



REACHING FRESHMAN

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If there is any class we should concentrate on reaching year after year it should be the Freshman class. I believe God has called us to be involved in reaching every student at our universities, and the most strategic way we can accomplish that on a regular basis is by concentrating on reaching the Freshman class...for the following reasons: Historically Freshmen are the most open to the gospel. Statistically, 85% of those who receive Christ do so before the age of 19.

By reaching every Freshman every year we will automatically be reaching every other influence group, since all of them must pass through the Freshman class. It is the only "target audience" that every other target audience has been a part of. All Greeks, athletes, and student leaders, etc. will have to pass through the Freshman class. It is much easier to reach them while they are Freshmen and send them into an affinity group than to try to break into an affinity group by ourselves. Reaching the Freshman class means we will also be reaching the entire University after 3-4 years. In other words, let's say that you reached every student this year with the gospel, who would you have to reach next year to continue reaching the campus? Who would you target? Probably just the Freshmen and transfer students, right? Let's use another example: Let's say you reach everyone on your block with the gospel. Two new families move in, who would you have to reach in order to continue "reaching your block?" Just the new families, right?

Our normal pattern of multiplication has been that students really don't contribute back to the ministry (i.e. have their own groups, assume leadership and multiply etc.) until their third year of involvement. Although there are some exceptions, we cannot

build our movements around the exceptions. This means that if we are targeting Juniors or Seniors, just about the time they begin to lead, they graduate. A movement happens when what I am doing is multiplied several times in the lives of those I'm working with. This creates momentum. Students will hopefully graduate with a greater depth of maturity and greater breadth of ministry skill and experience after 4-5 years of involvement. They will be prepared laborers for the harvest, wherever the Lord leads them.

The Freshman class is a measurable, definable, reachable, target audience. In many cases, the Freshmen are required to live on campus and hence are more accessible through dorm strategies, etc. On virtually all of our campuses, we can obtain a phone/address list of all the Freshmen. We can continually be giving other segments of the campus exposure to opportunities to hear/respond to the gospel via publicity, Every Student's Choice strategies, College Lives etc., but let's make sure we are personally contacting every Freshman.



As we concentrate on reaching Freshmen, we will reach far more students overall, since Freshmen who are won to Christ will have more years to be involved in evangelism than a senior--hence, the greater possibility of impact. Let's say for the purpose of



illustration that a student comes to Christ during his first week on campus and immediately begins sharing his faith at least once a week until he graduates. That means, with 30 good weeks on campus, he will reach a minimum of 120 students by the time he gets his diploma--not counting what his multiplying disciples do. Contrast that with a student won to Christ during their Senior year.

Other classes will automatically be influenced as this Freshman moves on through the other classes. If we're going to be involved in reaching the campus for the long-haul we can afford to be methodical and purposeful in our strategy.

Freshmen are probably the most accessible and easy to share with. It is probably less of a "faith barrier" for a sophomore to share his faith with a Freshman than a Senior.

As we reach every Freshman every year and are faithful in giving everyone the opportunity for building, training and sending as they pass through, we are, from the human side of things, insuring all that could be involved are in fact involved. It gives focus and clarity to what we are trying to accomplish. We need to be crystal clear with our objective and promote creativity in the strategy of fulfilling the objective rather than visa versa.

IMPLICATIONS

Well, what are the implications? We need to build our campus plans around reaching the Freshman class. Reaching Freshmen needs to move from one of many optional strategies to a distinctive of our staffed campuses. It's not whether we reach them but how we will reach them. Of course we will be reaching others in the process but let's make sure that we contact every Freshman. We will measure our evangelism by this question: "Did we reach the Freshman class?"

HOW CAN WE DO IT?

Strategies are the decision of the local level. But here are a few ideas. To begin with, make certain that you and your leadership are present at Freshman Orientation Week. Take your Spiritual Interest Surveys in front of the Freshman Dorms or in Dinner Line Surveys. Have Team Meetings in predominately Freshman classes. Target your strategy toward Freshmen or try sending a letter to every Freshman (100-150 letters per week) telling them that someone

from your ministry will be calling them the next week to take the Freshman Survey (creative surveys that you can change every month or so in order to really know your target audience). Or why not mail a copy of Jesus Without Religion to every freshman. This puts something in their hands that the Holy Spirit can continue to use whether he/she chooses to be involved in Crusade.

Choose as your "target audiences" the different segments of the Freshmen class. Each staff can be in charge of reaching one of these "target audiences."

