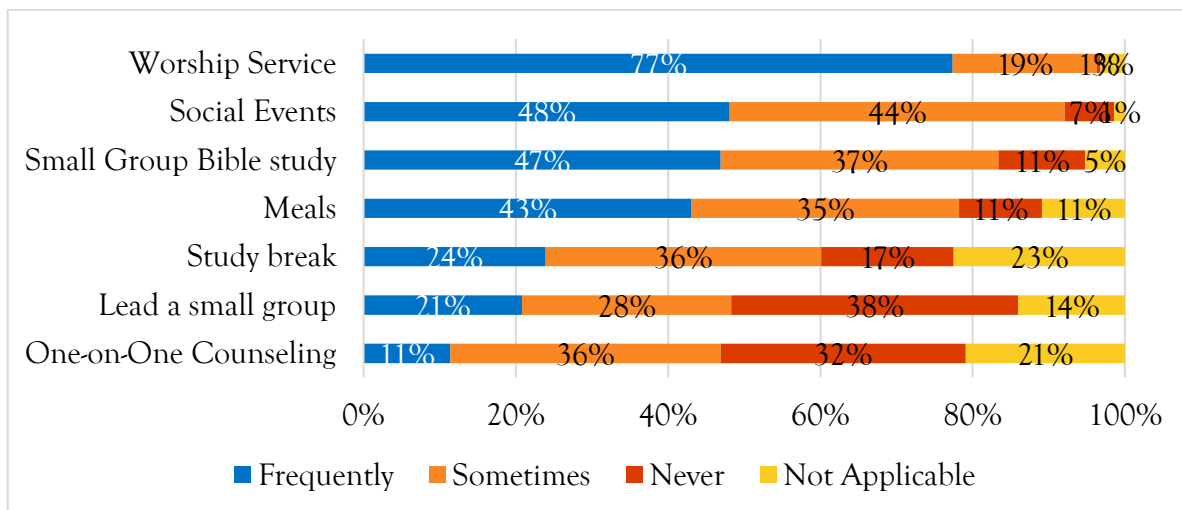


Figure 20: Frequency of campus ministry participation

We asked respondents to read a list of statements about campus ministry experience and rate each statement on a scale of 1 to 5, with 5 being Describes Completely and 1 being Does Not Describe At All. In the following figure we see that, on average, respondents say that “guidance and teaching about the word of God” and “a place to go for regular worship” describe their campus ministry completely.

As we can see from the following figure, on average, respondents say that all statements describe their campus ministry experience. However, on average, respondents are least likely to say that their campus ministry offered opportunities for advancement through leadership experiences.



Figure 21: Campus ministry experience

We then asked respondents to rate the impact that campus ministry participation had on various areas of their lives on a scale of 1 to 5, with 5 being Deeply Impacted and 1 being No Impact At All. On average, the largest percentage of respondents say that their campus ministry had the deepest impact because it “kept me on a spiritual path” and “instilled the importance of participating in a worship community” (Figure 22).

In the figure below we see that there is a significant difference between the statements chosen most frequently as having impact and those chosen least frequently. While the majority of respondents say that campus ministry had a deep impact on faith and worship, as well as relationship-building, far fewer respondents say that campus ministry had an impact on school and career.

