

clericalism. Finding community with other campus ministers—both at their own institutions and in their local communities—helped interviewees to alleviate some of their struggles. These support people provided a refuge and safe place where campus ministers could share their struggles, as in the case of lay ministers dealing with issues of clericalism on their campuses or solo campus ministers experiencing isolation.

Section 2. Campus Ministry Culture and the Use of Language

To understand the culture of today's ministers more closely, this section will examine the perception of ministry within four themes: ministering to students, relationship with Jesus, evangelization, and outreach. Many of the questions that gave rise to these four subsections have their roots in findings from the 2017 quantitative survey. First, there was a very positive perception of “accompaniment” among the ministers along with less enthusiasm for or even rejection of “programming”; some nuance and an alternative perspective is provided here. Second, the survey found that particular ministerial contexts emphasized students' relationship with Jesus more than others; discovering what may be driving that was a primary question. Third, “evangelization” was likewise favored among certain ministers; understanding this better was a priority. Finally, ministers' formation affected the importance they placed on outreach; this subsection examines outreach projects on today's campuses in greater depth along with other themes common among the ministers. Together these highlight the similarities and distinctions in culture among campus ministers. Some differences are more deep-seated and can lead to difficulties in collaboration. Others are more superficial and point to opportunities for cooperation between ministers or among teams that have complementary emphases. This section offers glimpses of these differences, providing points of discernment for campus ministries to better understand their own culture and the ways it shapes their ministry.

Fostering Student Growth

Campus ministers discussed two main approaches to ministry: accompaniment and programs. Accompaniment occurs on the one-on-one level and the ministers consistently present this ministerial approach as a positive and believe this is where the most profound student growth happens. The importance of accompaniment is noted in recent papal documents, such as *Evangelii Gaudium*. Programs are designed for larger groups and—perhaps because they lack the more intimate, relational dimension of accompaniment—are sometimes discussed in a negative light by the ministers. To be clear, all respondents indicated that they provided both programs (e.g., retreats, “win events” [a missionary organization term], Bible studies, service projects) and relational ministry (e.g., pastoral accompaniment, spiritual direction, mentoring). The consensus, however, was that student growth happens and is sustained in these more intimate encounters. This is seen most clearly in the near universal importance of “accompaniment” among the ministers. Before moving to the other findings in this section, the authors will pause here to explore this accompaniment/program dualism, as this juxtaposition misses some important truths.

First, there are real practical limits to eliminating programs from the campus ministry

toolkit. Specifically, there are simply not enough campus ministers (nor resources to hire many more) to provide spiritual accompaniment to all the students and employees of a university; programs help more students have faith-filled experiences given the obvious resource constraints. Second, there are human reasons to have programs. The intensely personal qualities that accompaniment entails, indeed what makes it so powerful for those who choose this, could be very intimidating for those who are less comfortable with their faith or consider themselves seekers; these may prefer to ease into campus ministry through the relative anonymity of programs. Thirdly, programs create opportunities for invitation. Students inviting other students to programmatic events affords them opportunities to evangelize others. And related, having fellow students to journey with at a retreat or Bible study builds community and helps connect them to other students who want to grow in their faith. Fourth, there are theological and liturgical reasons to have programs. Programs gather. Mass gathers. Prayer vigils for immigrants gather. Liturgy of the hours gathers. Benediction gathers. Retreats gather. Outreach to vulnerable populations gathers. Christ gathered and continues to gather today through these “programs”; the relevance of these should not be dismissed. Fifth, accompaniment should not be romanticized. Ministers, especially when they are not meeting their own relational needs elsewhere, can come to use the pastoral relationship to fulfill their own needs for importance and human connection. Ministers are there to foster a relationship between the person they are serving and God, not to cultivate a person’s dependence upon them. Given these reminders of a more thorough appreciation of both accompaniment and programs, we return to the findings.

