

Section 3. The Hybrid Context: Campus Ministries with Both Professionals and Missionaries

The 2017 quantitative survey examined the similarities and differences between two main types of campus ministers in today's landscape: professional campus ministers and limited-term missionaries. The survey found both similarities and differences between these two groups (examined indirectly through institutional type [e.g., Catholic university], ministerial model [e.g., center-based] and formation type [degree or missionary training]). The quantitative survey report described common ground as opportunities for cooperation and different emphases as opportunities for coordination. As that survey report outlined, office-based, parish-based, center-based and diocesan ministerial models are historical features of the campus ministry landscape (see survey pages 7 and 8). Missionary organizations are relative newcomers, but are currently a significant percentage of the campus ministry landscape. Just as professional ministers often share some visionary overlap with one another due to their graduate education, these missionary organizations also form their missionaries with a particular vision of Catholic campus ministry. As historical models sometimes also collaborate with missionaries, they may need to negotiate disparate elements of their respective visions.

However, this qualitative study revealed a more complicated and nuanced landscape beyond the notion of overlap in vision as an opportunity for cooperation or the disparate elements as opportunities for coordination. Even while this section of the qualitative report discusses serious difficulties when this shared vision is absent, it aims to illuminate better practices for blended ministries through lessons learned from both poorly-integrated and well-integrated ministries. Because this portion on blended ministries comes from fewer interviewees,⁸ we will omit most identifying factors (e.g., ordination status, type of campus, gender) to further ensure the privacy of the interviewees; only distinctions of missionary or professional will be given.

A word on methodology is in order here. As this is a qualitative study, the findings here describe events and experiences in depth from the perspective of those interviewed. However, as this is not a quantitative study—and because there were no questions on the experiences of mixed ministries in the survey—this report is unable to determine the frequency with which negative or positive experiences of ministry occur (in addition to the varying degrees of success that lie between these). In other words, it describes real problems and possibilities without being able to speak to how many mixed ministries are characterized by these problems or possibilities. Also, if a participant reported regular collaboration across these models, we asked, “In what ways has collaboration been fruitful? What are the challenges in collaborating with someone with very different training from yourself?” This gave us insights into the problems even in well-integrated contexts and also shed light on the positive aspects in poorly-integrated ministries. Given assets and limitations of qualitative methods, this section of the report effectively

⁸ Most of the interviewees here have direct experience in a mixed professional and ministerial settings, but a handful are describing the experiences of colleagues.

capitalizes on its methodological strengths, highlighting the joys and concerns of those in mixed settings.

As mentioned above, “accompaniment” was universally important among the campus ministers; likewise, they used “accompaniment” in a very similar way. Even when the research team for this qualitative study decided to add a question asking the interviewees to explain what accompaniment looks like to them, the responses were all very similar. This minister recalled campus ministers from his or her undergraduate experience, “I try to be as accessible as I can be. I felt like [my campus ministers as an undergraduate] were very strong in accompaniment. Not always having all the answers, which was great, but walking with me through the answers, or at least saying, ‘I’m here with you, even though we don’t know what to do.’” Later this minister noted that this has shaped his or her own pastoral style, “Understanding that nobody has all of the answers, but regardless, being able to sit with somebody and be there in communion with them, whether something’s really joyful or something’s really challenging and just trying to constantly remind that person that I see and that I am with you and who knows what’s going to happen, but I’ll be here regardless.” This sort of emphasis on accompaniment is common to campus ministers in a variety of contexts.

Beyond this significant commonality, which can be a unifying element for hybrid ministries, there are important principles that are essential for a successful blending of ministry models. These include:

- 1) a shared vision,
- 2) regular communication and, related, cultivating a sense of team,
- 3) fully understanding the various ministers’ roles and competencies, and
- 4) utilizing professional ministers’ leadership effectively.

As these three latter features may be more particular manifestations of the first feature, shared vision will be addressed first. These four features constitute the “needs” for successful mixed ministries. When these are attended to, ministry teams experience gratitude and integration. When not addressed, teams experience more difficulties. The research team spoke with ministry staffs that were enjoying strong and positive experiences in this mixed context as well as staffs that were currently facing or had previously faced challenges. This report will both highlight the practices that facilitate a more successful integration of these ministerial models as well as outline the challenges when attempting to integrate ministry models.