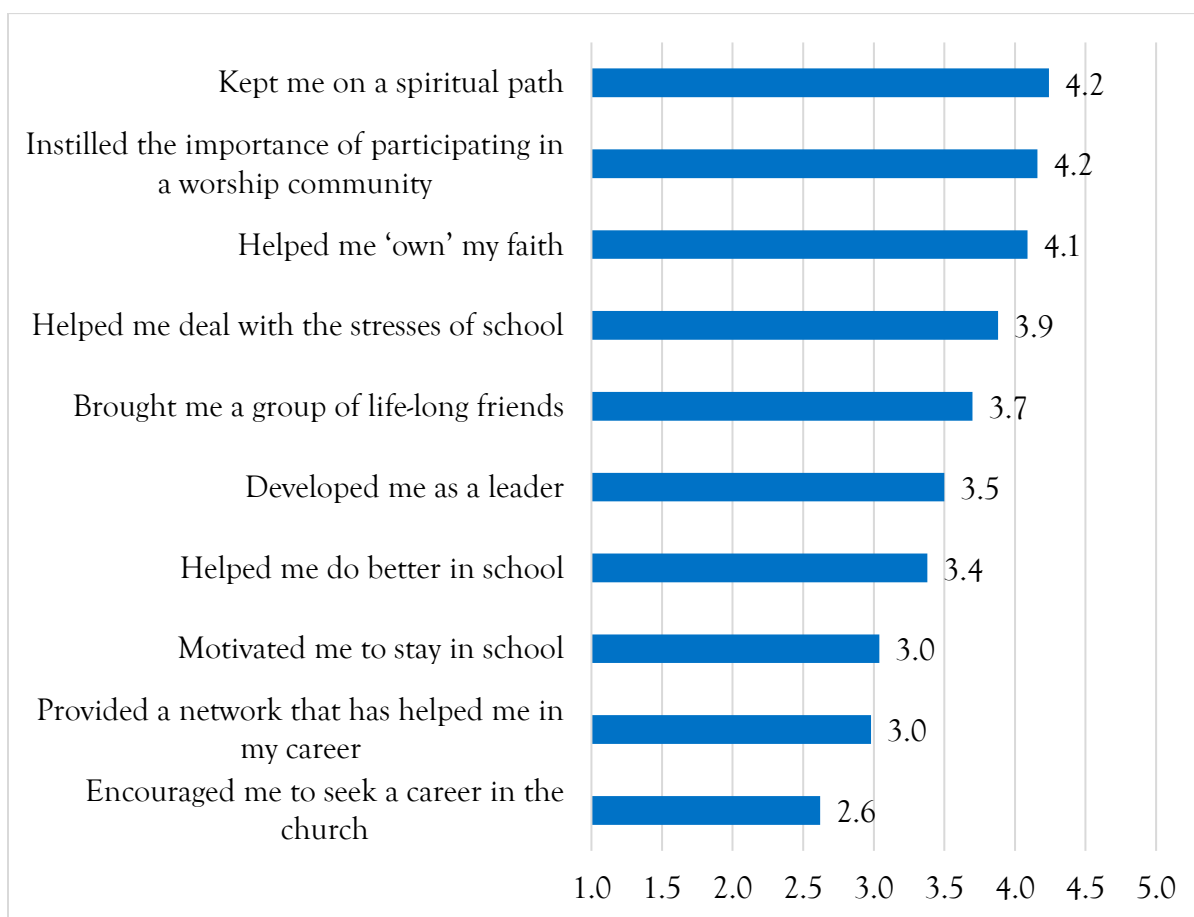


Figure 22: Campus ministry impact

We then gave respondents a list of ways that campus ministry leaders could do an even better job of serving students and meeting needs while they are on campus. We asked respondents to rate each item on a scale of 1 to 5, with 5 being Very Important and 1 being Not At All Important. As we can see in the following figure, on average, the largest percentage of respondents chose “Opportunities for spiritual development,” “Bible studies,” and “Volunteer opportunities” (Figure 23).

While the average response for all items tested is positive, we do see that there is a significant difference between the top-rated items and the lowest-rated items. Respondents tend to rate spiritual development opportunities more highly, and career-related opportunities lower.

