

Higher Education Action Team Report to the Minnesota Annual Conference, 2020

The Higher Education Action Team works to support ministry in our Conference that helps college students encounter a God large enough to move from the Sunday School room to the college classroom, the college dorm, and the workplace. It means helping young people find out what it means to be a disciple of Jesus Christ as a young adult, making important life-decisions.

The work of this team is described in great detail in paragraph 634 of The Book of Discipline, but the short version of our work is that we exist to support and coordinate work in campus ministry within our conference, and to help connect campus ministries to local United Methodist congregations. We met four times in 2019-20.

At the 2019 Minnesota Annual Conference we were tasked with putting together a response to **Item 101 Support for Campus Ministry in the Minnesota Annual Conference**.

Our findings and recommendations are as follows:

Financial Support

In the past 5 years the total amount allocated to the HEAT team for campus ministry grants in recent years is: FY 2016, \$32,000; FY 2017, \$32,000; FY 2018 (beginning 1/1/18), \$32,000; FY 2019 \$35,000, and FY2020 \$50,000.

Our research of higher education funding in other annual conferences found that funding levels vary. However, the majority of annual conferences seem to provide ongoing, yearly support to the Wesley Foundations and United Methodist colleges within their annual conference.

The nature of higher education financial support is constantly in flux. Some campus ministries qualify to be a student organization and are eligible to receive funding from their university's student programming boards. However, the funding support varies dramatically from year-to-year as the student leadership changes and student fees fluctuate.

Alumni support is also challenging for Minnesota campus ministries because they are relatively new or newly re-formed Wesley Foundations (less than 10 years old), so they don't have the alumni donor base that other more established Wesley Foundations would have.

Recommendation – We recommend that the annual conference commit to annual support for Wesley Foundations in Minnesota.

Relationship to the Minnesota Annual Conference

In addition to financial support, the Minnesota Annual Conference supports campus ministry through utilizing conference communications to promote campus ministry, helping connect graduating seniors to campus ministries, leadership training/support for clergy, occasional micro-grant opportunities (like Love Boldly in 2019), connections with the ELI program for students, recognition and participation at the annual conference session.

Recommendation: We recommend developing a process for supporting the formation of new Wesley Foundations akin to new church development process. This would look like support in the first 3-5 years to include: strategic planting and planning, leadership development and coaching, committed annual financial resources during the start-up stage, approval by the HEAT/MAC for certification as a Wesley Foundation.

Relationship to Congregations of the Minnesota Annual Conference

Some churches in the MAC have ongoing relationships with campus ministries. This may look like providing office space, hosting student events or meals, financial support, sponsoring on campus activities, offering ministry internships, etc. *More congregational partnerships could help strengthen our campus ministries and deepen the relationships between churches and college students.*

Recommendation: We recommend a MAC lead initiative to create a Campus Ministry-Congregational Partnerships program as a means of strengthening support for existing campus ministries and supporting the development of future campus ministries in Minnesota.

Among our accomplishments for the year:

- Supported campus ministries including the Wesley Foundation at the University of Minnesota, United Campus Ministry at the University of Minnesota, Duluth, and the Wesley Foundation at MSU, Mankato
- Facilitated scholarships related to the United Methodist Student Day offerings which are now administered directly by the General Board of Higher Education and Ministry
- Brought together the campus ministry leaders across our state for mutual support, resourcing and encouragement four times.
- Connected Campus Ministry leaders with Conference communications staff,
- We are in the fourth year of our grant application process to provide financial assistance to campus ministry units and congregations in ministry with college students. Funded ministries will address critical issues related to college students in their local context, with an eye toward spiritual development as a necessary component of academic, emotional, relational and personal development.

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