

GOD & THE ACADEMY SERIES



# PROF 101

**Five Things You Need to Know  
About Professors**

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## Five Things You Need to Know About Professors

by Paul Gould

“Win the campus today, reach the world tomorrow” has been a dynamic rallying cry for Campus Crusade for Christ from the beginning. We’ve seen God work in powerful ways over the years. Students are coming to Christ, lives are changed and movements are growing. There is much to rejoice in as we consider how God has used Campus Crusade to influence the university. But, as always, there is work to be done and new challenges before us. Many students still haven’t heard the gospel and it seems that spiritual conversations are getting more difficult.

I want to suggest a new frontier on campus that, I believe, could be one of the most exciting, challenging, and fruitful strategies for reaching the campus and changing our world for Christ: university professors.

Why university professors? Consider:

- Professors influence every student with whom we work. Over the course of four years, every single student spends around 2,000 hours in a classroom, being taught and shaped by 25-30 professors. And the influence doesn’t stop there—add textbooks, homework assignments, papers to be written, and so on and we begin to see the incredible reach of university professors.
- Professors are the permanent fixtures on a campus. Over a lifetime of teaching, each professor will influence thousands of students from many different ethnic and cultural backgrounds.
- Professors have a unique voice—through their writing and research they ultimately shape the world.

Recognizing the strategic importance of professors, several years ago the US Campus Ministry began to shift our mission toward reaching the whole campus—students and



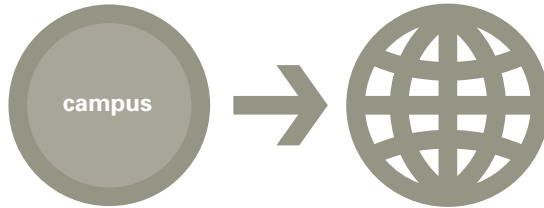
The Hope Center  
2001 W. Plano Parkway, Suite 2700  
Plano, Texas 75075  
Phone: 972.516.0516  
[www.cruprof.com](http://www.cruprof.com)



U.S. Campus Ministries  
100 Lake Hart Drive  
Orlando, Florida 32832  
Phone: 407.826.2000  
[www.uscm.org](http://www.uscm.org)

professors—with the great dream of being able to send the whole campus—students and professors—to change the world. In so many ways we are a better campus ministry with students and professors together.

### The Whole Campus to the Whole World



What does working with professors look like in practice? Professors coming to CRU every week? Students hanging out in the dorm eating pizza late at night with a group of Christian professors? Probably not. We can't expect professors to jump in and do everything that the student ministry is doing and vice-versa. Some things, many things, will need to remain "student only" or "professor only." But we have many opportunities to leverage the assets of one group to help us with the other, and multiply our impact (I'll suggest some at the end of this article).



Professors are not like students. They are unique—in fact, they make up just one half of one percent of the population in America. As you begin to think about ministering to and alongside professors, here are five principles to help you understand what makes them tick:

## One: Professors are Influencers

In his missionary journeys, the apostle Paul followed a predictable pattern:

1. arrive at a new city
2. find the local synagogue
3. tell people about Jesus

The synagogue was one of the centers of cultural influence in Paul's day. If you wanted to reach as many people as possible for Jesus and transform the culture in the process, the synagogue was a good place to start.

Today universities have replaced synagogues as a center of cultural influence. Over 1.3 million professors currently teach in our nation's universities. This relatively small population, all located in one place, has an incredible influence over the rest of society:

- They teach the future teachers of all the secondary and elementary school children in our country.
- They teach the future leaders of virtually every aspect of society—politicians, lawyers, businessmen, doctors, entertainers and so on.
- They regularly influence our laws and public policy. The "experts" who offer their opinions on TV news-talk shows are usually professors.

University professors are a powerful ½% of our population—an Archimedean lever that can move the world.