Ways of Relating to Jesus

The 2017 quantitative survey found differences in the ways ministers evaluated the students’ relationship with Jesus, differences both according to institution type and ministry model. The survey found that Catholic campuses were least likely to strongly agree that their ministry prepared them for a relationship with Jesus and public campuses were most likely to strongly agree with this. Likewise, office-based ministers were least likely to strongly agree with this and missionaries were most likely to. However, these interviewees universally believed their own relationship with Jesus was central to their faith and ministerial approach; this was present even while the campus ministers themselves had diverse senses of their call to campus ministry. This unity within diversity was possible because of the different emphases campus ministers placed on the person and ministry of Jesus Christ. In their discussions, the interviewees identified four ideas or experiences that fostered their relationship with Jesus: the notion of Jesus as a friend, parish life, sacraments, and prayer. In addition they talked about two ways of viewing that relationship: as a window into the Trinity and as something to which one gives witness.

The most common theme among the interviewees was that this relationship was a true friendship associated with authentic intimacy, with language such as friend, brother or spouse typical, “I think that’s a big part of our job, is to introduce people to Jesus in a living, vibrant way. Not as—I think, too often, students tend to have their development, like Jesus as a father figure rather than as a companion, or even as a friend.” Not surprising given the American context of these interviewees, power differentials can be perceived as a barrier to intimacy; this

layman at a Catholic university encouraged a peer-based approach to Jesus. Likewise, a diocesan-based layman shares, “We had our team retreat last week, and the whole retreat was focused on friendship with Jesus, and I have an icon. I’d never seen this before. A friend gave this to me as a tribute of friendship, but it’s an ancient, it’s a fourth century Egyptian icon of Jesus with his arm around a monk. I’ve never seen anything like this, but we spent the whole morning meditating on friendship in general, but friendship with Jesus.” We can experience intimacy with God in the tender embrace of Jesus. Taking all of the above into account, having a relationship with Jesus allows for vulnerability and authenticity before a loving and transformative God.

Parish life is a place in which students cultivate this relationship with Jesus. A concern voiced by the ministers here and elsewhere in the interviews is that campus ministry is almost too good (elaborated in the section examining the campus-parish transition). This sentiment reflects the disconnect in students transitioning to parish life after graduation. The campus community holds a shared context that allows campus ministers to more easily meet the various needs. Campus ministers know exactly what is going on in the students’ lives and can craft retreats, homilies and other events in a way that is extremely vivid and relevant for them. For example, at the start of the school year, the idea of welcome and new beginnings are highlighted. Come finals week, the notion of determination in the homestretch is amplified. For juniors, there are retreats for discerning one’s vocation. It is this perpetual relevance of Christ in one’s life that helps campus ministry facilitate a relationship with Jesus. However, when the students graduate and move into an ordinary parish, the parish’s generalist message may not resonate with them. As one campus minister put it, “I feel like we might give them a great four years but if at the end of it when they go back home, even if they’re—let’s say their parish life, or whatever, it’s a little bit of a dead atmosphere. If they, because of that, choose not to go to Mass then I think we failed, even if they had a great four years. Okay, maybe down the line the seed will have been planted and they’ll develop that later on, but if that’s just it, then all we are is fun and great events, then it’s for naught.” Campus ministers want to ensure that this relationship with Jesus is cultivated through liturgy and the life of the Church, which is more than the “fun and great events” they enjoy in campus ministry. Many of the campus ministers deepened their relationship with Jesus during their college years. They want to make sure that students’ campus ministry experience helps develop them in a way that grounds them in Jesus through the broader Church. Ideas to facilitate this transition to parish life are discussed in the fourth section of this report.

Similar to this is the belief that a relationship with Jesus is experienced through the sacraments. When asked how they cultivate their own relationship with Jesus, one lay minister on a Catholic campus responded, “Daily prayer and daily reception of the sacraments. Especially the Eucharist.” Others noted that the sacraments should likewise be important for the students’ faith. The Church and the sacraments share an obvious connection and many of the respondents who mentioned one of these also mentioned the other.

Campus ministers underscored the importance of prayer in different parts of the interview and some spontaneously mentioned that prayer was central to the relationship they and their

students have with Jesus, as this laywoman minister at a Catholic campus discussed, “I desire the students to be able to sit and reflect and discern at every moment as they’re moving forward and through their prayer of sitting, at times, in silence before we even start with words. And that it’s okay to have ups and downs in regards to your relationship with God.” Other campus ministers reported specific prayer practices, such as Ignatian retreats, were fundamental to tethering themselves to Christ.

