

THE CURRENT REALITY

World Assembly 2023 Conversatorio: University: Our Mission Field

INTRODUCTION

The IFES vision is to see students thriving together as communities of disciples, transformed by the gospel, and impacting the university, the church, and society for the glory of Christ.

In this statement, we envision ministry starting at the university, then pushing out to impact the whole campus, the church, and society. Training students to appreciate the university as their place of mission not only reaches the campus but teaches the students to take a similar approach as they graduate and serve in the academy, families, churches, business, and government.

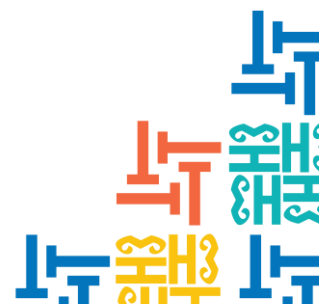
SOME THOUGHTS ON CAMPUS MINISTRY IN THE CURRENT CULTURAL CONTEXT:

- The university is our ministry context. We love and serve the whole campus. We care about students, faculty, and staff, as well as the impact of each university on its city and country. We want to see the campus transformed through Jesus' truth and love.
- All people have a desire to know Jesus and the life he offers individuals and communities. He is the only true answer to student and cultural brokenness and pain.
- The context for student ministry is increasingly post-Christian, ambivalent, or even hostile towards faith and faith groups. In some countries, students meet at a danger to themselves; yet, in other places, there is openness and even encouragement to meet in campus spaces.
- Our world is broken, and students feel vulnerable. Mental health struggles are endemic. To effectively minister to students, movements must take mental health issues seriously.
- Ministry needs to be organic and available to students, staff, and faculty who might share this brokenness while also feeling mistrust towards historical Christianity.

Often, the relational approach to ministry is the best way to gain a hearing for the good news.

PRACTICAL STEPS FOR ENGAGING THE UNIVERSITY:

- Listen to God:
 - Pray over the campus: what words, pictures, and/or dreams does he give you for your university?



- Share these insights with a small group of like-minded students, faculty, or staff. Ask God to lead you to the best action to see your campus transformed.
- Listen to others:
 - What are people saying and experiencing?
 - What are the pain points and joys of students and staff today?
 - What are they experiencing in their homes, universities, and the larger world?
- Engage with the story:
 - What are the stories of students/staff you know?
 - How could your own story of faith relate? How does it answer their questions about life, God, faith, future?
 - How does Jesus offer hope, life, and perspective to their vulnerable place?
- Proclaim the good news about Jesus:
 - Never assume students, faculty, and staff know about Jesus' life and teachings.
 - Always share about what a Christian is, how to become a follower of Jesus, and how Jesus longs to transform the whole campus and society.
 - Leave others with a question or next step to consider.

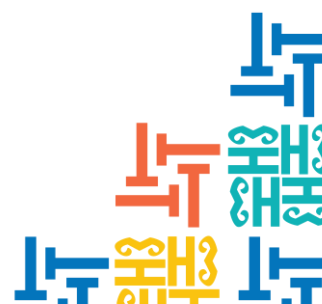
DISCUSSION QUESTIONS FOR SMALL GROUPS AT WORLD ASSEMBLY

All contexts are unique and though we share a common mission and goal, there is no single universal way to reach the campus. Therefore, we need to listen and gather stories of what God is doing throughout the world. To accomplish this, please consider the following questions:

1. What are you observing, generally, about the culture of your university/country?
2. What insight is God giving you/your community to proclaim Jesus in your context?
3. What methods have you utilized in reaching your university/country?
4. What results have you seen?
5. What did you hear from others that you would like to share with likeminded students/staff at your university?

Kurt Thiel

North America Representative



BIBLIOGRAPHY:

[Engaging the Campus: Faith and Service in the Academy](#), 2016 FES Singapore

[Engaging the University](#): Self Evaluation. EN, FR, ES.

[Digital Resources](#) from Big Issues Project