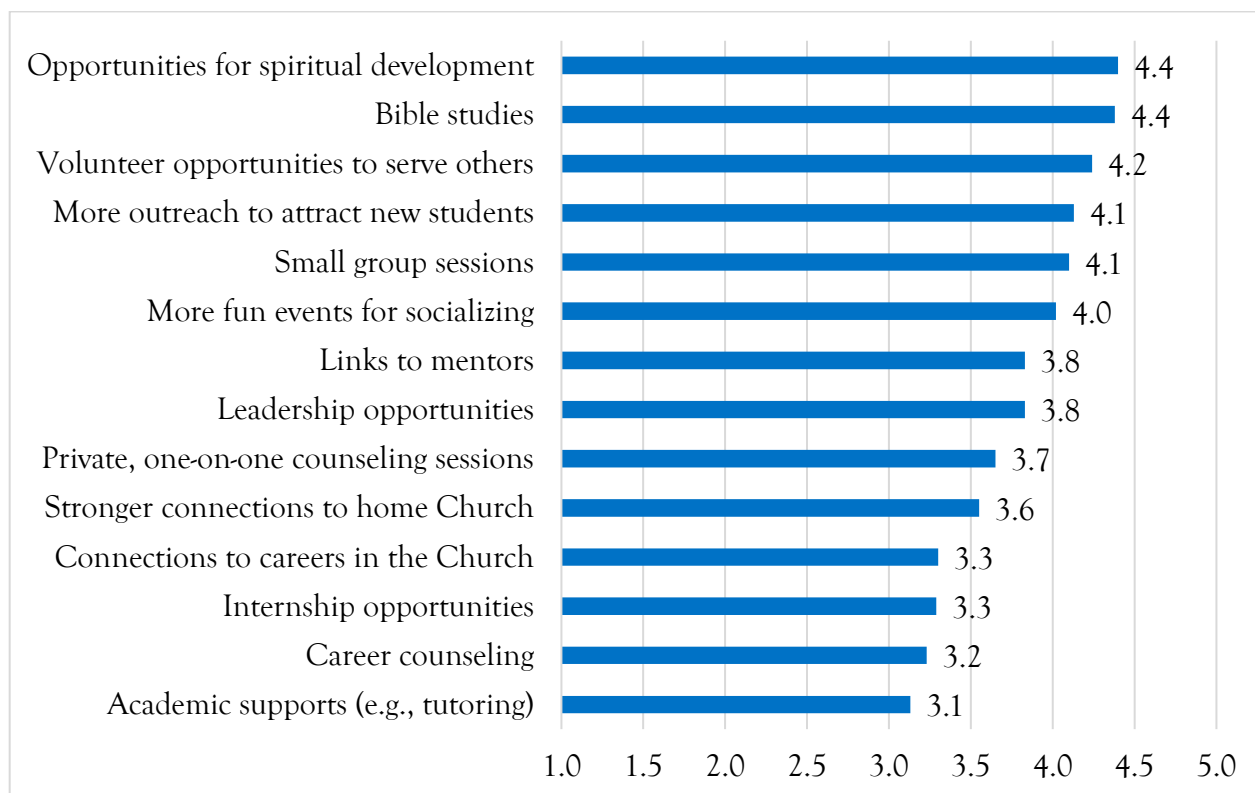


Figure 23: Importance of campus ministry activities

In order to provide a tangible measure of participant loyalty, we use the Net Promoter Score (NPS) tool. We asked respondents how likely they would be to refer campus ministry participation to a friend or family member on a scale of 1-10. We calculate the Net Promoter Score by considering those who respond with a 9 or 10 to be “promoters,” those who respond with a 7 or 8 as “neutral,” and those who respond with a 6 or lower to be “detractors.” An organization’s net promoter score is equal to the percentage of promoters minus the percentage of detractors. Among the campus ministry survey respondents, 74.6% are promoters and 7.1% are detractors, resulting in an NPS of 67.5 (Table 3).

Net Promoter Score	% of Respondents	NPS Calculation
10	64.1%	74.6% Promoters
9	10.5%	
8	13.4%	7.1% Detractors
7	4.8%	
6	3.8%	
5	1.4%	
4	1.9%	
3	0.0%	
2	0.0%	
1	0.0%	
67.5 Net Promoter Score		

Table 3: Net Promoter Score

Reason for Net Promoter Score	% of Respondents
Personally had good experiences in campus ministry	23%
Connection with like-minded individuals	20%
Kept me on an active spiritual path	18%
Greater accountability to school – motivated me to do better or be more involved in campus	9%
Helped me deal with the stresses of school	8%
Brought me a group of life-long friends	7%
Campus ministry is part of the faith identity	7%
Provided a network that has helped me in my career	2%
Developed me as a leader	2%
Would not recommend / had a negative experience	2%