### The Potential Influence of Professors



Professors move the world because they market ideas for a living. They live in the land of the conceptual more than the land of the committed. Professors' ideas incubate at universities and then are released into our culture and shape our lives in many ways—some not so subtle—e.g.,



## Professors open doors!

"I had the privilege of serving as a local leader for 25 years at the University of Idaho; we led many summer project teams to Osaka, Japan between 1993 and 2007. During that season, never once did I invite a professor to go with us. Now I work with Faculty Commons at the University of Idaho. For the past two summers, a Christian professor and I have co-led a team to Africa. Dr. Bernie Van Wie and I have had such a great time leading together! Because he is a professor, the universities that we have worked on have so honored him that the rest of the team was honored too. He opened the doors on a very Islamic campus in northern Nigeria and gave us opportunities to speak in classrooms to hundreds of students. I will never go back, Lord willing, to going overseas without a professor on the team."

—Ralph, Faculty Commons staff at the University of Idaho

professors (correctly) discovering that bacteria causes infectious diseases; and some subtle—e.g., the often unspoken subtext in science that only materialistic explanations of the world are plausible.

Think of some very vocal voices in our world today:

- Richard Dawkins, who maintains that "belief in God is delusional"—former Oxford University professor
- Bart Ehrman says "the New Testament is a fabrication of the church"—University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill professor
- Peter Singer insists that "infanticide is morally permissible"—Princeton University professor

Professors have a unique voice and credibility that gives them permission to speak into our culture.

Professors also move the world because they influence every single student in America. Students look up to professors, and are shaped by them. Imagine the impact Christian professors could have for the kingdom if they linked together with you in ministry! Imagine the influence of just one changed life, when a professor becomes a Christian!

Just as Paul went first to the center of cultural influence in each city he visited, we would be wise to recognize the influence of university professors and dare to dream of ways that God can use us to minister to them and with them.

What an opportunity! Through influencing professors, we can have a dramatic impact on the world, both now and in the future as the students they teach graduate and become leaders in society.

## Two: Professors are People Too

Sometimes we let imaginary obstacles keep us from relating to professors. In the film *The Princess Bride*, the hero Westley has a dramatic showdown with the villain Vizzini over Westley's true love Buttercup. Westley approaches Vizzini who is holding a knife to Buttercup's throat:

"If you wish her dead," Vizzini calmly states, "by all means keep moving forward."

"Perhaps an arrangement can be reached?" Westley suggests.

Vizzini will not have it: "I can't compete with you physically. And you're no match for my brains."

Westley sees his opening: "You're that smart?"

And then Vizzini delivers one of my all-time favorite lines: "Let me put it this way: have you ever heard of Plato, Aristotle, Socrates?...Morons."

To this Westley offers an irresistible proposal: "A battle of wits, then?"

The battle consists in Westley pouring poison into a glass of wine and the Sicilian choosing to drink either the glass in front of himself or the one in front of Westley. After a display of dizzying logic, the Sicilian makes his choice, picks up a glass of wine, and drinks.

Confident that he had fooled Westley he triumphantly exclaims: "You only think I guessed wrong! That's what's so funny! I switched glasses when your back was turned! Ha ha! You fool! You fell victim to one of the classic blunders! The most famous is never get involved in a land war in Asia, but only slightly less well-known is this: never go in against a Sicilian when death is on the line! Ha ha ha ha ha ha ha! Ha ha ha ha ha ha! Ha ha ha ha ha ha! Ha ha ha ha ha ha..." at which point he falls over dead.

As it turns out, both glasses were filled with poison, but Westley had built up a tolerance to the poison and was unaffected.

A common misperception exists that professors are all somewhat like Vizzini in *The Princess Bride*—waiting to engage anyone who dares in a battle of wits, even to the death! People also assume that professors think of themselves as giants whose intellect is far superior than those who have gone before them.

Another common misperception is that to engage a university professor we must be like Westley, who spent years studying and mastering all of the most difficult aspects of his craft. Our fear is that to influence professors, we must be prepared to meet them head on—to not only match them wit for wit, but to best them at their own game. None of these perceptions are accurate.

