

HINTS AND HELPS FOR SUCCESSFUL BLACK STUDENT MINISTRY

Definitions:

- **Black Campus Ministries (BCM):** consists of all of InterVarsity Christian Fellowship/USA's ministry to students and to staff of the African Diaspora. More specifically, the focus of BCM's work with BCM staff (Field Ministries, National Service Center, Camps, IV Press) includes their supervisors and their constituency; the work with Black students/faculty includes their staff workers. To accomplish the above work, BCM's work also includes influencing InterVarsity's staff directors and senior management, and working in conjunction with the other ethnic-specific teams and directors.
- **BCM Staff:** They are all of InterVarsity's Black staff AND InterVarsity's staff who primarily serve Black students/faculty .
- **National BCM Director:** He/she oversees the work of Black Campus Ministries. Donnie Lawrence is the national BCM director .
- **Leading Servants Team (LST):** The LST works in conjunction with the BCM director in the leadership of BCM .

History:

Black students first got involved with InterVarsity in New York City in the 1945, when the student work at elite private schools spread to public schools in lower Manhattan and Brooklyn. InterVarsity's first Black staff person was Ivery Harvey, who was hired in Atlanta in 1952. He came from Detroit, and served from 1952 to 1954. In 1958, Ruth Lewis (Bentley) was recruited from Wheaton College by then InterVarsity president C. Stacey Woods; she served students throughout the Southeast from 1958 to 1963. In 1968, Paul Gibson came on staff in the wake of Urbana '67 and the group of Black students who, during Urbana, challenged InterVarsity and had an all night prayer meeting. In 1973, Barbara Brown (New York) and Tony Warner (Atlanta) came on staff, and so the number of Black staff grew from one to three. In that same year, InterVarsity's *Black Staff Caucus* was established as the organization's internal network of Black staff, and they met for the first time—this group eventually became the Black Staff Fellowship. In 1980, Elward Ellis was appointed as the first national director of Black Campus Ministries. At this writing, BCM consists of 65 Black staff, around 15 non-Black staff working with Black students, and 3614 Black students.

Regarding Black Students:

- Most Black students in InterVarsity are on a predominantly non-Black campus, although there is a significant subset that are either on a mostly Black campus or a historically Black college or university (HBCU).
- Although they are all *Black*, culturally they are of differing ethnic/cultural backgrounds and have differing levels of self-awareness regarding their ethnicity and race.
- They are from the United States, the Caribbean, Central America, different African countries, and even different countries around the world. Race issues in the United States are related but unique compared to those of our neighbors in Canada, Mexico, and the Caribbean.
- Besides being of the African Diaspora, all these students have experienced some degree of the general experience of racism and marginalization.
- Some of these Black students are struggling with self-hatred, and have varying levels of awareness regarding how it affects the way they see themselves, other Black students, and other non-Black students.
- Some of them are the first generation in their families to attend college.
- All have had to learn to survive in non-Black settings. Some of them actually thrive in these settings – this can be especially seen in some who attend predominantly non-Black colleges.
- They are from varied religious backgrounds; some have never regularly attended church, and most have never had their faith seriously challenged by their surroundings (life, professors, friends). Some are seriously pondering their faith in Jesus Christ for the first time.

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So:

- Realize “typical” reliability, availability teachability, and emotional stability may look different for a Black student with a full schedule who feels cultural dissonance in your InterVarsity group.
- Don’t depend on your Black students to raise racial/justice issues in your InterVarsity group (especially if you only have a few Black students in your group) - as a person affected by racism and injustice, make sure **you** raise and address these issues.
- Know that it is normative for many African American students to work through racial identity issues while in college; the best things a good staff worker can do is hang on tight and get wise advice from an older Black campus minister.
- The *superwoman* and the *absent male* are two social patterns you may see among your Black students. Help the *superwoman* to establish healthy boundaries and the *absent male* to bring clarity (and subsequently, be faithful) with his commitments.
- Don’t reach out to Black students so that your group can become more multiethnic—reach out to Black students because they need the fuller picture of the gospel, because “the fields are ripe unto harvest,” and because God gives you opportunity.

Next Steps:

- Do some **research**—what are the stats on your campus regarding Black students? Where are they from (U.S.? Caribbean? Overseas)? What is the ethnic make-up of your fellowship? How does your campus website present and represent ethnic issues on your campus?
- Where are places on your campus where **Black students hang out?** (Go there and begin making some friends.)
- Check out the school paper and/or your student union— what groups are represented there by their **articles and ads?** What Black student events are going on? (Make sure to attend.)
- Think: How could your large group meeting be **more welcoming to Black students** (speakers, music, topics, talk examples, etc.)? (Get resources from other InterVarsity staff, or get help from other local Christian groups.)
- Think: Who are the **students with cross-ethnic experience** who might be helpful leaders or influencers for the fellowship?
- Make sure to call or write the BCM Director or a member of the Leading Servants Team to **get help** :
 1. **Donnie Lawrence:** BCM Director, Multiethnic Ministries, Marion, IN
 2. **Felicia Anderson:** Senior Staff, GFM Georgia, Atlanta, GA
 3. **Kimberly Blackford:** Area Director, Southeast Region, Louisville, KY
 4. **Phil Bowling-Dyer:** Associate Director, Multiethnic Ministries, Oakland, CA
 5. **Michael Eubanks:** Team Leader, Pacific Region, Berkeley, CA
 6. **Howie Meloch:** Associate Regional Director, Central Region St. Louis, MO
 7. **Dakota Pippins:** Regional Director, Mid-Atlantic Region Hyattsville, MD
 8. **Michelle Verrill:** Senior Staff, Red River Region, Austin, TX
 9. **Virginia Ward:** Associate Regional Director, New England Region, Boston, MA
 10. **Sean Watkins:** BCM Regional Coordinator, Red River Region, Austin, TX