Some campus ministers viewed this relationship to Jesus as a window into the Trinity or as a way to give witness to one’s faith. One’s relationship with Jesus was also important because Jesus, as fully human and fully divine, provides believers with a tangible way to understand God. A center-based priest emphasizes that the person of Jesus gives us a window to the divine, “The relationship with Jesus is not merely the sacrament, or merely a historical person, but the alpha-omega, the representation of the source of all being. Our relationship with Jesus is ultimately not really a relationship with Jesus, it’s a relationship with the one who made Jesus or the one who Jesus comes from, or the one who Jesus shares partnership and Trinity. Not a historical person, although that’s the story we’ve got. But, I mean, the divine.” Recognizing the finiteness of the human mind, this campus minister claims that the earthly life of Jesus grants us access to understanding a God that we cannot fully understand without a relationship to Christ. But the divine and human nature of Jesus goes both ways. In the act of choosing to become human, God expresses love toward creation, as a lay minister with her doctorate elaborated as she recalled conversations with her students:

We’re the only people that I know of whose God thought it was important enough to come see what it was like to be one of us... And that’s how Jesus got here... So we now have a God who knows how you feel, when a loved one dies. It’s evident in the story of Lazarus. We have a God who had parents, we had a God who was not always—[he] disappeared from them, and his parents were searching for him... There isn’t anything that you haven’t experienced now that you know for sure that you have a God who’s experienced that with you.

Through the Incarnation, Jesus is a revelation that we were created by a God who loves us deeply and demonstrates this by living alongside us and experiencing the highs and lows that earthly life entails. And because of this, we can have a relationship with a God who understands us intimately.

Although many campus ministers discussed the various ways they gave witness to their faith, tying this to one’s relationship to Jesus through witnessing was common among the missionary campus ministers, as one said, “[O]ur relationship with Christ is not just an ‘I-thou’ thing, it’s something that’s meant to pour out and to gather in others as well.” And another shared, “If I’m doing that [being a strong Catholic], then I can also live that out as an example to other people who may not totally understand that, or who may struggle with seeing that.” If done well, these missionaries contend, a relationship with Jesus will affect the way one acts in the world and attract others. Our relationship with Jesus should bring others to us.

Examining this section in light of the quantitative survey data is illuminating. It was clear

that the vast majority of the campus ministers interviewed believed that a relationship with Jesus was very important. Yet, as discussed above, the survey data indicated that campus ministers on Catholic campuses do not believe their ministries are as effective in cultivating this among their students (just under half strongly agree that students are effectively prepared for a lifelong relationship with Jesus) as the campus ministers at public universities claim they are (roughly two-thirds say this). At first blush, this may seem counter-intuitive. Should not a Catholic campus that is steeped in Catholic identity do a better job of facilitating a relationship with Jesus among its students? Two explanations are possible here.

The first is that Catholic campuses take their identity for granted and that a secular campus—that may be indifferent or even hostile to religion—provides a more stark (and therefore more contrasting) context, allowing students to be more conscious of their Catholic identity. This could foster a sense of embattlement between Catholics and the campus. The interviews do find that campus ministers at public universities are more likely to use combative language when discussing “the world.” But this may have more to do with the higher proportion of missionaries on public campuses; of the six campus ministers who drew upon language of embattlement, five were missionaries.⁶ Although the idea of strong in-group/out-group boundaries could contribute to an emphasis on a relationship with Jesus in a strongly sacred/secular binary, a second explanation is stronger.

More likely it is due to the very different scopes of ministry on Catholic and public campuses. For Catholic universities, most often the ministers are expected—often explicitly stated in their job description—to minister to the whole campus. Campus ministers on Catholic campuses take the lead on ministering to the entire campus: students, staff, faculty and sometimes the neighboring community beyond the university, as well. This means that they partner with non-Catholic student groups, including Muslim, Jewish, Protestant and other faith traditions. They also offer pastoral accompaniment, retreats and other spiritual programming on the students’ terms. For example, when asked if this interfaith context requires avoiding “God” or “Jesus” language, this office-based minister on a Catholic campus responds, “I wouldn’t say we avoid, but we make intentional decisions about when we’re going to focus our prayer, our language on ‘God’ or on ‘Jesus.’” The campus minister goes on to describe the various retreats that are offered to different student audiences throughout the academic year. Retreats that are for students of all faiths, such as a retreat for discerning one’s vocation (in the broad sense), will use “God.” Other retreats that are meant for a Christian audience will rely heavily on “Jesus” and “Christ.” Being sensitive to the variety of faiths they are called to serve requires ministers at Catholic campuses to take a more generally theistic approach with their students at times; they know their audiences and are intentional in their use of language. In contrast, ministers at public universities are often called explicitly to serve the Catholic students and (sometimes) the Catholic staff and

