



Turning Lost Students into Christ-Centered Laborers

REACHING FRESHMEN • Eric Swanson

God has called the Campus Ministry of Campus Crusade for Christ to be involved in reaching every student on every campus. The most strategic way we can accomplish that on a regular basis, is by concentrating on reaching the Freshman class. They should be the focus of our efforts every year.

Reasons for Reaching Freshmen

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. 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.

Reaching the Freshman class means we will also be reaching the entire University after 3-4. In other words, if you reached every student this year with the gospel, who would you have to target next year to continue reaching the campus! Logically, just the Freshman and transfer students. Another example: If you reached everyone on your city block with the gospel, then two new families move in, who would you have to reach in order to continue “reaching your block?” Just the new families.

There is a normal growth curve of one to three years before new Christians begin to have their own ministry, assume leadership, and have an impact. Although there are some exceptions, we cannot build movements around the exceptions. This means that if we are targeting Juniors or Seniors, just about the time they begin to mature in their faith and ministry, they graduate. A movement happens when what an individual is doing is multiplied several times in the lives of those she is 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 mature and prepared to labor in the great harvest.

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 every campus, you can obtain a phone or address list of all the Freshmen. We can continually be giving other segments of the campus opportunities to hear and respond to the gospel through various strategies. But let’s aim to personally contact every Freshman.

As we concentrate on reaching Freshmen, we will reach far more students overall with the gospel. Freshmen who are won to Christ, will have more years to be involved in ministry, growth, and evangelism, than a Senior. There is a greater possibility of impact.



Other classes will automatically be influenced as the Freshman progresses through college. If we are 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 her 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 the ranks, we are, from the human side of things, insuring all that could be involved, are, in fact, involved.

We tend to be more motivated when we can say with integrity that we are giving every student the opportunity to respond to the gospel. It gives focus and clarity to what we are trying to accomplish. We need to be crystal clear with our objectives and promote creativity in the strategy of fulfilling the objective.

Implications for Planning

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 on our 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 Do We Do It?

You and your leadership team decide what strategies are the most effective to reach your campus. But here are a few ideas: Be present during Freshman Orientation Week. Take your “6 Easy Questions” survey in front of Freshman Dorms, or in the dinner lines. Offer programs about relevant topics in predominately Freshman classes or dorms, or Greek pledge classes and athletic teams. Target your strategy toward Freshmen. Send a letter to Freshmen every week telling them that someone from Campus Crusade will be calling them the next week to take the “6 Easy Questions” survey. Use other creative surveys that you change every month or so, in order to really know your target audience. Mail a copy of Josh's More Than a Carpenter to every Freshman. This puts something in their hands that the Holy Spirit can continue to use. Distribute Freshman Survival Kits if you have them. Ask your consultant about availability.

Choose as your “target audiences,” the different segments of the Freshman class. Each leader can be in charge of reaching one of these “target audiences.”

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The Compass is the discipleship curriculum for Campus Crusade for Christ's Campus Ministry. It was created by Centerfield Productions, the field based division of CruPress. We'd love to hear your feedback on this lesson. Please write us at centerfield@uscm.org