Gone are the days of the "renaissance man"—the so-called "know it all" who has an encyclopedic knowledge of



## Regular People Too

"When professors interact with others they are most inclined to talk about their *research projects*. While many are engaged in impressive research, what I find more fascinating is their personal lives, which often get ignored. As I talk with professors, in addition to asking questions about their research, *I make it a point to ask personal questions*.

What I've discovered is that many professors carry a lot of pain and hurt. One professor shared about the immense grief he had been experiencing as a result of losing his son to leukemia. Another professor revealed that her husband had abruptly left her.

At the core, *professors are regular people* and the best way to minister to them is to relate to them as you would a neighbor or co-worker rather than as the world's authority on a particular subject matter."

—Brad, former MTL at Berkeley and current Faculty Commons staff at Duke

almost everything. There is simply too much knowledge in the world for one person to command all of it.

Professors are specialists. Just like professional athletes, professors have invested years in specialized training in order to excel in their field. You wouldn't expect Peyton Manning to be a star in golf and gymnastics as well as football. Similarly, professors are not experts in all areas of life.

In stark contrast to the renaissance man, today's university professors are usually specialists over a very narrow field of knowledge. For example, my professor friends include:

- a physics professor who spends all her time studying condensed matter theory
  - a history professor who specializes in German history from 1930-1960
  - an engineering professor who specializes in electro-hydraulics
  - a philosophy professor who specializes in Kant's Ethics.
- So, don't buy the notion that if someone has a PhD, he or she knows everything.

University professors are people—just like you and me. Sure, they have PhDs attached to their names. They have an expertise in one or a few specific areas of knowledge. But they have the same needs, desires, and struggles as you and I do. Perhaps they won't wear their spiritual needs on their sleeve—but their spiritual needs are just the same as ours.

The good news is that God can use you to reach non-Christian professors. Moreover, when working with Christian professors, you are the expert when it comes to understanding the life of the spirit and how to disciple others in the ways of Jesus. You have much to offer professors:

- your intimate walk with the Lord
- your passion for reaching the lost
- your desire to help others connect with God in all areas of their lives.

One of the greatest assets you bring to professors is your ability to listen to, care for, and befriend them. Being a professor, especially a Christian professor, can be very lonely and stressful. Simply taking the time to listen, care and encourage (in other words—to be a friend to) a professor will build trust and open doors for you.



University professors are people...their spiritual needs are just the same as ours.



One of the greatest assets you bring to professors is your ability to listen to, care for, and befriend them.

God can also use students to reach professors. By being intentional, respectful, and diligent, Christian students can make a favorable impression on professors. Simply saying “thank you” or “I appreciate you working so diligently to help me learn” goes a long way toward softening the heart of a university professor who is used to working in an often competitive and harsh environment.

It's amazing how many times we hear stories of professors being moved toward Christ when students tell them their life stories or invite them to be part of something their CRU group is doing. Staff and students have such an opportunity to be “safe” people—people who care, listen, say “thank you,” and bring the hope of Christ to professors.

The USCM dream is that God will use our staff and students to help change the world through engaging professors in our mission.

### Three: Professors Move to the Beat of a Different Drum

What motivates a person to become a professor in the first place? Two reasons often cited are:

- autonomy
- intellectual freedom

Professors find the pursuit of knowledge a worthwhile endeavor. They believe in it. They also seek autonomy in doing their work, and they seek freedom of thought and expression.

Professors are a bit different than the rest of us. We live increasingly in an age of video—video games, movies, YouTube on demand and so on—all passive forms of gaining information. But professors are people of the book, the written word, who enjoy actively engaging with the world of ideas in order to learn and find truth.

They read and write for a living. They teach others how to think. Some (not all!) enjoy contemplating a deep truth, or solving a puzzle, or writing a journal article more than engaging with pop culture or having a cup of coffee with a friend at Starbucks. This is an important fact that should not be overlooked.