⁶ The appendix lists seven instances of language of “battle,” but two of these mentions were from the same campus minister. This contrast between campus ministry and the wider society may be a characteristic of the language of missionary organizations or merely a coincidence owing to our small sample.

faculty; public campuses are perpetually able to make Jesus central. Context matters for public ministry, even while relationship with Jesus matters for all the ministers privately. And an important takeaway here is that ministers of all institution and model types find a relationship with Jesus to be personally meaningful, even while this relationship might manifest in different ways due to their pastoral contexts.

Evangelization

The quantitative survey found a significant difference between missionary-trained ministers and degree-formed campus ministers in the importance they placed on evangelization for students' growth in faith. Specifically, 90 percent of missionary-trained ministers believed that evangelization was somewhat or very important for students' faith development compared to only 62 percent of degree-formed campus ministers. At the Notre Dame symposium, one of the participants was confused by this finding: Given the wide array of ways the Church brings good news to the world, how could any minister not see this as important?

The interviews indicated that many of the campus ministers answered the survey through a more narrow sense of "evangelization," as this degree-formed campus minister stated, "I think a lot of people think of evangelization as someone going out and maybe being a little bit in-your-face in a way that's not very desirable... 'These are our beliefs, and this is what you need to believe, too, and this is why you should think this.'" Perhaps in their haste to complete an anonymous survey, respondents did not reflect as deeply on the word as they would normally, as she continued, "I do think that [evangelization] is sharing the joy and the love of our gospel and of our faith, but I think there are a number of ways that you can do that... by your action, by the programs that you run, in your conversation, and just your everyday relationships with people, too." This is a good reminder that methods have an impact on findings, underscoring the value of mixed methods in sociological research.

The vast majority of interviewees found importance in evangelization, even while there were some differences in the details. None of the interviewees advocated a catechism-thumping, "in-your-face" idea of evangelization. Some of them emphasized simply bringing students the goodness of God's abiding presence, as this lay woman at a private college does, "I'm hoping [they will] be able to turn to God... the moments of joy and the moments of sadness and consolation, to spend and to be able to—yeah—to find community, to find purpose. So there is goodness there but I think yeah, that word ['evangelization'] can be tricky." Some emphasized invitation through a more indirect availability, welcome and visibility, like the priest who bakes cookies and practices "intentional loitering," meaning he wears religious garb in high-traffic campus areas. Others advocated for a more direct style, approaching strangers, such as this professional minister, "I'm not going to just sit here in my office and wait for people to come to me. I was out all day today with the students and in their place telling them to come and going to them. I see that as key." And yet they still want to be invitational, not aggressive, as this missionary shares, "Being on campus, making our presence known, but also not trying to be forceful. Because a lot of student organizations on campus come off as very forceful, standing in the middle of the aisle, like here take this pamphlet... We would table on campus a couple times

a week. So we'd set up a table with our tablecloth and cut out pope, and a couple other things, and just be available." All ministers wanted to bring good news to their campus and they did so in ways that they believed made sense for their gifts and their contexts.

Another major theme among the ministers was relationship, as this priest at a Catholic campus stated, "The mistake in my mind of evangelization is to think that evangelization is the first move. That ultimately it starts with encounter. It starts with encounter where people find themselves. And then it moves to—before you even get to evangelization—to helping people and developing trust. And you do so by listening, by helping them integrate what they've got going on in their own lives. And then if you've proven through your encounter and your ability to accompany them, then you [are] set up to be able to have a conversation around evangelization." This priest highlighted not only the priority he gives relational ministry, but also refers to an apprehension discussed above: That evangelization, as a way of teaching the faith, can become pontificating if not coupled with relationship. Evangelization, literally meaning spreading "good news," must be experienced as good news by the hearer as well as the speaker; relationship helps ensure this shared understanding.

