



## August 4, 2021 Memorial Of St. John Vianney

### Catholic Campus Ministry Association Publishes Recommendations for Fall 2021 Regarding Campus Ministry

Catholic campus ministry, currently present on 25% of the nation's four year campuses, is emerging from the Covid-19 pandemic as colleges and universities prepare to re-introduce in-person learning for the Fall of 2021. Related to this, the CCMA Executive Board met in April, 2021 in order to assess the past academic year and articulate recommendations for the 2021-2022 school year.

We recognize the profound challenges facing higher education in the coming year and yet remain convinced that Catholic campus ministry *holds the key* for a future of missionary disciples in the Church and in the world. Many ministries, even during partial or complete shut down, witnessed growth among its student participation.

Out of our conversations with Directors, Chaplains and Campus Ministers, three trends emerged from the 2020-2021 academic year:

- **A successful period of innovation.** Many campus ministries embraced the rapid deployment of technology to deliver retreats, experiences of prayer, one-on-one meetings, conferences and spiritual direction. The examples of specific innovations on campus were inspiring.<sup>1</sup>
- **A feeling of uncertainty.** The pandemic has created a tangible sense of suspense, continually waiting for new guidelines and updated policies related to student activities. The Fall of 2021 will likely be even more challenging as we continue to navigate the pandemic.
- **A continued satisfaction in the work of campus ministry.** In spite of all of the challenges from the past year, campus ministers express satisfaction in their ministry and hopefulness for the season that will follow the pandemic. This satisfaction in the

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<sup>1</sup> St. Pierre, Michael. "Even without Students on Campus, College Ministries Thrive." *Our Sunday Visitor*, 9 Apr. 2020, [www.osvnews.com/2020/04/09/even-without-students-on-campus-college-ministries-thrive/](http://www.osvnews.com/2020/04/09/even-without-students-on-campus-college-ministries-thrive/).

work of campus ministry is consistent with the most recent qualitative study on Catholic campus ministry.<sup>2</sup>

Having emerged from the most severe time of impact from the pandemic, campus ministry must now prepare for *its next season*. To this end, CCMA offers a set of recommendations that will help campus ministers and those responsible for campus ministry.

The recommendations come after a period of both dialogue and listening during the Spring of 2021. CCMA conducted over 25 listening sessions with campus ministers, chaplains, benefactors, Church leaders and other stakeholders. These listening sessions, conducted virtually, provided the Board with valuable insights and real-life examples of the ingenuity exhibited over this past year.

This process was complemented by several presentations during the April Board meeting of CCMA. Dr. Kevin Kruger, President of NASPA (Student Affairs Administrators in Higher Education) and Dr. Josh Packard, Executive Director of Springtide Research Institute outlined the challenges that colleges (and students) faced this past year. These challenges include but are not limited to:

1. Increases in loneliness and isolation. Nearly 1 in 3 young people indicate<sup>3</sup> they have one or fewer trusted adults in their lives.
2. Serious financial pressures. Institutions have eliminated programs and either furloughed or eliminated employment roles.<sup>4</sup>
3. Hesitancy to re-engage in public religious events.
4. Admissions trends that favor large and elite institutions.<sup>5</sup>
5. Campus spaces, as related to hybrid learning trends, will change.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Starks, Brian, and Maureen Day. "A National Study on Catholic Campus Ministry 2017: A Report Prepared for the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops Secretariat of Catholic Education." *A National Study on Catholic Campus Ministry 2017*, United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, 2017, [www.usccb.org/beliefs-and-teachings/how-we-teach/catholic-education/campus-ministry/upload/A-National-Study-on-Catholic-Campus-Ministry.pdf](http://www.usccb.org/beliefs-and-teachings/how-we-teach/catholic-education/campus-ministry/upload/A-National-Study-on-Catholic-Campus-Ministry.pdf).

<sup>3</sup> Packard, Dr. Josh. "The Once and Future Crisis of Loneliness in Young People." *Springtide Research Institute*, Springtide Research Institute, 2 Nov. 2020, [www.springtideresearch.org/post/the-once-and-future-crisis-of-loneliness-in-young-people](http://www.springtideresearch.org/post/the-once-and-future-crisis-of-loneliness-in-young-people).

<sup>4</sup> Bauman, Dan. "Colleges Have Shed a Tenth of Their Employees since the Pandemic Began." *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, The Chronicle of Higher Education, 10 Nov. 2020, [www.chronicle.com/article/colleges-have-shed-a-tenth-of-their-employees-since-the-pandemic-began](http://www.chronicle.com/article/colleges-have-shed-a-tenth-of-their-employees-since-the-pandemic-began).

<sup>5</sup> Adams, Susan. "How College Admissions Have Changed during Covid." *Forbes*, Forbes Magazine, 8 Apr. 2021, [www.forbes.com/sites/susanadams/2021/04/07/how-college-admissions-have-changed-during-covid/?sh=153926812c90](http://www.forbes.com/sites/susanadams/2021/04/07/how-college-admissions-have-changed-during-covid/?sh=153926812c90).