Table 4: Reason for Net Promoter Score

Predicting Net Promoter Score

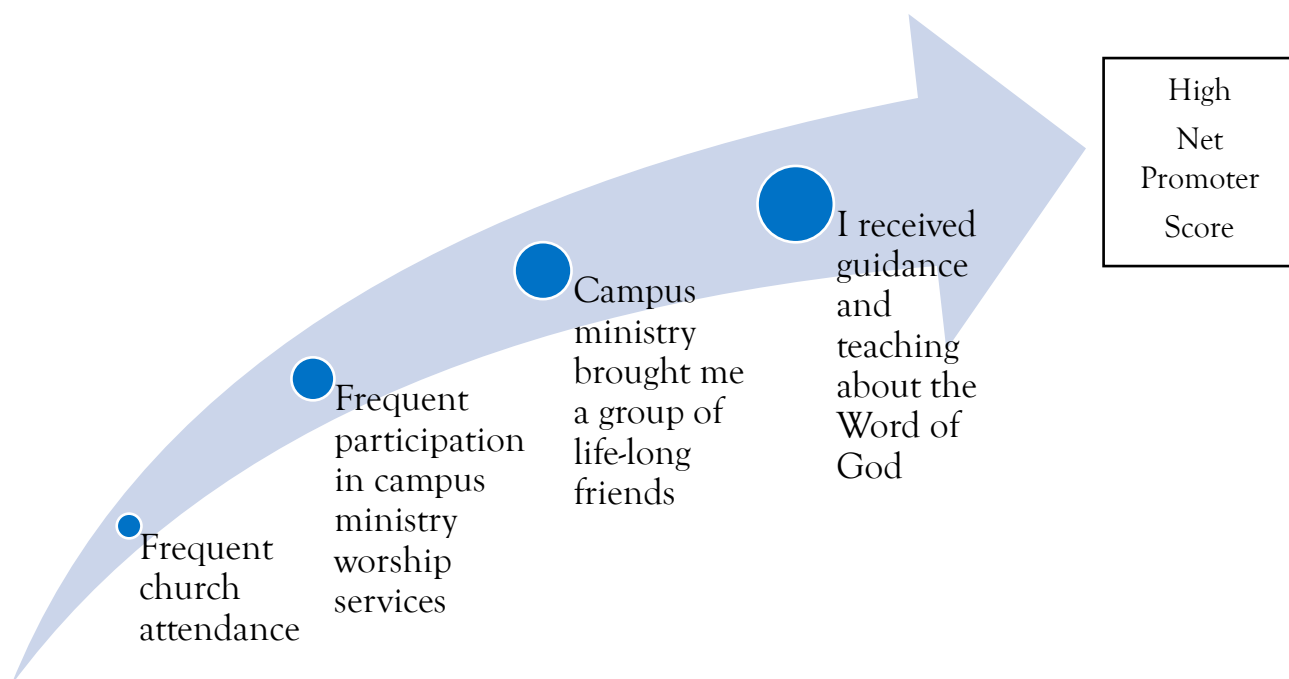
In order to better understand what combination of behaviors and opinions best predict whether a respondent is willing to refer campus ministry participation to a friend or family member, we use stepwise regression to identify which variables, in combination, predict the greatest change in Net Promoter Score.

The following figure shows the results of this testing. The figure tells us that:

- The more frequently the respondent attends church services; and
- The more frequently they attend or attended campus ministry worship services; and
- The more they agree that campus ministry brought them a group of life-long friends; and
- The more they say their campus ministry provided guidance and teaching about the Word of God...

The greater their likelihood of referring friends or family to campus ministry.

Combined, these four variables account for about 37% of the variation we see in Net Promoter Score.



Staying Connected to Campus Ministry

When asked how they like to stay connected to campus ministry and friends they have made there, more than one-fifth of respondents (22%) say social media. Between one-sixth and one-eighth of respondents say they prefer either “regular social events” (16%), “newsletters and bulletins” (15%), “reunions” (14%) or “community volunteer activities” (12%) (Figure 24).

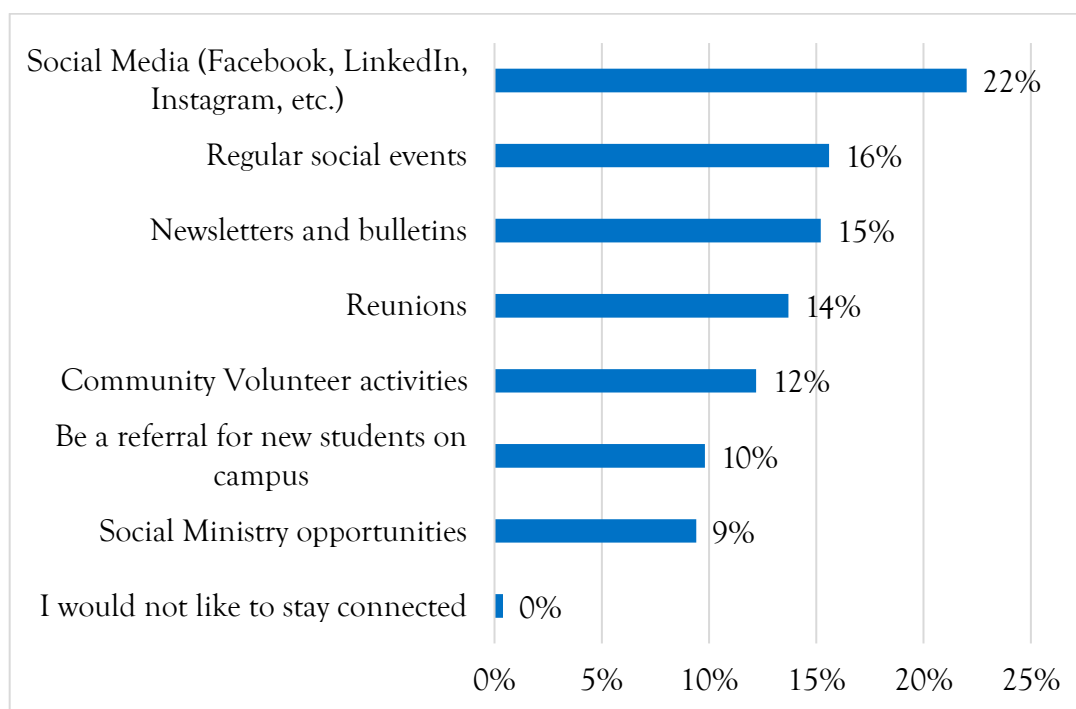


Figure 24: Preferred method of staying connected to campus ministry

Current campus ministry students are significantly more likely than alumni or active Christians to say they would like to stay connected through:

- Being a referral for new students on campus
- Community volunteer activities
- Reunions

This is not surprising, as we would expect current participants to express greater desire to stay connected to their campus ministry.