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Thoughts from the Field on Freshman

Chris Lipp: East Kentucky University

one thing we did to start off this year was an "it's free" campaign - basically a showing-God's-love-in-practical-way pre-evangelism deal. freshman move-in (housing office actually made us the official movers!), big cookout (dining halls don't serve until monday so we had a free cookout on sunday - ran out of food twice), food/coke giveaways (esp. at greek chapter mtgs), all of us wearing t-shirts saying "it's free" (on the back they said "free indeed" with "john 8.36" in smaller type). it was one of the better things i've seen. we got the idea from paul hilliard at ECU - tho i don't think theirs was necessarily a 1st 6 wks thing.

Rick hove: Duke University

1. you must make freshmen the focus of your ministry the first couple of weeks. Many ministries get all their upperclassmen groups going and then turn to the freshmen. It's too late. I see the first couple of weeks of school as the battle for the literal souls of young men and women. An entering believer, looking for a fellowship, isn't much different from week 1 to week 4. But a nominal church kid, if they get drunk and run with the wrong crowd is radically different week 4 than week 1. Week 1 they'll shake your hand and come by your meetings. Week 4 they will mock you. So we schedule EVERYTHING in the ministry to focus on the freshmen for the first 2-3 weeks. Upperclassmen groups can wait -- we'll all pursue freshmen. Now some might say that the focus of those first 2 weeks should be evangelism. Well, that's what we're doing. At Duke at least half of the freshmen coming around the first couple of weeks don't know the Lord. We are just loving them into our community where they will hear the gospel.

If I talk to any director about the start of their school year, I'll want to see that they are wholeheartedly pursuing freshmen, not just putting up posters.

2. you must make freshmen groups your priority in terms of leaders. I realize this isn't the norm in Crusade, but here's my thinking: it's at the freshmen level that people choose to get involved. So why put your weakest group leaders to work with the freshmen? Freshmen group leaders need great people skills -- they are meeting tons of people, shaking their hands, and trying to bring them around. Obviously I care about my upperclassmen groups, but I think if you are going to get good freshmen, you need your best group leaders at the cutting edge -- where new people are making the

decision whether to get involved or not.

3. your freshmen group leaders must be trained. IV has a camp in May to train all their small group leaders. We actually did this long ago at Carolina. We don't now, but we gather all our small group leaders before the freshmen arrive and be sure they are ready to go.

4. schedule your fall conference early. The fall conference is your prime opportunity to "bond" and "win over" freshmen. We go the third week into the fall. At Duke tests get bad around week 5 or 6. Fall Break comes around week 7. All the other Christian groups are having retreat around then. We go first and always have a huge crowd.

5. scholarship your freshmen to fall conference. Our fall conference cost is \$75. Each year we tell freshmen they can go for \$25. The upper classmen talk it up, saying "You lucky dogs. Better go this year." The reality is that this costs me at least \$3k a year. But it is money well spent. It also fits into my first point: you must structure the whole front end of the fall to get freshmen.

6. have a "info meeting" for freshmen sometime during orientation week. During O Week we'll play hoops, dish out Ben & Jerry's, etc. but it is at the "info meeting" where freshmen hear about who we are and what we offer. These meetings are i) short -- 30 minutes; ii) always involve good food; iii) are done by 4-5 of our very best students. 1 student emcees, 1 gives a very brief history/overview of CCC, 2 give "CCC" testimonies -- not salvation testimonies but what they've enjoyed about CCC, and the last student summarizes what we have to offer -- large groups (including the details -- where, when, etc), small groups (including how they can find their group), and conference/summer projects (including info on fall conference). We gather email addresses, etc.

7. get to the freshmen asap. We have our activities fair on Saturday afternoon and our Info Meeting Saturday night. After those two meetings we have 250 names. We split them up and give them to freshmen group leaders. They visit them all personally and kick off groups on Tuesday nights. It's tough to personally visit 250 people in about 2 days but you can't spread this out over the first week or two -- you need to go for it. All my leaders know that we work really hard for a week - from Friday of orientation week through the first Friday of classes -- but it's worth it.

8. make a quality brochure that tells who you are and provides them all they need to get involved. We have one that is full of smiling faces and is specifically written for your typical entering freshmen.