It's amazing how many times we hear stories of professors being moved toward Christ when students tell them their life stories or invite them to be part of something their CRU group is doing.

To understand the mindset of professors, it is important to know how one becomes a professor. Typically it takes between five and eight years to earn a PhD. Their graduate school years could be fairly described as a kind of “boot camp”:

- taking graduate-level coursework
- passing a qualifying exam
- learning a language
- teaching undergraduate courses
- writing and defending a dissertation

After spending so many years in the university, it is not surprising that *the academic environment shapes professors*. The constant grind of the university conforms its “cadets” into its own image. This presents unique challenges and opportunities for us as we desire to work with and reach professors.

**Challenge #1** Consider the apostle Paul’s warning in I Corinthians 8:1 that “Knowledge puffs up.” In this passage, Paul is not saying that knowledge is intrinsically bad. Rather, he is making the familiar point that love is superior to knowledge (see also I Corinthians 13). His statement is not opposed to knowledge *itself*, but to a certain attitude toward it. Knowledge can puff up if it is disconnected from its source (God).

Unfortunately, the reality is that much of a professor’s training as a graduate student *was* disconnected from God—and that can tend to produce arrogance. I’ve not met anyone as arrogant as Vizzini in *The Princess Bride* (“Plato, Aristotle, Socrates?...Morons”). Still, it is important to realize the often subtle effect of becoming an expert in a particular field of knowledge. This expertise can produce, even unknown to the professor, a sense of arrogance and superiority.

*Don’t let that bother you.* This is the natural tendency of the academic enterprise unless one intentionally engages in an academic career with the understanding that all truth is God’s truth and scholarship is just an opportunity to study God’s hand in his creation.

**Challenge #2** Consider the religious views of non-believing professors. There is a general perception among profes-

sors (and more so at the elite universities) that religion is for the weak-minded; that to be rational, one must avoid religion with a ten-foot pole.

*Don’t let that bother you.* I have found that usually the professor’s objections to Christianity were formed in graduate school and without much thought. It’s not difficult to show that Christianity is not simply for the weak-minded or delusional. You can:

- give them a quality book such as C.S. Lewis’ *Mere Christianity* or Timothy Keller’s *The Reason for God*
- point them to Christian professors who are respected in their field
- live your own life in front of them

Take time to ask questions and listen. Don’t guess or assume; take time to get to know the professor—and ask the same good questions that you would ask anyone to discern his or her spiritual condition. Soon enough, you will be able to discern the professor’s perspective on God and the world.

**An Opportunity** A professor’s unique mindset presents an opportunity as well. Colossians 2:3 tells us that in Jesus are hidden “all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.” As followers of Christ, you can help university professors understand *who* Jesus is:

- the Divine logos (cf. John 1-3)
- the creator of all things (cf. Colossians 1 and Hebrews 1)
- yet also the loving savior who came to forgive us our sins

As professors come to understand who Jesus is; as they embrace the fact that only as a disciple of Jesus can they come to “know the truth” of God and “be set free” (John 8:31), they will begin to experience true freedom, not just freedom to follow their ideas wherever they lead.

## Four: The Busy Life of a Professor

When a newly minted PhD lands a job after those challenging years of grad school, life doesn’t get any easier. The goal of attaining a PhD is replaced with a new goal: making tenure.

Tenure is simply the right to hold a permanent faculty position, usually rewarded to a professor after a probationary period of six or seven years.

# 73%

The percentage of professors at elite universities who agree with this statement: “The Bible is an ancient book of fables, legends, history, and moral precepts recorded by men.”



Ask the same good questions that you would ask anyone to discern his or her spiritual condition.

The tenure process is difficult and competitive. At smaller universities, a professor's eligibility for tenure is determined

- first by their teaching
- second by their research and publications
- third by their departmental service

At the larger research institutions the tenure process is judged primarily on the quality and quantity of one's research and publications. You might have heard the phrase "publish or perish;" for many professors this phrase is a truism. There is an incessant need to produce, to bring in money and recognition to the university—to be famous or perish.

