

Building a Peer Ministry Team

Starting from Scratch

Consider establishing a peer ministry program in your campus ministry to help provide the understanding and assistance international students need. The campus or area pastor identifies several students who are willing to make at least a one-year commitment, and trains them to develop their interpersonal and leadership skills, their ability to clearly articulate their faith, and then familiarizes them with resources that are available for dealing with specific programs and problems. The pastor and the students become the "peer ministry team." Peer ministers spend four to six hours a week performing assigned duties designed to develop and nurture a ministry with international students on campus.

Potential peer ministers might be:

- First-year students (able to continue longer)
- Students with experience in another country or culture
- Christian international students (very helpful)
- Graduate students
- University faculty and staff
- Church families

Once There is a Team

It is important to grow together as a "team." This takes time—Jesus spent three years training the disciples and involving them in an active way in His ministry. (Many campus ministries may be unable to afford a semester scholarship for more than one "peer minister." In this case it is important that a special committee be organized to serve as a support group to assist with this ministry.)

Elements of Team Growth

Bible Study

1. Vision for the work (goals and objectives)
2. Growth in Christ as his disciple
3. Commitment to and skills for the work (job description)
4. Helps with our priorities

Prayer and Worship

1. Personally—for yourself, and for international friends
2. As a team—for each other, the work, and international friends
3. In large groups (weekly committee meetings)—for new contacts, specific countries, international friends, and your team
4. In churches—worship services, prayer circles, church publications

A Christian international student could share with the large group or church about his country, what Christians in his country are doing, and prayer requests.

It may take prayer to overcome fear and prejudices, and to get others motivated to befriend internationals. It will certainly take prayer for internationals to respond to the Gospel.

Sharing and Playing

- a. Be open to one another about needs, joys, frustrations, experiences. Share experiences of how friendships with internationals are going. It's important to grow in love together.
- b. Have fun together in relaxed, natural settings like weekend or day retreats, sports events, walks, or meals together. These are important learning experiences which carry over in contacts with internationals as well as helping the team mature as a "team." **Planning**
 - a. The campus pastor should lead the team planning meeting, helping the team to stay on the track and keeping the time.
 - b. Some questions for planning and evaluating:
 - What have we done? What needs to be changed? What should stay the same?
 - What needs to be done now? When? Where? What materials are needed? Who will be responsible for what? Who can we ask to help? What resources do we already have?
 - What groups of internationals are we reaching? Who are we missing? How can we include more internationals? Who should we focus on?
 - How are we helping Christian internationals? Non-Christian internationals?

Training

- a. Peer ministers will need assistance in order to:
 - Be oneself—relax
 - Have a Biblical base for international student work
 - Be culturally sensitive
 - Be friendly in first contacts with internationals
 - Know what to say in conversations
 - Build a real friendship with one or two internationals
 - Build bridges to people of other faiths
 - Share Christ in a way that's clear and understandable
 - Assist with language difficulties and tutoring
 - Visit university officials
 - Plan for international student events, weekends, outings, conferences, etc
 - Display book tables
 - Organize a welcome campaign — housing, telephones, utilities, banking
 - Host a city tour
 - Conduct evangelistic Bible studies with internationals
 - Share with churches a vision for the work
 - Assist and strengthen new believers
 - Prepare internationals to return home
 - Learn the rudiments of scheduling times and places

Mission

This, of course, is why we are a team—to accomplish the work the Lord has entrusted to us as his faithful servants.

Suggestions to Implement the Elements of Team Growth

1. Have weekly meetings.
2. Have a retreat each semester.
3. Ask staff workers, missionaries or other experienced people to help.
4. Attend training conferences together.
5. Use handbooks, papers and media on international student work.
6. Discuss books on particular themes, i.e., Islam, How to Share Your Faith, Bible Studies, Discipleship, etc.
7. Visit other groups which are also involved in international student ministry.
8. Participate in the "gatherings" for holidays and other celebrations.