

B. Ministry Formation

Overview

“So he shepherded them according to the integrity of his heart, and guided them with his skillful hands” (Psalm 78:72, NASB). This verse indicates that preparation for ministry should involve both character and competency, for the passage speaks to David’s preparation of heart and hands to do ministry. The concept of ministry formation includes both the development of a ministry mindset and the development of knowledge, skills, and abilities to perform ministry in both personal and professional areas.

As with Christian formation, ministry formation encompasses more than any one program, department, or division. Instead, it is found embedded in a variety of courses and activities across campus, most notably the Christian service component (as discussed later in this chapter). Presently, ministry service roles are required by all students beginning in their freshman year. Students are involved in some form of ministry during all four or five years of their education at LBC. Ministry formation also includes many extracurricular activities, including missions trips, prayer retreats, sports teams, and seminars and workshops available to students, to name just a few. The ministry formation process includes both noncredit and credit opportunities.

While ministry formation activities are found in a variety of forms throughout a student’s time at LBC, many of these activities, including internships and practicums, are overseen by the Professional Division. It is the Professional Division that focuses its attention on the second half of LBC’s missions statement, that of educating Christian men and women to serve through professional ministry. Hence, in this section of the self-study report, the Professional Division addresses issues of ministry formation, especially as they relate to the following ABHE standard.

Standard

ABHE Standard 11

The institution’s academic programs are appropriate to the achievement of its mission and to the level of educational programs offered, with some programs oriented specifically to full-time vocational ministry but all programs enabling students to achieve a biblical worldview.

Compliance Documented

It is the finding of this self-study process that LBC is in compliance with the stated standards and subsequent elements in the area of curricular issues. Data sources demonstrating this compliance include: Christian service handbook, character contracts, internship and practicum notebooks, reflection journals, student teaching handbooks, and evaluation rubrics.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided this section:

1. What are the evidences that ministry formation is an integral part of the student's education in all three divisions of LBC?
2. How does the faculty supervisor use internships, practicums, and applied field service to evaluate and guide students in the formation of professional ministry skills?
3. Does each department have sufficient personnel to support the ministry formation aspect of its programs?
4. What measurements will be implemented to determine if online education courses engender ministry formation?

Analysis of Key Issues

During the self-study process, the overarching goal of the Professional Division was to examine areas that are critical to creating a quality ministry formation process for all LBC students. Discussion centered on key functions of the division as it prepares men and women for future vocations in professional ministry and related fields in the years ahead. The research questions were designed to address both aspects of ministry formation, the heart and the hands. Collectively, the questions address both personal and professional ministry formation.

Ministry Formation across the Curriculum

This issue was identified by the Professional Division as a critical piece for study. There is consensus that ministry formation is perceived to be very important to the education of a student at LBC. It was determined that research needed to be done to see how ministry formation issues were being addressed intra-divisionally. The rationale for this decision centered on the desire of the Professional Division to ascertain the frequency with which issues of ministry formation were being addressed in all aspects of the student's education. It was believed that this area of formation is so vital to the entire educational process of a student that it should be explored in all three divisions.

A committee from the Professional Division created a survey of eight questions ([Appendix 4.B.1](#)) that was used to poll professors of all divisions regarding their consistency in formulating a ministry mindset and perspective among students at LBC. Surveys were sent to 56 adjunct and full-time faculty with 42 professors responding. Three students were also randomly selected from each of the courses that the 56 adjunct and full-time professors chose to be surveyed. The college registrar conducted the random selection of students.

The maximum total score on the survey was 32 points with a maximum of 4 points on each item. Respondents indicated by their total mean scores that the elements of ministry formation as a whole were carried out consistently in the classroom "most of the time" with a mean range of 22.8 to 26.2 points total. Also, the total mean score of each division indicates that the elements of ministry formation were carried out "most of the time" in each division with a mean range of 22.1 to 26.2 total points.

Comparison between full-time faculty, adjunct faculty, and students was made on their item survey ratings. Students often rated the frequency of the expression of these elements of ministry formation higher than the faculty did.

Comparisons between the Arts and Sciences, Biblical, and Professional Divisions were made on their item survey ratings. It would be expected that courses in the Arts and Sciences would not score as high in some categories due to the fact that basic course content would not be directly related to ministry formation per se, and may only be related as a means to that end, such as the content in an English composition course. Even so, some specific items should be expected to be as high in the Arts and Sciences as in other divisions, such as prayer before class. On that particular item, the Arts and Sciences mean as measured by faculty and students was 3.42. While a respectable mean, this rating was significantly lower than those of both the Biblical and Professional Divisions.