One professor describes the process as follows: "For a young professor his or her priorities are usually (1) making tenure and (2) family, often in that order and NOTHING ELSE."

The competitive nature of the tenure process can be very stressful for professors, and can create hostile environments in academic departments. Some large research universities intentionally hire more tenure-track professors than they can possibly keep, which leads to competition between the young professors, and an unstable teaching pool for the undergraduate students.

Ultimately, we can help professors understand that the most important thing is not what they do, but who they are.

A professor's tenure process involves giving and receiving criticism:

- for their teaching (such as student evaluations)
- for their research
- for their departmental service

So, while most of your experience with university professors is probably related to the classroom, it is important to keep in mind that often their primary focus is not teaching, but their research and writing. This process can be fairly stressful and eat up much of a professor's time and energy.

However, the professoriate is changing. Many more professors are finding non-traditional employment:

- non-tenure track appointments
- lectureships (the main responsibility is to teach)
- adjunct positions (in which a professor teaches one or two classes on a part-time basis)

## Types of Professors

*Adjunct Professor/Lecturer:* Adjuncts are often viewed as "hired guns;" professors employed to teach a class or two, or even full-time, but they aren't in the tenure system. They are viewed as "second class" by those professors in the tenure system.

*Assistant Professor:* These are professors trying to attain tenure. These professors are often stressed over whether their department will accept their work as good enough to reward them with tenure.

*Associate Professor:* These professors have achieved tenure—a life-long secure position in the university. It is easy to confuse "associate" with "assistant" but the difference is huge. Associate professors have "arrived," they have tenure. Assistant professors are trying to earn this badge of honor.

*Full Professor:* After being an Associate professor for some time a few are rewarded with the title "Full Professor." In a department of forty professors, just a handful might be honored by this title.

*Distinguished/Named Chair:* A very few professors are distinguished or hold a "named chair" position. Professors who hold a named chair are funded by an endowment and are only held by extremely respected professors.

- teaching on-line courses

A professor's roles and responsibilities vary considerably depending on where he or she is employed:

- at a research university (a large university like Ohio State or a prestigious university like Duke or Princeton)
- a teaching university (Illinois State is a good example)
- or a community college.

In general, the bigger or more prestigious universities will require the professors to be more focused on their research. The smaller, less prestigious universities will reward professors for excellent teaching.

You will discover that there are a wide variety of professors. Some spend very little time with undergraduate stu-

Earned Doctorates Awarded in 2008	
Academic Institution	Doctorates
University of California at Berkeley	856
University of Texas at Austin	821
University of Wisconsin at Madison	740
University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign	735
University of California at Los Angeles	724
Ohio State University	719
University of Michigan at Ann Arbor	716
University of Minnesota-Twin Cities	690
University of Florida	674
Harvard University	660

dents. Some don't even like undergraduate students! But many professors love students and prefer actual teaching to the stress of research. These unique passions of the university professor provide many avenues for partnership with those professors who are Christian as well as many avenues to engage the spiritually-seeking professor with the love of Christ.

What an opportunity for us! If there is ever anyone in need of encouragement and a friendly face who will care for a person's well-being instead of his or her performance, it is the university professor (especially those who are untenured). Professors might not realize this need, but it is real. The pressures of their jobs can foster isolation and discouragement.

It is important for Christian professors to realize they are not alone. At any university there are usually a number of

Subject Matter of Some Academic Disciplines	
Discipline:	Subject Matter:
Biology	<i>studies living cells</i>
Mathematics	<i>studies of numbers &amp; their relations</i>
Philosophy	<i>studies the good, the true &amp; the beautiful</i>
Physics	<i>studies the fundamental laws of nature</i>
Sociology	<i>studies social processes</i>
Political Sci.	<i>studies government, leadership, and the process of decision-making in society</i>



89% Rise in Number of non-tenure track faculty members since 1993;  
20% Rise in number of tenure track faculty members since 1993

Christian professors, although they might not know each other. One of the simplest ways you can serve Christian professors is by connecting them with other Christian professors at their own university.