9. remember food is power. Throw good parties to build community.
10. follow up all the freshmen who come to your first weekly meeting. No matter how well we gather contacts before our first meeting, I am always amazed how many freshmen come "out of the woodwork."
11. At fall conference give your freshmen a bigger piece of the pie. By now most freshmen have opted to go with Crusade. Many of them are unbelievers but there will be many that want to get more involved. Give them a chance.
12. In your freshmen groups be sure you do two things: You must create community where there is significant "heart" connection. In other words, groups can not be just cognitive. The leader must ask questions about real stuff and share from his or her life. People want to connect with other people. Secondly, these groups must focus on Christ and, correspondingly, the gospel. At the risk of stepping on some toes, but freshmen groups shouldn't be doing "I kissed dating goodbye" or other equally moving books. Take them to Christ at a heart level.
13. Since your large group meeting is often the first exposure for a freshman, you need to be very careful about the quality of everything for those first few weeks. I am far more "hands on" with the band, etc. those first few weeks because so much rides on it. Strong large groups will help you draw freshmen.
14. there is an inviolable rule in ministry -- students are attracted to similar students. This really affects freshmen. Let me explain: when we first started at Duke there were no students. My prayer for the first year was to find a handful of people who liked me and who would hang around. It was tough. But the next year we got more freshmen because we actually had 10-15 sophomores! Our fourth and fifth year we got large, social, solid freshmen classes. This was because we finally had solid upperclassmen they could look up to. So, if you're just getting going, be patient. Work and pray for a solid few and each year build on them. Also, if you have a core of students who, for some reason, won't attract leadership type students, you need to figure out how to rectify this (ah yes, easier said than done!). I'll give you another example. There is a Christian group at Duke that meets on Friday nights. Friday nights at Duke are when all the social students head off campus for dinner. So inevitably this Christian group tends to have more timid or socially reserved students. Every year when freshmen come in I can almost pick the freshmen that will go with this group based on their personality. I'm not sure I like this principle, but I've found it to be true: students are attracted to similar students.

Jeff Chuddy & Sally Powell: Indiana University

We make a big deal about the importance of the freshmen class. Our first six weeks strategy until the Fall Retreat is filled with attention given to bringing in a good freshmen class. We are doing lots of publicity, surveys, socials, free pizza's, etc. Something that we have been doing the last couple of years is beginning Bible studies the first couple of days of classes in every major dorm area. We do surveys the first couple of days of classes and hand everyone who takes a survey a flyer inviting them to a Bible study. We challenge all of the Target areas to get back to every positive Bible study survey response by the next day, hopefully face to face, inviting them to the Bible study to be held in their dorm. This is a 3-4 week co-ed Bible Study (although after some get to know you stuff we divide off men & women) where we offer free pizza. Already by the second day of classes we have had large groups of freshmen gathering, getting to know each other, and talking about the Bible. This has been tremendously successful as we meet lots of new students right away and introduce them to the other things we offer.

Jim Sylvester's philosophy about the importance of reaching a freshmen class has been very helpful in building the movement. If you can reach a freshmen class two years in a row it makes a huge difference in the size and feel of your movement.

Hugh Jones: UNC-CH

Probably our greatest success has been our "Great Adventure Retreat" which a student came up with. The first weekend of the year we invite all of the freshmen to come away with us for Friday night and return on Saturday after dinner. We scholarship them 1/3 of the cost. High fun quotient, low on content, helping students get to know CCC and other students. We've gone from 35 the first year to 235. The second night, we ask our group leaders to stay for small group leaders training. Usually 80 student leaders will stay with us. They are highly motivated after spending the weekend with all of these new students.

Jeff Nieman: University of Michigan

"In campus ministry you are always only four years away from extinction." With these words my pastor challenged me and reminded me of how difficult ministry can be in a transient environment like a college campus. Our priority every year is the same: reaching as many freshmen with the Gospel as possible. This is nothing new or profound. Evangelism is the key to growth and freshmen are traditionally the most open to the Gospel and stay on campus the longest.

Our freshmen come in a few days early, so our ministry actually holds a meeting uniquely for them. We pass out flyers after freshmen convocation, inviting them to a meeting an hour later consisting of music and stories from sophomores about their first year experience. We have each freshman attending that night fill out a card with his or her name and living information, and hold a drawing at the end for free stuff. We then put out signs around the room listing all of their dorms, and we encourage them to go to the sign where they live. It is remarkable how many friendships start that night. We also invite them to a party the next night furthering the chance to get to know them before the upperclassmen even show up. Within the next day or two our leaders and staff also try to go back and see each freshman personally, learn who they are and tell them who we are, explaining the faith that we have in Christ.

But this is just the beginning of our focus on freshmen. For the most important day of our year is the first day of classes. Across our campus we do our surveys, asking people if they are interested in learning more about God, in learning about Bible studies, etc. Late in the afternoon we quickly sort all of our cards, because that night we invite every student in every dorm who expressed interest on the survey to a Bible study that first night in the place they live. We make flyers for the Bible studies with the time and location in their dorm, and if a student is home we invite them. If they are out we leave them a note on the flyer inviting them to join us. So in each dorm across campus we start a Bible study the first night, making it very relational and fun with some content. This year we had around 150 freshmen attend a Bible study their first day of classes at Michigan.