One area of challenge was indicated by the item “The instructor gives the students ideas about how to improve their personal life and devotion to Christ by his/her example” when compared to another item, “It is evident that the instructor genuinely cares about reaching people for Christ.” The mean of the ratings by instructors and students on these two items indicate that the faculty and curriculum do well in training students how to do ministry but not as well training students by personal example how to live their personal lives in devotion to Christ. The collective means of these two items were 2.675 and 3.395 respectively, a significant difference. The item mean on training students how to improve their personal devotion was 2.08 for the Arts and Sciences Division, 2.76 for the Professional Division, and 2.96 for the Biblical Division. It is recommended that this area of concern be shared with the faculty as a whole for a discussion on how the college can address the issue. Some suggestions might include planning deliberate times of modeling in courses, curriculum, and other academic activities.

Internships, Practicums, and Applied Field Service

The mission statement of LBC states that LBC exists for the purpose of educating Christian men and women to live according to a biblical worldview and to serve through professional Christian ministries. As the Professional Division discussed the intent of LBC’s mission, it was determined that it was important to ascertain the breadth and depth of the ministry formation field experiences as they presently exist. During the 18 months prior to the writing of this section, there has been much discussion in the Professional Division about unifying the field experiences in each of the various programs. It is the intent of the Professional Division to create similarity within the division while maintaining the unique qualities of the field experiences indigenous to each program of study.

Another aspect of earlier discussion involved the expectation of difficulty of the field experiences. It was the consensus of the Professional Division that students should participate in professional hands-on opportunities that are challenging and preparatory. There are seven different departments within the Professional Division. Each of these departments is distinctive and engages students in various aspects of ministry formation that are reflective of the goals and objectives of the department.

To ascertain the effectiveness of the various field experiences, department chairpersons were asked to submit indicators from the ministry experiences that would show the extent of the

internships and practicums. The data collected indicates that a variety of methods are being implemented to support ministry formation in students preparing for professional ministry. Internships, practicums, and applied field service all contribute toward the formation of professional ministry skills by providing the students with realistic experiences rather than just theoretical perspectives in their chosen field. The students are exposed to and have interaction with different cultures, ethnicities, age populations, and socioeconomic levels. As they minister to others, the students are able to model the passion, as well as the behavior, of their faculty supervisors. This interaction is essential to the refinement of their ministry skills. Since each department is unique in evaluation and guidance, the following items document the continuum of paradigms that exist to evaluate and guide the students. All of these items illustrate a level of personal interaction and care that is demonstrated to individual students by faculty supervisors to produce the best ministry formation skills upon graduation from LBC.

- syllabi
- daily logs
- portfolios (evaluated by the faculty supervisors)
- weekly reflection journals
- semester evaluation forms completed by internship, practicum, and applied field service supervisors
- oral reports to peers
- individual mentoring/advisement in regard to activities
- student learning groups to report activities
- character contracts between the faculty supervisor and the student to address character issues in the student
- collateral reading assignments
- online web resources
- ministry skills inventories
- weekly time reports demonstrating work accomplished
- scheduled meetings throughout the semester (depending upon the department)
- various end products (e.g. philosophy of education paper)

The information collected through the divisional discussions and data collection indicates that there are a variety of ways that students are being impacted by the faculty supervisors. The information also reveals the breadth of the ministry formation experiences in the various departments of the Professional Division.

While gratifying to see that many different methods are being used to measure ministry formation, there are no clear overarching procedures that reflect a standard for the entire Professional Division. Therefore, it is recommended that the division be proactive in creating more cohesion among its departments in the area of field experiences and the impact of those experiences on ministry formation. While realizing the need to maintain distinctive objectives and goals within each department, the creation of a few division-wide benchmarks would ensure that students are acquiring a more consistent ministry formation experience.

Staffing to Support Ministry Formation Effort

As the Professional Division discussed the future development of ministry formation in the various programs within the division, it became apparent that one of the concerns focused on adequate personnel. Both faculty and support personnel were targeted in the discussion and were included in the survey population.