Need One: A Shared Vision

As many books on leadership or organizational theory highlight, having a shared vision that unifies members is critical to any institution. Some professional ministers discussed challenges in their mixed setting with the arrival of new members, “How that dialogue of, the presence of [missionary organization] assimilating—in a good way... that they can learn that their [organizational] identity is almost needing a process of being grafted. When you graft something into something which has already been established, it takes time... It doesn’t come to colonize the tree. It comes to be grafted.” This minister contends that missionaries should be more flexible in the way that they bring their apostolate to a given campus, respecting the unique context and

gifts that each campus provides. Likewise, a missionary reported that a group of missionaries at another campus was continually undermined by the professional minister at the campus' Newman's Center, resulting in parallel ministries that avoided one another. Several of the ministers pointed to shared vision as the non-negotiable basis for collaboration, as this missionary does:

Yeah, I think that more than anything it is the [missionary organization] team and the chaplain on the same page. Do they have the same vision? And are they collaborating together to work towards whatever goal that is? Because if they are, then I think then more times than not they do thrive and they're very successful... [A professional minister might say,] "I'm supposed to be spiritually responsible for these students. Why would we bring in a lay organization who's going to do spiritual stuff with them?" Whatever the case... teams that seem to be a little bit more dysfunctional... sometimes that comes from internal conflict. [Missionary organization] placement isn't perfect, and sometimes there's just not great life on the team that causes the ministry to be affected.

As missionaries come reflecting the unique charisms and pastoral sensibilities of the organizations that formed them, conflict may occur when these are different from the established ways of doing ministry. Some professional ministers have felt "colonized," some missionaries have felt "undermined."

In promoting a shared vision, two considerations are beneficial. First, whether the charisms of the missionary organization complement the ministry of the host campus. And second, if so, what thoughtful considerations are necessary to pair individual missionaries to a campus team. Some of the interviewees said they were told—and not consulted—by their diocese that missionaries would be added to their existing ministerial team. This can be very difficult for professional ministers, first, because they provide the primary pastoral care for the campus and appreciate consultation. And second, because some professionals believe that missionaries will undermine their pastoral work due to differences in theological orientations and pastoral practices. Likewise, missionaries sense when they are not wanted by the professional ministry team, and may simply default to the activities learned in their training, forming two parallel—rather than integrated—ministries. Listening well to the experiences of the existing campus ministry team affords prayerful discernment about ministerial direction. If mixing these models is deemed appropriate, the diocese can actively facilitate the integration of these two models. Integration calls for diocesan leaders to exercise pastoral sensitivity, humility and reflection. Poorly integrated teams bring down the morale of everyone involved as well as the vitality of the ministry. Both professionals and missionaries need the support, respect and accompaniment of their leadership as they strive to live their call.

Need Two: Regular Communication, a Sense of Team

A professional minister was told by the bishop to integrate missionaries into the existing campus ministry; that minister highlighted the importance of communication (and indirectly, transparency and trust) in this endeavor, lifting up a specific quote here, "We're in our [number]

year with [missionary organization]. The first two years... the communication was poor. A lot of it was very secretive. I didn't know what was going on; even though I was asking questions it felt sales pitch-ish. But that relationship has grown." This minister reports a rough start that has become much better through regular and intentional communication, which has fostered greater trust.

A challenge related to communication when integrating professional and missionary campus ministers was rooted in the campus reporting structure. Missionaries typically report to a designated "chaplain"—most often a deacon or priest—and this works well when missionaries are the only Catholic ministry presence on a campus. However, if there is, for example, a Newman Center with student leaders or additional professional ministers there can be a disconnect between the two ministries that can lead to parallel, rather than integrated ministries, as a professional minister wonders, "How do they [missionaries] work with the leadership of the community? And that does not go to centralize to one particular person, but how do they work with the [professional] team?" When the chaplain does not bring the entire ministerial staff together in a complementary or collaborative way, it can breed confusion, suspicion, and even a sense of fracture. Directors of blended ministries will see a more vibrant team when they prioritize trust and communication; each team member plays a role in this responsibility.