## Five: Professors Can Profess a Beautiful Christ and a God-bathed World

Being a Christian professor in the secular academy provides a unique, yet challenging, platform for ministry. Christian professors need to understand their *calling* to the university in order to be missional in their role.

Christian professors can make a significant impact for God within the university when they:

- begin to think about their jobs in terms of the gospel
- view each interaction with a student or colleague as an opportunity to love in the name of Christ
- view research and teaching as an opportunity to make connections between faith and scholarship

There is much encouraging news: Christian scholars across the country are making an impact in transforming their academic disciplines by making them more open to Christianity. For example, in the discipline of philosophy one atheistic philosopher is so alarmed that he laments, "God is not 'dead' in academia; he returned to life in the late 1960's and is now alive and well in his last academic stronghold, philosophy departments."

I disagree. Rather than God's "last academic stronghold", philosophy is a beachhead that the Lord is using to transform other academic disciplines. Christian scholarly societies in all academic disciplines are flourishing. Christian study centers, which often involve Christian professors, are popping up all over the country. Professors are beginning to make important connections between their faith and work.

But much more work needs to be done. Since 9/11 there has been a new wave of assaults on religious belief by atheists, led by university professors and scholars. Often the message is that religion is not only silly—it is dangerous. In the humanities, there is a strong prejudice against explicit religious perspectives; or religion is simply marginalized as one culturally relative view among many.



If there is ever anyone in need of encouragement and a friendly face who will care for a person's well-being instead of his or her performance, it is the university professor (especially those who are untenured).





We must patiently develop relationships of trust with them to credibly demonstrate what a win/build/send movement looks like.

Often, the pressures of the university, the exhaustion and the relentless pace, quench the fire that once burned bright in many Christian professors for the gospel. Working with Christian professors is further complicated by the fact that they are highly diverse theologically, much more so than a typical CRU movement.

Don't assume that every Christian professor is aligned with the mission, vision and values of Campus Crusade for Christ. On the contrary, I have found that usually they are not aligned; we must patiently develop relationships of trust with them, credibly demonstrate what a win/build/send movement looks like, and then invite them to participate in it with us.

In my experience, one of the most difficult aspects of professor ministry is helping them to turn the corner from being passive to being active in living out their faith on campus. There are a host of reasons:

- busyness
- a desire to “lay low” (sometimes born out of fear)
- spiritual immaturity
- a lack of vision for ministry outside the church.

If we can help professors begin to think about their vocation in terms of stewardship and mission, and give them opportunities to be engaged in our mission, we will begin to see an incredible impact for Christ on the campus.

One semester, I (as a PhD student in philosophy) was helping to teach a course on philosophy. After the semester was over, I received the following email from one of the students from this class; I'll call her “Jenny”:

*I was just wondering if you would have anything comforting to say to someone who was happily raised a Christian but then got really interested in Anthropology and Religion, decided to major in them, learned a whole bunch of interesting stuff, and then experienced much disillusionment, confusion, and depression in response to all the knowledge.... What if I need to believe in some kind of ultimate reality, some kind of perfection behind all the chaos in the world, some kind of transcendent power or force or whatever you want to call it because I cannot live with the idea of being utterly alone in both life and death, but I realize there might not be one right answer and if everyone in the world is searching for meaning*

*in different ways and each claim they have found it, how could there be a universal meaning? .... **Nothing makes sense to me and I don't know if it is ever going to. I am completely lost.***

I emailed Jenny back, assured her that there were answers and invited her to get together with me in the student union over a coffee to chat about it. When we met, I was able to share the gospel with her and answer for the first time many of her objections to Christianity that she had learned through her religion and anthropology classes.