Chapter Three of this document reports the finding of a 2006 study done by the Office of Academic Affairs regarding faculty ratios ([Appendix 3.1](#)). The Professional Division, serving as the study group for this section on ministry formation, notes that there is a wide variance of percentages in the seven different departments within the Professional Division. As noted in Chapter Three, some of this variance is due to the numbers of students in the various departments as well as to the smaller departments that include just one or two full-time instructors. Nevertheless, attention should be given to what seems to be an imbalance of full-time faculty ratios in several Professional Division departments.

Another factor related to full-time faculty ratios is internship and practicum classes. These classes vary greatly within the Professional Division departments in the way they are taught. Attention is currently being given to the internship, practicum, and applied field service classes to develop commonality among the classes while allowing for diversity and flexibility appropriate to the uniqueness of each department.

It is the recommendation of this study group that this data be used to develop a holistic plan for future hiring to create effectiveness in teaching the course offerings that most relate to the ministry formation of students. Additionally, this data should be used in conjunction with an overall curriculum review.

Another area that should be monitored is the percentage of full-time faculty members who are teaching overloads on a continual basis. Benchmarks should also be established concerning the numbers of adjunct professors who should be used in each department. Additionally, criteria should be established to determine the maximum number of students in each class for that class to be effective in its objectives

It is recommended that the institution determine what criteria will be used to create a process to assess what percentage of classes will be taught by full-time professors and which courses can legitimately and effectively be taught by adjunct faculty to best utilize the full-time faculty in the most strategic and impacting way.

One area that was not targeted in the research of this study group, but deserves mention, is the various ways faculty provide opportunities for ministry formation with students outside of the classroom. These informal and formal times of interaction are integral to the ministry formation of students. One example would be Helpers in Service (HIS) teams. Students have the opportunity to participate in these cross-cultural opportunities that provide intense interaction with faculty team leaders and other ministry professionals and create many different venues for ministry practice. Additionally, individual faculty spend time interacting with and mentoring students for personal and professional ministry development. These informal times provide opportunities to personally engage students in a variety of ways, which enhance the educational process at LBC. It is recommended that better data be kept regarding the amount of informal interaction that occurs between students and faculty to ascertain the impact this time has on the ministry formation of students.

To free up faculty to spend time in ministry formation both in and out of the classroom, key support personnel are needed. This study group sought to determine if the current number of faculty assistants is sufficient. The findings of this study are found in Chapter Three.

Ministry Formation of Online Students

The rationale for this issue stemmed from a concern within the Professional Division that online education will lack personal contact with students and, therefore, will be less effective in achieving elements of ministry formation. The intent of this research was to gather information that could be used to create a tool that would evaluate how effectively online education courses engender ministry formation.

Administrators, faculty, and staff were asked to provide input as to how online education might best be constructed and evaluated for effectiveness. Interestingly, the data was gathered through e-mail, thereby using the technology that is indigenous to an online education process. The results of the e-mail survey are located in Appendix 4.B.3.

Since this is a new initiative for LBC, the research process was seen to be in its early stages and was viewed as a brainstorming function and merely the impetus for further research that is needed in this area. The recommendation of this study group is that the college create a task force to discuss and prioritize the data gathered from the e-mail survey. This task force should consider how ministry formation will be accomplished in future online courses and programs and should develop a tool which can be used to measure how ministry formation is being engendered in specific online courses and programs.

Key Strengths Noted in This Section

1. Both faculty and staff recognize that elements of ministry formation are being accomplished “most of the time” in classes within all three divisions of the college.
2. There is a great deal of breadth of ministry formation experiences being utilized in the various departments of the Professional Division.
3. There is a great deal of variety in the availability of extra-curricular opportunities for ministry formation, both formal and informal.

Recommendations for Growth and Improvement

The following recommendations for consideration are being made by this study group:

1. The college should challenge faculty to become more intentional in the ways they model personal Christian formation.
2. The Professional Division should seek ways to become more proactive in creating cohesion among its departments in the area of applied field service.
3. The Professional Division should work with the Vice President for Academic Affairs in establishing benchmarks for acceptable levels of full-time, part-time, and adjunct faculty teaching Professional Division courses. [A similar recommendation is made by other study groups.]
4. The college should establish a more intentional process of hiring faculty and support personnel so that the ministry formation of students is able to be carried out across the campus in the most effective way possible.

5. The data contained in this section should be used in conjunction with the overall curriculum review.
6. Better data should be kept regarding the amount of informal interaction that occurs between students and faculty to ascertain the impact that this time has on the ministry formation of students.
7. More consideration should be given to how ministry formation will be accomplished in future online courses and programs.

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