Outreach: Immersion and Service

The quantitative survey also found distinctions between degree-formed and missionary-trained ministers in their attitudes toward the importance of service activities and their role in student growth. For example, 79 percent of degree-formed ministers identified service or charitable work as very or moderately important for students' faith growth compared to 56 percent of missionaries. This study sought to explore that difference in perception, but unearthed important qualitative differences in the ways ministers understand two forms of outreach: immersion experiences and service projects. These distinctions have ethical and spiritual implications. This subsection will also discuss outreach as an onramp into campus ministry, the importance of theological reflection and the ways outreach opportunities facilitate student transformation.

Before discussing the various ways these campus ministers understand service and immersion experiences, we must first define these terms. Here "service" or "service projects" refer to events that gather students to perform some sort of work of mercy, such as a house-build, for a marginalized group. These often include a time for reflection or debrief, but not always. "Immersion" or "immersion experiences" are relational encounters in which no services are provided, but students instead listen to the stories of a marginalized person or group and observe their way of life, such as eating (but not serving) a meal with residents of a homeless shelter. Immersion experiences will always incorporate reflection or processing.

The Scriptures repeatedly state that those who are in need deserve help from those who are able to assist (e.g., Matt. 25); Church teaching underscores that this is a matter of not simply charity, but of justice (e.g., CCC 2446). However, charity and justice work in the US context is complicated. More often than not, power inequalities—including wealth, race and education—

are exacerbated in service projects.⁷ Many, but not all, campus ministers voice their concerns over service projects, contrasting these to their own more immersive and relational style, with this laywoman from a Catholic campus sharing:

We don't do house-building and we don't dig dirt anymore. There's no service component, which is probably big for some students. But I think that for me, we need to both dismantle artificial othering but also really have conversations about—we can have a conversation about immigration there because everyone has some kind of—right? And that's real and it's not—so probably, it's interesting because it's a meta thing. But I took my student leaders down to [Tijuana] and their student leaders met up with us and then we visited a family in the neighborhood and then came back and did a reflection altogether... I think it would be easier to go down and build a house and have one of the youth group's moms cook us dinner and be like, "Oh my God, they're so fun." And then, "They're so poor and they're so happy." And then you go home. And that makes me really uncomfortable.

Immersion experiences attempt to emphasize the personhood of someone living in poverty by removing the service component, facilitating an encounter. Although this prevents the students from engaging in works of mercy, it has the benefit of creating a "culture of encounter" that is based on relationship and mutuality, with this laywoman from a different Catholic campus saying, "We advertise it and prepare the students not to do mission or service, but to go and accompany the people and just to meet Christ in the people. That's our way into kind of what we consider some of the dimensions of Catholic social teaching, or helping people see the poor as companions on the journey. More than just people that we are called to [serve]." This paradigm shift reflects an emerging awareness of the need to avoid service projects that obscures the human dignity of the marginalized. Although many campus ministers strive for a more relational and immersive type of community engagement, a significant minority still run traditional service projects. Campuses, centers and dioceses would benefit from a critical examination of the assets and liabilities of service projects, in light of a culture of encounter.

Yet, the inequality that characterizes the typical ways we organize service projects within the American context can be responsibly managed if one is aware of the common pitfalls. Concerns like othering, romanticizing poverty, another's scarcity causing one to feel grateful for all one has, and charity as a way to quell guilt should not be a part of either service or immersions. Although eliminating service is one way to ensure that these negative aspects do not creep into campus ministry, this is not the only way. This encounter-or-service dilemma poses a false binary. In fact, providing both relationship and material well-being characterize the life and ministry of Jesus. Campus ministers should feel invited to consider the ways they can integrate the separated strands of encounter and service. By recognizing the power dynamics that organize

⁷ Nina Eliasoph, *The Politics of Volunteering* (Malden, MA: Polity Press, 2013). Jerome Baggett, *Habitat for Humanity: Building Private Homes, Building Public Religion* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2000).

the benefactor/beneficiary relationship, campus ministers might endeavor to create service projects informed by solidarity, projects that happen in deliberation with the host community. Rather than students implementing projects *for* the host community, these are projects that students implement *under the leadership of* the host community, with both groups growing in affection and appreciation of the other; the ways the campus and students benefit from this encounter must be recognized. There is a strong argument to be made that it is better for young adults to cross social boundaries in personalist ways than to perpetuate social distance by engaging in projects that amplify inequalities. However, once a campus feels that they have eliminated the pernicious aspects of service projects, it should consider the ways that carefully incorporating elements of service might enhance the spiritual and human development of both the students and the host groups in a spirit of true community.