After the time with Jenny, I called up the Campus Crusade staff woman, Emily, who was working in her dorm and asked her to follow up. Within 20 minutes of my meeting with Jenny, there was an email from a Campus Crusade staff woman waiting for her in her inbox, inviting her to get together. Jenny began to meet weekly with Emily to study the Bible. A few weeks later, I received the following email from Jenny:

*You know the drawing you showed me where Christ is either on the outside of the circle, knocking at the door, or on the inside, on the throne? Well, I finally decided to go for it and invited Christ into my life a couple of nights ago. I was really nervous about it and thought that I probably should make some life changes first, but Emily said God loves us no matter what, and I shouldn't worry about trying to shape up before asking him into my life, and the first priority should be to have Jesus in our hearts, and then He will help us make life changes, should we need to. Plus it says in Ephesians (I think) that so no one can boast, good works alone can't get us into heaven. It takes faith, and God's grace gets us into heaven. I think that's so beautiful, and I feel so blessed, because I'm such a screw up and God will still accept me in spite of that if I have faith. Well thank you for your help, I really appreciate it!*

There are so many students like Jenny—searching for truth, aware in some vague way that something is not right, and looking to professors to point them in the right direction.

Imagine a campus on which Christian professors actively seek ways to share their faith with students, and then (because these professors already have a relationship with you)

they are able to immediately connect them to your ministry. What potential! I am convinced that if we want to reach the full scope of our ministry, we must partner with Christian professors.

Christian professors can influence the campus in so many different ways. Some professors, in fact, have very few students. God has uniquely gifted these men and women to make scholarly contributions through engaging the dominant ideas of the university with a robust Christian worldview. This extends the influence of their ministries far beyond the classroom and greatly influences our students through increasing their receptivity to the gospel. God can use you in the lives of these professors even though they don't teach huge classes of undergraduates.

Other professors will have the greatest impact through reaching their graduate students and fellow professors. God can use you to encourage and develop these professors too.

We are better together: students working with professors and professors working with students. And, Lord willing, we will reach the whole campus and send the whole campus to the God-bathed world in the process.



### Christian Voice Needed

A Tibetan student shared with me that she's taking a sociology of religion course because she wants to explore religion. Her story captures the experience of many students today. Raised in a global context, they arrive on campus with meaningful questions and an openness to be influenced by the answers they receive. Moreover, with the dominance of today's scientific culture, students are turning to professors, as opposed to theologians or philosophers, in their desire to understand life and even religion. Consequently, providing a Christian voice in this context is not only strategic, but vital.

—Brad, former MTL at Berkeley and current Faculty Commons staff at Duke

## First Steps

Are you ready to take some steps toward working with professors? Begin by getting to know some of them. You probably know some professors through your neighborhood, church, or kids athletic team. Ask to get together with him or stop by her office. Invite a professor to your home so that you can learn more about his or her life. Some things to keep in mind:

*Be careful not to make assumptions* about a Christian professor's perspective on ministry. Professors might be on your priority list, but often you are not on theirs! There is a good chance your professor might be tentative about being publicly identified as a Christian in such a hostile environment.

*Ministry with professors is slower than with students.* When working with students, we are used to weekly discipleship meetings, weekly large group meetings, fall and spring retreats, winter conference, and more. Students are

much more available and life change seems to happen at a quicker pace than it does with professors. Don't be discouraged if a professor can't meet with you for a couple of weeks or months even—persevere and know that in God's timing, you will begin to see progress.

Professors are the fixtures within the university; as we influence them, equip them and love them they in turn will be used by God to reach more professors and students themselves. But professors are busy. They don't have a lot of time and won't commit too much over the course of a week or semester. Howard Hendricks' dictum applies: "We overestimate what can be accomplished in one year and underestimate what can be accomplished in five years."

*Build relational trust* Professors will open up as they trust you. Take time to get to know them. Some professors aren't the easiest to connect with. That's OK; take an interest in them and allow God to use you in their lives.