But reaching freshmen does not stop that first day. Because we use a cell group model, those first night Bible studies quickly split into more reasonably sized groups. Our leaders then go back and spend time sharing Christ with those who came, and continue to reach out to those who did not. We have noticed that after the second week people are much busier and it is harder to get them to come to a Bible study. So we work hard to spend time sharing Christ with as many freshmen as we can before life gets too busy.

On a campus with as many distractions as ours it can be easy to get sidetracked. As the coursework gets harder, school can become all-consuming, and ministry can feel hard. Our leaders (and even staff) can become guilty at times of making excuses, saying “Michigan is different” or calling it a “difficult” campus. As a result, in October there is a strong temptation for our leaders to close ranks, and try to desperately hold onto those students we have already gathered. But this is not what God has called us to do. God has called us to reach “every student”, so it is vitally important throughout the year to look for more ways to reach out to everyone, especially those in their first year. So our

staff must continually struggle to keep the vision fresh and alive before our leaders. It can be a continual battle to keep the movement from October-on “outward-focused”. One helpful way has been to allow the freshmen to share in the vision themselves. Too often we offer no challenge to freshmen for growth and outreach. Yet freshmen are the ultimate “insiders”, and can do a lot toward reaching their classmates by inviting their friends, hosting focus groups and other outreaches in their dorms. Where appropriate, they can even become assistant leaders as cell groups split. But throughout the year if we are to grow as movement, both in depth and breadth we can never lose our focus on others.

In addition to reaching new freshmen, we look for various ways to involve and connect those who already are coming. We host a special freshmen time at our fall retreat. We host special freshmen pizza parties and dinners throughout the year. Last year many of the freshmen started eating dinner together once a week. We want to help build a “class identity” that will last for four years and beyond.

Yes, we do believe in reaching upperclassmen for Christ here at Michigan. Yes, we do pursue other outreach and coverage strategies. Yes, we do believe in discipling, building into and sending those former freshmen. But we feel that one of the reasons we have seen our ministry grow is that for each of the last six years we have seen more freshmen get involved in our ministry, and many of them have come to Christ. And so we will continue to remember that despite the size of our movement, we are still a mere four years away from extinction. May God continue to raise up each and every year freshmen who become lifetime laborers for Christ!

Jason Morris: EKU

Here are some things we do at the beginning. We like everyone try to meet as many freshman as we can. Last year we were able to go to another level through partnering with the university. I will tell you a little about it.

First, we have all of our leadership, and future leadership students come back early to reach the freshmen. On our campus the university has a series of new student days before classes start. These days are geared toward all new students. Our students see these 4 days as a mission trip to their own campus. If they are going to come back earlier then they will labor along side us. It is really good b/c it gets their hands in ministry and lets them live the staff life for a few days. So that is key number 1 for us. This week helps create an environment in our ministry that goes throughout the year.

Second, last year we served at 2 university events. A cookout, and a late night ice cream social. The cookout had around 900 people and the ice cream 600. The university sponsored and paid for every thing as it was a part of their week. They let us give people info about our group and the Big key was that everybody that went through the lines filled out a card

where they could express interest in a Bible study. Launching these Bible studies is the key for us all week. We are not so much trying to share our faith yet. Instead we are trying to get people to come to a Bible study and we will individually share with them from there. Our other big contact getter was we set up tables outside the dorms and had people fill out a contact card for Bible studies. We got another 500 cards from that. At the end of the week 900 people had expressed interest in a Bible study.

The third thing we do is divide up the cards and give them to those launching the Bible studies. This year we launch 4 guy and 4 girl. We were able to give each girl 130ish contacts of people who had some interest. The guys each got 60ish. So the first part of this new student week is getting contacts part 2 is visiting everyone who has expressed interest and inviting them to come to the small groups. This is great training for our students as they have all participated in this and it really helps the Bible study leaders. Once classes start the staff still go visiting people trying to catch them at home along with the Bible study leaders. We have found that many non-Christians will come to these groups and it is so natural to share your faith with them once they come even once. Our students have shared their faith more than ever this year b/c of that.

One thing I will add about working with the school. Our thought has been how can we be helpful to the university. How can we be a blessing to them instead of having an us vs. them mentality. This has opened many doors for us and although we may not get to share the gospel immediately in some areas it lays the foundation where the school welcomes us helping them. So I would encourage people to look for way you can help your school b/c if we had the cookout and ice cream deal under the name of CCC then the turn out would have been significantly less.