Reasons for Not Participating in Campus Ministry

Finally, we asked survey respondents who reported that they did not participate in campus ministry as a college student to tell us the reason they chose not to participate. The following table shows the key reasons and the percentage of participants who gave similar answers.

Reason for Not Participating in Campus Ministry	% of Respondents
Didn't have one / didn't know about one	31%
Didn't have time for it	28%
Didn't want to participate / no need	15%
Different religious faith or level of faith from now	12%
Online college / off campus living	4%
Attended church, not campus ministry	4%
Transportation / location	3%
Attended a religious college - no need for additional campus ministry	1%
Expense	1%

CONCLUSIONS FROM DATA FINDINGS

- Based on evidence from secondary research findings and from our survey data, campus ministry likely attracts those students who already come from a strong faith practice, having participated in multiple church activities before college.
- However, there is room for much greater encouragement from home churches and home pastors, and much greater congregational involvement with students on campus. These have a strong relationship with campus ministry participation, although few participants experienced them as part of their campus ministry time.
- Worship and spiritual guidance are a strong, positive part of the campus ministry experience for participants. In addition, relationships with fellow campus ministry students play a large role in experiencing campus ministry in a positive light.
- Graduating students are likely to continue participating in the life of a worship community, which should be a strong incentive for congregations to get involved in campus ministries and in the lives of current students.
- Social media seems to be the best method for staying connected to campus ministry alumni, even though some current students also say they would welcome connecting to new students on campus, participating in volunteer activities, and reunions.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Siebert Lutheran Foundation invited campus ministry leaders to review the findings from this study and to brainstorm ways in which the findings could be put to practical use. The following recommendations are a compilation of ideas from this meeting as well as suggestions by the Oversight research team. These recommendations are categorized into things that can be done before students enter college, things that can be done while they are in college, and things that can be done after graduation.

Before College

- Encourage relationship-building between campus ministries and local congregations. These relationships can help by raising awareness of Lutheran Campus ministries among congregation members and could encourage families and students to seek out campus ministry when they get to college. Even if students chose to attend college far away from home, they will be more likely to seek out a campus ministry if they have been exposed to Lutheran Campus ministry while they are still at home.
- Set the stage for campus ministry participation among students who are in the active college selection process. Encourage parents to ask about campus ministry when they visit a college. Home pastors could set up a meeting between parents and campus ministries as part of the college visit process. Every connection point between local congregation and campus ministry can reinforce the value of this resources for students.
- Seek out speaking engagements at Lutheran high schools to raise awareness of campus ministries and the positive impact they have on the lives of students.
- The year 2017 marked 100th anniversary of ELCA campus ministry in Wisconsin. This milestone could serve as a celebration point and an opportunity to raise awareness of campus ministry in local congregations.
- Create a video or other publication that can be distributed to congregations to encourage support of Lutheran campus ministry.
- Publicize the results of this study showing the positive impact of campus ministry participation.

During College

- Encourage current campus ministry participants to invite their friends to attend, perhaps including an incentive, such as a Starbucks card or other small gift to encourage referrals. Make it as easy as possible for students to invite their friends and include a variety of activities (including good food and challenging Bible study) to meet a variety of student needs.
- Involve local congregations in the life of campus ministry. Local congregations can participate by providing food for campus ministry events, participating in volunteer opportunities, or “adopting” campus ministry participants.
- Invite campus ministries to be involved in worship opportunities with local congregations, perhaps even leading a worship service, where appropriate.

- Share the importance of on-going support and encouragement with students' home congregation. Invite home congregations to communicate with and encourage the students while they are at college.

Transitioning From College

- Ask graduating students for their parents' contact information as a way to reach them during the years immediately post college, when many individuals are in a state of transition.
- Stay connected to students as they graduate and move into the next stage of their lives. Invite students to continue worshipping with their campus ministry if they stay in the same community.
- Connect graduating students to campus ministries in cities to which they move as a bridge to the local community and local congregations.
- Increase social media activity as a way to stay in touch with campus ministry alumni.