*Remember, you know more about ministry than many professors.* The questions you've asked students for years will be just as golden with professors as they've been with students. So, take a (spiritual) breath and step out in faith into the wonderful, challenging, and influential world of professors.

### A few questions to get you started:

1. How would you describe your spiritual journey?
2. Were you ever in a group like Campus Crusade for Christ as an undergraduate? What was your experience like?
3. Why did you want to become a professor?
4. What is your area of research and teaching? What interests you about this area?
5. What do you like about being a professor? What is hard about being a professor?
6. What is challenging about being a Christian professor in your department? At your university? Are your colleagues open to Christianity?
7. Was there a Christian professor who made a profound impact on your life as a student?
8. Have you found any interesting or surprising connections between your Christian faith and your academic discipline? What are they?

# 88%

When students were asked, "If you were to go on an international summer project, how would you feel about a group of professors from your school joining in on the project for a week or so to labor alongside of you overseas?" 88% answered, "I'd like that" or "Incredible."

“*Involvement breeds commitment.*” As you build trust with a professor invite them to connect with your CRU group in some fashion. Help them “turn the corner from getting to giving” by involving them in what you are already doing:

- Invite them to speak at CRU or share their testimony
- Have a dinner/social with a few Christian professors, students and staff
- Sponsor a joint student-professor prayer meeting once a month
- Bring professors along on your spring break or summer project trips

Some ways to reach out to non-believing professors:

- Have each student involved with CRU give their professors a book such as C.S. Lewis’ *Mere Christianity* or Timothy Keller’s *The Reason for God* at the end of the semester with a brief note of thanks.
- Invite professors to work alongside students to meet some need of the world.
- Host a “favorite faculty lunch” to which students can invite their favorite professors.

Perhaps the most important thing I could say, in closing, is “have fun” as you engage this new frontier in ministry. Step out in faith, try new things, and enjoy the freedom to fail.

Lord willing, God will use you and CRU to reach professors, and God will use professors to help reach students and our world.

For more information and resources on working with professors, check out the Faculty Commons’ websites:

- *Cruprof.com*—find resources and ideas for launching a professor and student movement. A one-stop location designed especially for USCM staff to take the whole campus to the whole world.
- *MeetTheProf.com*—provides an avenue for Christian professors to minister to students. They can post their personal testimonies here, and students can begin an online dialogue with them.
- *MyMinistryMinute.com*—professors can subscribe to these brief, encouraging e-mails delivered every Monday during the school year. Written by professors for professors, they provide a thoughtful look at the

struggles and triumphs encountered by Christian professors at secular universities. You can subscribe to these as well as forward them onto your ministry friends.

- *FacultyCommons.com*—general information and ministry stories
- *FacultyLinc.com*—an online, global community for Christian professors. The members-only “Idea Center” provides a wealth of strategies and resources for ministry, pioneered on campuses across the U.S. by Christian professors.



Paul is on the executive leadership team of Faculty Commons, the faculty and graduate student ministry of Campus Crusade for Christ. Paul has served on staff since 1997 working with students and professors at Miami of Ohio and Purdue University. He has a PhD in Philosophy from Purdue University and a Masters in Philosophy of Religion and Ethics from Talbot School of Theology. He is the co-editor, along with William Lane Craig of *The Two Tasks of the Christian Scholar: Redeeming The Soul, Redeeming the Mind* (Crossway, 2007).

Paul is married to his wife Ethel and has four young children. In his spare time you can usually find Paul hanging out with his family, hiking, mountain biking, watching a movie, or reading a good book on philosophy or theology.

## FACULTY COMMONS

The Hope Center  
2001 W. Plano Parkway, Suite 2700  
Plano, Texas 75075  
Phone: 972.516.0516  
[www.cruprof.com](http://www.cruprof.com)



U.S. Campus Ministries  
100 Lake Hart Drive  
Orlando, Florida 32832  
Phone: 407.826.2000  
[www.uscm.org](http://www.uscm.org)