

Campus Ministry Council and Student-Led Religious Groups Purpose and Policy Statement

As a university affiliated with The United Methodist Church, SMU requires that a United Methodist elder serve in the position of Chaplain and Minister to the University. According to The Book of Discipline, the chaplain is tasked with extending the ministry of the church in the university setting. The mission of The United Methodist Church is to “make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world.”¹ This description of the Chaplain’s role sets the parameters within which the Campus Ministry Council functions.

Since SMU is a diverse community of teachers and learners from a wide range of faith backgrounds, the Chaplain’s office welcomes and respects the integrity of each particular religious tradition. We operate in the tension between the Christian mission to make disciples and the religious diversity of a college campus.

The Campus Ministry Council (CMC) is the body of representatives of each recognized campus ministry and functions under the authority of the Office of the Chaplain. Whereas each organization has its own core mission, the CMC is charged with maintaining an orderly system of programs in keeping with university policies and with working together in a spirit of good will. The CMC will: (1) promote the development of worshiping communities, (2) collaborate wherever possible on projects of mutual concern, and (3) communicate the vision of faith as a central and integral component of human life.

Admitting New Religious Organizations

The following criteria govern the consideration for membership in Campus Ministry Council and for new student-led religious organizations:

1. The applying group must be associated with a historically identifiable religious group. Preference will be shown to the applying group which identifies with a local congregation.
2. Preference will be shown to the applying group who is distinct in its organizational identity and non-duplicative of other organizations already serving students at SMU.

¹ Neil Alexander, editor, The Book of Discipline of The United Methodist Church, (Nashville: The United Methodist Publishing House, 2012), paragraph 332, p. 256; paragraph 337.2

3. The applying group must show that a significant constituency exists for their services (at least 10 students). These students must agree to meet with a representative of the Office of the Chaplain to ascertain their commitment to a new group and show that they are not presently in leadership of another existing group.
4. The applying group must complete the application process with the Office of the Chaplain.
5. A Campus Ministry is permitted no more than five credentialed, non-volunteer campus ministers not including SMU faculty/staff advisors. It is understood that the University may limit the total number of approved campus ministers per organization based on (a) available resources, (b) the University's determination of whether a significant constituency exists for a particular religious group's services, or (c) any approved applicant's failure to comply with University policy. Exceptions to this when the existence of a significant constituency on campus exists for the applicant's services will be considered on a case-by-case basis.

Admitting New Campus Ministers

The following criteria govern the consideration for new Campus Ministers to be credentialed through the Office of the Chaplain.

1. Applicants will complete an application for a Campus Minister position with the Office of the Chaplain. The Office of the Chaplain must receive a current signed letter from the applicant's supervisor and/or board recognizing the authority of the applicant to be a representative of the religious organization on campus.
2. Applicants for a Campus Minister position are expected to hold a baccalaureate degree and appropriate certification and credentialing, demonstrate evidence of experience in campus ministry and plans for ongoing training. Those without appropriate experience will be paired with the Chaplain to the University for mentoring/training.
3. Applicants must agree to Campus Ministers and Religious Volunteers Policies.
4. Applicant agrees to pay for and submit to a background check.
5. Applicant will be interviewed by the Chaplain to the University or such other individuals designated by the Chaplain with respect to:
 - Existence of a significant constituency on campus for the applicant's service

- The willingness of the applicant to comply with applicable policies and procedures
6. The University has sole authority to determine whether there is a significant need for applicant's services, based on demonstrated student, staff and faculty need, and to make a decision on whether to accept or reject the applicant, based on such reasons as the University determines are in the best interest of its community and mission.
 7. It is understood if approved, only the named applicant may exercise related privileges and may not transfer those privileges to any other individual.

Criteria, Accountability and Procedures

Accountability – The individual members of CMC are to be accountable to:

1. Instituted authorities of their own denomination or religious group;
2. Southern Methodist University through the Offices of the Chaplain. This accountability includes:
 - Attending and participating in monthly CMC meetings. Any organization that misses 2 meetings of CMC in one academic year will lose recognized status with Office of the Chaplain and Religious Life. Chartered organizations may lose their charter through Student Senate.
 - Maintaining a group online presence and providing the Office of the Chaplain with printed materials that reflect meeting time and place along with contact information
 - Meeting with Chaplain's Office for an end-of-the-year report
 - Attending and participating in Underground chapel service.²

Policies

Each campus minister, student representative, and his or her appointing agency shall:

1. Recognize the religious diversity represented and respect the integrity of all.

² Campus ministers who identify as Christian.

2. Refrain from targeting other religious groups for the purpose of proselytizing.³
3. Refrain from recruiting members from other religious groups. While it is true that student may explore multiple groups, it is the expectation that campus ministers and students in leadership will encourage students to faithfully commit to one group.
4. Adhere to “truth in advertising” – any programming by a religious life group shall reflect the name of the group on all materials.
5. Support the common goals of the council, the Office of the Chaplain and the University.

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³ Please note that proselytizing is defined as the “attempt to convert someone from one religion, belief, or opinion to another” (Oxford Dictionaries). Sharing one’s faith with another is not considered to be proselytizing.