Nine of the forty-five campus ministers spontaneously described service as a valuable entry-point for students. One of the ministers said that she was not especially interested in faith when she was an undergraduate, but was drawn to the service, justice and immersion opportunities that campus ministry offered. Those activities led to friendships and invitations to retreats and prayer events, widening contact with campus ministry and her Catholic faith. Another minister recalled data from the outcomes she tracks at her parish-based ministry, “A cool stat I don’t [precisely] know off the top of my head, but I think it was 40 percent of students that went on the Spring Break trips were involved in our ministries. Then, after they got back, 80 percent were more involved in our ministries. [Outreach opportunities are] a definite onramp.”

Something that can frustrate campus ministry outreach is having a separate office on campus that coordinates community engagement, as this minister at a Catholic campus experiences:

We have a separate service office on our campus. I find this dissatisfactory. Even though we’re in the same division and we collaborate. It’s not like, “We don’t talk to you and you don’t talk to us.” However, I think that split inhibits us from doing the kind of deeper engagement with faith and service, and faith and justice that we would like to do. On the other hand, we know that a lot of students want to do service, but they don’t want to have anything to do with campus ministry or faith.

They will more likely go to an office like that.

But, what this minister did not highlight is that in having ready access to a service office not embedded in campus ministry, outreach cannot attract students who may be disengaged from the faith, disaffiliated or uninterested in religion. Of the seven ministers who voiced this challenge, five were on Catholic campuses and two were missionaries at public campuses (for one, a separate Catholic student group did outreach and, for the second, the university held its own “mission trips”). In situations where another group or office handles outreach, collaboration in planning and implementation could mitigate the disconnect between faith and outreach.

But outreach cannot be a springboard into campus ministry more broadly if the theological significance to what and whom the students encountered is not unpacked. Therefore, it is critical that campus ministers engage in theological reflection with the students. Ten of the

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eleven ministers (91%) who identified theological reflection as an important aspect of ministry had graduate degrees in ministry or a related field; this is disproportionately high compared to those with ministry degrees in the sample broadly (69%). This could indicate that formal theological education heightens the ability of ministers to see the presence of God in their world. Remember, graduate programs do not simply dispense knowledge, they also form their students to see the ways God acts in the everyday world. This lengthy formation process—which also raises theological acumen—helps future ministers practice theological reflection, a tool that they then use in their campus settings.

A laywoman at a Catholic campus illustrated the way that theological reflection can help expand students' imagination, helping them see the theological significance to an issue they previously saw only as political:

[For] example, the issue of immigration. They were so involved in wanting to do the walks and everything for the issue without realizing the spiritual components and the Catholic social teaching connected with it. So they were just like, "Well, how can Jesus be involved with this? This is a social justice thing." I was like, "Jesus is social justice." And so just even talking about how they're so... wanting to speak out and to understand these issues. But introducing Catholic social teaching is important and allowing them to see that you cannot disconnect Jesus from any issue, and that he has to be the center of that.

Just as service can be an onramp to campus ministry, Catholic social teaching can enhance the moral, spiritual and human dimensions of a political issue. The work of justice is a constitutive element of preaching the Gospel, as *Empowered by the Spirit* reminds us, "[T]he Church on campus should remember that the goal is not learning alone, but constructive action to eradicate injustice and to transform society" (76).

Finally, because of the inherently experiential aspects of service opportunities, these provide a fertile venue for student transformation. Some of these transformations are a change in perspective, a sort of scales-falling-from-the-eyes experience. Others have vocational consequences, as this woman religious at a non-Catholic college discussed, "Not just in terms of the activism part of that, but how does that integrate with faith. So seeing that not just as a project in terms of a one-time mission trip, but a project of life. How that has shaped, has educated, has raised the awareness. And makes life-changing options for them, whether in terms of their career paths. One particular student, because of her interactions, her involvement with several different mission trips, she's changing her major now, and she's working towards wanting to be an immigration lawyer." Seeing outreach as a way of manifesting one's faith in the world can have a profound impact on vocational choices. College is an important time for questions, identity formation and discernment. Because of its explicitly formative expectations, campus ministry is uniquely poised to accompany young adults in this critical period.