Regardless of the way a professional and missionary partnership began, it seemed that if both parties wanted to make it work, communication was key. As one professional minister who oversaw both established ministers and the incoming missionaries put it:

First year was, I didn't think it was an instant success, because the students had this preconceived notion about [the missionaries]. It's like, "What are they here for?" Especially my core leaders. My core leaders were like, "We're doing all this ministry. Are we competing with [missionary organization]?" And that's what happened... [missionary organization] was actually coming in as [missionary organization], not as the campus ministry... So in the second year, I told [the bishop], I said, "[Bishop], we'll keep them for a second year, but I deserve the decision whether we really want them." I said, "Because the first year was not a success." I didn't say it was a total failure and everything... So when we got into the second year, before the semester started... I said, "Listen. This is what we need to do, because this is what actually happened." And so the [missionary organization] missionaries were so sorry, because "This is how we've always been doing it." I said, "But this is what happened." So they changed it. They deferred everything. They realized they're there to support the Catholic ministry. They're not there to go do their [separate] missionary [work]. 'Cause they have their [missionary organization] program... And so, they thought... that was what they were supposed to do in each and every campus. I said, "But you kinda alienated a partner here, 'cause there's a portion of students that's, my student leaders are like, 'You're competing [with] me.' And it's like, why are we competing [with] each other? I thought you were here to help us to go bring

students in and everything.” So, that changed. So from then on, they were tabling on campus to go bring people in. They were doing their Bible studies to go bring people in. So their focus was, “We’re doing this to go bring them into the campus ministry. To go bring them to church, to go bring them to all the activities of campus ministry.” Rather than to bring them to their own activity.

As difficult as hearing that must have been for young, enthusiastic missionaries, the ministry is far more collaborative now. These conversations can go the other way, too, when a missionary had to level with the professional minister that the student meetings “were the exact opposite of life-giving. Three hours long, there was always cold pizza, some middle school icebreakers, some poor formation, and a lot of maybe socially awkward crowd... What would happen is new students would come, and they would never come back.” After more of these candid conversations and some participation in missionary-sponsored programs, the missionaries were able to help revitalize the Catholic campus ministry.

Although these types of candid conversations are difficult, they are critical to the health of any ministry organization. They require intentionality, regularity, goodwill and commitment, as this minister said, “I firmly believe that tough conversations are things that are a little harder to talk about. You don’t know how the other people are going to take it. [Tough conversations] are very, very good if they’re done well.” Christian charity and a commitment to stay in the conversation is key as they gradually build trust, reflected in the vulnerability and humility of this missionary, “I told [my chaplain] in our first meeting, over the summer, I was like, ‘[Chaplain], I’ve learned a lot of what I didn’t do well last year and I want to do better for you this year.’ And so it’s really on [the chaplain] and myself to be in good communication so that [the chaplain] can help [their university Catholic organization] be a home for the Catholics on this campus and we, as [missionary organization], can help it grow and help it be fed into shape.” The staff interviewed here are very proud of the collaboration that has come to fruition even after the rough start.

The professional minister from an earlier quote also alludes to a less prominent feature among those interviewed, but worth elevating here: clear authority. To lift up a quote, “So they changed it. They deferred everything. They realized they’re there to support the Catholic ministry.” Another chaplain benefitted from hearing that chaplains have been entrusted to form, direct and supervise the missionaries, “To me [the ambiguity of authority is] a source—figure out—tension, like who’s really the boss. Is it [missionary organization]? Is it campus ministry? When [the founder of a missionary organization] said that [it was the chaplains], it gave me more freedom to tell them, ‘This is what you need to do and this is how you need to do it.’ I think it’s more empowering, honestly, because our needs are different than what another campus’ needs might be.” The collaboration significantly improved on this campus once ministerial authority was established. Where integrated ministries find gratitude, bifurcated ministries find avoidance or worse. Communication must be intentional, fostered and regular.

Need Three: Clarifying the Roles of Degree-Trained Ministers and Missionaries

Very few missionaries have a degree in ministry or a related field. However, the

missionaries do not consider this to be a problem because they, according to their interviews, are there not to bring academic knowledge to the students, but to inspire the students and disciple them into a relationship with Christ. When they encounter questions that are beyond their education, the missionaries can go to their chaplain. Although this lack of knowledge is not problematic for the missionaries, several of the professional ministers expressed concern with their lack of formation in Scripture, Church teaching and the pastoral applications of these. It is important to note that the concern about missionaries' lack of knowledge is not just a problem in and of itself for most of the professional ministers; the problem is the potential for unintended damage due to this relative absence of theological education, as a minister explained why their campus does not partner with missionaries, "Skepticism about leading people astray by virtue of poor theological, or no theological training, but a lot of enthusiasm." This minister was concerned that the lack of formal theological training coupled with tremendous zeal was potentially dangerous. It should be noted here that both Catholic missionary organizations in the United States, in addition to the brief initial training, provide regional training, team development, and mentorship throughout the missionaries' term of service.