<sup>6</sup> Alati, Danine. "How Higher Learning Spaces Are Changing in the Covid-19 Era." *Architectural Digest*, 2 Oct. 2020, [www.architecturaldigest.com/story/how-higher-learning-spaces-are-changing-in-the-covid-19-era](http://www.architecturaldigest.com/story/how-higher-learning-spaces-are-changing-in-the-covid-19-era).

## Recommendations for Fall 2021

*Recommendations for Dioceses and Religious Orders who assign personnel to both universities and colleges:*

1. Campus ministry requires highly skilled personnel. Strive to deploy priests, religious and laity who demonstrate exemplary character, personal holiness, a love for the Church and a desire to reach students. These individuals are highly trained pastoral professionals and understand the complex landscape of higher education.
2. Commit to campus ministry on a particular campus for a minimum of five years. Campus ministry requires time, engaging stakeholders across the campus and forming lasting relationships with students and staff. If 2020 taught us anything, it is that relationships matter more than ever and that ministry requires a sustained commitment.
3. Ensure that ongoing formation and training exists for campus ministers and chaplains. No campus minister or chaplain can go it alone. CCMA offers weekly opportunities to connect with other campus ministry professionals as well as a formally approved certification process (Pathways).<sup>7</sup>
4. Recognize that the financial effects of Covid-19 will remain through the 2021-2022 academic year. The vast majority of colleges experienced staggering losses during the last year. The corresponding fiscal adjustments will likely remain during the upcoming year and continue to impact ministry on campus.

*Recommendations for Campus Ministers and Chaplains:*

1. Embrace the focus of evangelization. There is no better time than the present moment to help students grow in their relationship with Christ and the Church. All of Catholic campus ministry exists for this purpose. All of our activities ought to draw a line back to this goal as has been articulated by Pope Francis<sup>8</sup> within the broader context of the Church's role in the world.
2. Establish and measure student engagement. Whether related to retreats, worship, service opportunities, Bible studies or discussion groups, measuring student engagement is vital. This requires the foresight to discern which metrics are most valuable to a particular campus.
3. Pursue liturgical excellence. While campuses figured out ways to livestream Masses and other liturgical experiences last year, the return to in-person worship is vital for the upcoming year. Students will be eager to worship in person and our liturgical

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<sup>7</sup> Catholic Campus Ministry Association. "Pathways Certification Process." CCMA, 2020, [www.ccmanetwork.org/certification](http://www.ccmanetwork.org/certification).

<sup>8</sup> "Evangelii Gaudium : Apostolic EXHORTATION on the Proclamation of the Gospel in Today's WORLD (24 NOVEMBER 2013): Francis." *Evangelii Gaudium : Apostolic Exhortation on the Proclamation of the Gospel in Today's World (24 November 2013) | Francis*, 24 Nov. 2013, [www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/apost\\_exhortations/documents/papa-francesco\\_esortazione-ap\\_20131124\\_evangelii-gaudium.html](http://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/apost_exhortations/documents/papa-francesco_esortazione-ap_20131124_evangelii-gaudium.html).

experiences ought to be of the highest quality in relation to environment, music, homiletics and the proclamation of the Word. Inviting students into a greater Eucharistic relationship with the Lord should receive much attention.

4. Care for your team. Your ministry team, whether professional or volunteer, learned how to manage a hybrid schedule. The temptation may be to bring everyone back 100% of the time. We recommend a higher level of ingenuity, embracing the benefits of remote work while placing a premium of in-person ministry. Finding that balance will be key in the 2021-2022 academic year.
5. Recognize the mental health crisis facing students. We know that many students were feeling isolated *prior to* the pandemic. As they re-engage with campus and ministry opportunities, recognize both their social hesitancy and simultaneous need for connection.<sup>9</sup> Seek out professional resources on campus and beyond in order to accompany students in need.
6. Prioritize professional development. All that you and your team learned during the pandemic can be refined in the coming academic year. Ensure that you continue to connect, dialogue and learn from each other, setting aside time to evaluate and measure what matters.
7. Prepare for the implications of a student body which is only partially vaccinated. At present, only a fraction of universities and colleges are mandating Covid-19 vaccination. This will likely continue and we need to discern holistic ways for including all students in ministry rather than excluding them based on whether or not they have been vaccinated.

In conclusion, CCMA recognizes the immense challenges that have faced campuses in the past year. We affirm the brave work of accompanying students through the pandemic and look to the Fall of 2021 as a rich opportunity to welcome students back to campus. The joy of bringing the Gospel of Christ to every corner of the university awaits us.

*Faithfully in Christ,*

*Rosie China Shawver, MDiv (Chair)*

*Michael St. Pierre, Ed.D. (Executive Director)*

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<sup>9</sup> June, Audrey Williams. "College Students Have Been Stressed out during the Pandemic. Here's How It's Affected Their Mental Health." *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, The Chronicle of Higher Education, 22 July 2020, [www.chronicle.com/article/college-students-have-been-stressed-out-during-the-pandemic-heres-how-its-affected-their-mental-health](http://www.chronicle.com/article/college-students-have-been-stressed-out-during-the-pandemic-heres-how-its-affected-their-mental-health).