One professional minister shared a story of a time when a difficult situation was averted, "One of our missionaries two years ago came to me just sobbing. And she's like, 'I'm in so far over my head.' She goes, 'Students are coming to me with things that I have no idea what to do.' And I was like—so I'm working with her on, 'You need to refer them to us.' And actually the situation she was talking about... I would refer that on. But that's not what they're taught. They're taught, 'You can handle this.' And that's a problem. So, I mean, very grateful to her that she could recognize when she was in over her head, but I wonder how many times that hasn't happened."

Before this quote is inappropriately used to conclude that all missionaries lack a sense of when to refer a student, it should be contrasted with both missionary organizations' training and with these findings. First, one of the missionary organizations shared their curriculum with this project and noted several sessions covering mental health, handling a crisis, and distinguishing between spiritual direction (done by someone with special training) and pastoral care.⁹ These sessions help the missionaries understand the limits of their competencies and when they should refer a student to someone with more appropriate training. Additionally, this missionary organization has established protocols for dealing with mental health issues and emotional boundaries.

Second, the findings indicate that unless a minister had formal training in counseling or a related field, all spontaneously brought up that they would refer a student whose needs seemed to be beyond their training. A missionary explains, "I know that I am not a counselor, and it is not my job to be a counselor. So I know enough to keep someone grounded and point them in the right direction." The missionaries in this sample were aware of the counseling resources available to students, as well. The missionary above who was described as "in over [her] head" may have

⁹ Personal email correspondence. September 20, 2019.

deviated from her training or this organization might now include more on ministerial boundaries. The previous two quotes from professional ministers reveal a concern that brief training can lend a greater subjective sense of preparedness than it warrants, ultimately risking a ministerial misstep.

Need Four: Utilizing the Leadership of Professional Ministers in a Blended Context

Given the very different training these two groups of campus ministers have, it would be very helpful for a professional minister to put time into the ongoing formation and support of the missionaries, as well as helping them translate their missionary formation in a way that is sensitive to the needs of a specific campus, as one professional said, “From our side of it, my dream would be that there would be basically one staff member that almost their full-time thing is helping [the missionaries], of being that liaison to them and making—how are we helping to form them versus, we’re just all so super busy and no one has time to do it well.” The challenges of missionaries with limited formal education and experience could be mitigated by having someone whose primary role is to support, form, train and theologically reflect with the missionaries, much as a mentor in a field education placement would. This would also help to bring these two models together. However, as alluded to at the end of the quote, this would likewise require a significant amount of resources. Thinking about ways dioceses could cover or subsidize the salary of this staff person would be enormously beneficial for collaboration.

A missionary points out how much better campus ministry is with both present, “I think there should be, if possible, we should have both. ‘Cause campus ministers, I think, are great at the macro-view, so, taking the general view, ‘What events are we doing? How can we make this community grow?’ And then missionaries can kind of take the micro-view of like, ‘Let’s go invest our lives in students, Bible studies, and bring people into this community.’ I think having both is super important.” Although this study found that ministers of all models prefer the one-on-one forms of ministry, this quote highlights the longer-term, more campus- and vision-embedded work of professionals and the more immediate and short-term projects of the missionaries. Bearing in mind the relative lack of enthusiasm professionals have for the more administrative components of their job, this dichotomy should not be applied rigidly, lest the professionals lose the more generative parts of their job. Still, recognizing some of the particular gifts that the professionals bring can help mixed ministries allocate tasks and build collaboration in vocationally significant ways.

Several professional campus ministers were also worried that they would be replaced by younger, more available and less expensive missionaries, as this minister explained after describing what he or she has observed, “My issue with it is, many dioceses have decided that it is much more cost-effective to bring in four [missionary organization] missionaries to a college than it is to pay a professional campus minister... My issue with church for years and years is, if we can get somebody to do this voluntarily, let’s just get ‘em ‘cause it doesn’t cost anything and don’t really scrutinize what it is that they do.” A major concern among campus ministers is that missionaries do not simply fill in gaps where there are no campus ministers, but they provide a cheaper alternative to professional ministers. Needless to say, the professional ministers find this

deplorable. Amplifying the distinct gifts of professional ministers in mixed contexts can help to reassure the professional that he or she is essential to the ministry and is not going to be replaced.

Another minister argued that as a matter of best practices, missionaries should be used to complement professional ministry or fill in gaps for campuses without a campus ministry:

I guess when I think about [missionary organization] being on a campus on their own, the first thing I would say is it's better than nobody being on that campus. Because [missionary organization] does a really good job at what they do. But at the same time, I do have concerns that the students on that campus are really only seeing one piece of the Church... Because, I think, we're a more integrated campus ministry, we're able to show [students a] more full scope of the Church, plus have that guidance that I feel is necessary. So kind of the both/and. I feel like [a missionary organization presence only is] better than not having any presence of the Church on campus, but I do have concerns.

This minister believes complementarity is best when considering missionary placement because it provides students with greater access to the breadth of the Catholic experience and can help guide the missionaries in their outreach. Still, using missionaries to minister on a campus without a Catholic presence is understandable if resources are scarce.

This emphasis on professional leadership also highlights some of the ways greater collaboration in ministry can help staffs meet the other three needs of communication, clear roles and shared vision. First, when the students and campus ministry staff recognize a particular professional minister as a leader and chaplain, he or she can facilitate authentic and productive dialogue and understanding. Second, when professional leaders recognize the distinct training that they and missionaries have they can identify clear roles and tasks for each that are appropriate for their training and gifts. Finally, as blended ministries become more integrated and collaboration becomes more natural, this professional, long-term, campus-embedded leadership can begin to articulate what a shared vision in a blended ministry context could look like.

Insights for Going Forward

Typically, campus ministry teams that involved both professionals and missionaries could identify what was going well and what needed further improvement. Briefly revisiting the findings in light of how to maximize the potential of these blended-model ministries is in order.

Beginning with the leadership of professional ministers, their long-term dedication and experience with the campus culture should be recognized as a valuable asset. Diocesan leaders should assure the professional ministers that missionaries will not take their place. Explicitly stating that their long tenure is necessary not only for creating a thriving ministry, but will be invaluable in quickly onboarding the new missionaries and in helping them best discern how their gifts might most benefit the campus community. When the gifts of both missionaries and professional ministers are recognized and utilized effectively, true collaboration can come to fruition.

Second, appreciating the different training and competencies that both professionals and

missionaries bring is critical. Many professionals have graduate degrees in ministry; recognizing their knowledge, their ability to pastorally apply this, and their sense of campus culture will ensure that the missionary charisms appropriately translate to the host campus. Recently-graduated missionaries easily connect to undergraduates and can bring new students to the existing campus ministry. Those who would exclude missionaries from a campus simply because they lack theological education forget that enthusiastic volunteers—including those without graduate degrees in theology—are critical to the majority of Church ministries.

Third, regular communication is key and fosters a sense of team. Even while recognizing distinct gifts is important, both professionals and missionaries want to see the campus thrive. Care should be taken to have honest conversations not only when beginning to integrate missionaries, but also as a regular practice. Similarly, do not discount socializing; having casual, yet intentional time together builds trust and charity.

Finally, a professional minister will close this section with sage advice when discerning whether or not to blend the professional ministers with missionaries, “I think there’d have to be an openness to this particular kind of ministry. Yes, I think it can [work], but if there’s resistance from the beginning, it’s not going to work. It can’t be forced.” This brings us back to the importance of shared vision; coercion can force a new ministerial model, but only with an openness to a vision shared by all involved will it succeed.

Section 4. Parish Involvement Post-Graduation

One final finding that was especially important is the transition to parish life after graduation. None of the campus ministers volunteered that they had data that tracked the extent to which students continue to practice their faith or otherwise develop spiritually after graduation. But most believed that generally students’ faith lives would decline after leaving campus ministry; only seven said that they thought that most of those who attended Mass would continue to do so upon graduating. Unlike the other sections above, in which the most common themes were the ones that shaped the analysis, this section will lift up insights that sometimes only a handful of respondents provided. Instead, the hope of this section is not to discover the broadest trends, but to raise up creative and innovative ideas that may help recent graduates to continue to grow in their faith once they no longer have the benefit of campus ministry.

Nineteen of the forty-five interviewed pointed to the parish as the problem. This was expressed either as parishes not being a very life-giving experience generally or that parishes are not good at meeting the needs of young adults in particular. Beginning with the former, a good number described parish life as an anemic experience—liturgically, communally, relevance-wise and in other ways, “They’re not welcoming. They’re not giving good homilies. They don’t have good music. They don’t have good community. We’re both on the losing end of this because, we’re missing, we’re losing a generation.” Parish life needs to be reinvigorated.

Second, some said that parishes are just not good at meeting the needs of young adults specifically. Some interviewees pointed to practical needs that drive this, “Maybe that’s not fair to the parish, because people care, but maybe the orientation is more towards families, with