

Publicity on Campus

Hey, to make Christ known, you have to make yourself known, right?

Shauna Miller

Pete just arrived on campus and is checking out the posters on the notice board. He sees a dirty white cartridge paper that has scribbled on it in faded blue marker "All Freshers! All Christians! Come to UCCF first meeting of the year. Tues 3:00 pm at Main Hall". He thinks, "*Cool, a Christian group. Maybe I should go to that. I just hope they are not as boring as my church. Yes, it would be a good idea.....wait what's that...*" Across from this poster is this other poster - how could he have missed it - bright florescent colours, funny cartoon drawings, totally psychedellic. Later on he sees quite a few members of this group in their club T-shirts. He approaches them and they are very friendly, telling him about the group and all the fun things they did last year. They also take down his name and number and remind him of the first meeting.

Tanya has been at school for two months but she feels terribly alone. She hates her classes and she does not like the people in her dorm. On her way to the library she sees a small crowd. She goes over and there's a mime going. The mime had four people chatting, laughing and pretending to be fine while each was comically hiding a different injury. One person finally fell down, exposing her injury, leading all to reveal their own. The mime ended with the group tending to each person's injury. Tanya smiled at the mime and wondered if this group was a good place to make friends. Apparently, it was some group called UCCF. . .

Jed has been having a great time at university but as his final year gets going he begins to wonder where his life is going to lead. In the dining room with his friends, he notices a card in the middle of the table. One side showed a two-panel cartoon. One panel showed a crowd of athletes sweating, running fiercely along a road. The other panel showed a far -off shot of the runners and of the end of the road way ahead which was a cliff and a runner was falling off. The other side of the card read "Do you know where you're going to . . ." and at the bottom was the time, date and place of the next UCCF meeting. He laughs it off with his friends but it gnaws at him until he decides to visit the next UCCF meeting. . .

Laura has been at school almost a year now. She started off at UCCF but school work pressure has been too much. On her way from class she noticed a desk set up in middle of the grass with a large notice "10 TIPS FOR GREAT SUCCESS". She went over to the desk and picked up a very well designed handout that turned out to be ten verses from the bible on what was really important and how God viewed success. The girl sitting at the desk recognised Laura and asked her how she was doing and why she hadn't been coming to meetings. Laura explained the pressure that she'd been feeling and the girl was surprisingly not condemning of Laura's attitude. Instead she offered to help her set up study schedules and keeping her accountable to it. Laura left feeling relieved and happy and made a renewed determination to get involved in UCCF and help others as that girl had been willing to help her.

Why advertise?

I think I already answered that in the title. Really I think we underestimate the importance of being known on campus. It's not enough to have someone whisper around "there's a Christian group on campus . . ." to people who look like they might want to come. Your aim is to have any arbitrary person able to tell you that there's a UCCF that meets on . . . at ... right by Even if they have never gone and have no intention of ever going to a meeting. You need to give everyone the option of coming to UCCF, every week. Not just a publicity blitz at the beginning of the semester which peters out when you figure you have more or less everyone that's coming this year.

Who do we advertise to?

Basically there might be three sets of people on your campus, especially at the beginning of the year. You have the hard core Christians who have been planning to get involved in any and all Christian clubs on campus way before they were even accepted. Don't worry too much about advertising to them - they just need the time and place of the meetings and they'll be there. Then we have our real targets - the non-Christians and the undercover secret Christians. In a Jamaican setting, we can probably think of both groups as the same - more than likely they have been going to church but they have no serious commitment to Christ and little intention of going to some "church meeting at school". Especially if they are now living away from home and this is their chance to "bruk-out". These are the people who need to be attracted to UCCF. Bear this in mind when planning your publicity campaign. How will you get them to come? What are their attitudes to Christianity? Will they be attracted by a preachy churchy poster or will they be more intrigued by a creative, witty skit/poster? Hmmm . . .

What do we say?

Whatever format your publicity takes, make sure:

- That it is interesting - catchy, thought-provoking. The object is to intrigue your audience.
- That it is brief - nothing wordy, nor didactic. Images and metaphors are more powerful than pedantic statements. Jesus used pictures much more than direct statements.
- That your information is clear - where, when, what time, theme or maybe activities.

When are key times to be public

All year round. OK .. but you do need to have real intense publicity going on at the beginning of the year when all the new people are on campus. You need to be visible, visible, visible ... to catch all those hardcore Christians that are dying to join your group and to make others aware of your presence. Hopefully you can attract weaker Christians at the beginning of the year before they start to feel alienated from their beliefs. And even non-Christians are very open to new things during their first few weeks of college.

Where to do that

Please pick key spots to put up posters or tables or to do your skits. Don't choose the place that no one ever goes by. You wouldn't want to waste all your efforts, would you?

How do we advertise?

Now we're down to the nitty gritty ... Let me focus first on new students advertising. You should really have a plan for orientation week and if possible get your plans announced or printed with official college orientation programmes. You could hold a freshers party. You could be on hand to help freshers move on hall. Or you could have a help booth to help explain campus life to new students. You could be introduced in other college orientation programmes. Whatever you plan, it's a good idea:

1. To have a good number of your UCCFers around during orientation week, preferably wearing T-shirts that identify them with UCCF. Prepare your UCCFers by reminding them to maintain a friendly helpful attitude to all new students. Their friendliness alone is very good publicity for UCCF.
2. To have a brochure or welcome letter including information on UCCF, meeting times and themes for the semester, UCCF beliefs and other more general information for new students. Also try to include some cell group information (leaders, times, locations).
3. To have paper and pen ready at all events to record the name and phone numbers of people interested. During the first weeks of school UCCFers should divide up names of freshmen and visit them. Don't assign just one or two people to do all the contacting. At the end of the first term or the beginning of the second, recontact people who showed initial interest in UCCF but did not join. Some students are simply not ready to get involved until after their first semester. Send out an updated "welcome letter" with current information about activities, drop them an e-mail message, and divide up names and phone numbers to set up appointments to get reacquainted with new students and ask how the year is going.
4. To plan time for introductions and mingling at the first large- group meeting. Be sure the meeting is newcomer-friendly. Have food on hand.

Now let's look more generally at . . .

Posters

Be sure posters are eye-catching and not buried among a lot of other papers, making them unnoticeable.

Make them dazzling, or so subtle they beg your interest.

It's easy to get a poster out, but you'll need to be more interesting than all those other ones. Have an artist do the work. A real artist will know how to organize the information in an attractive and effective way.

Use pictures more than words, use catchy themes, raise questions rather than answer them.

Skits/Mimes

Using skits and mimes to advertise UCCF should be done with caution. Make sure you are not disrupting classes or inconveniencing students in any way. Use an open area. Check if you need to get permission from someone.

As with posters, the key to a good skit is creativity and not being obvious. Again go for pictures and metaphors that raise questions in the audience's mind or forces them to think a little before understanding the meaning. Even better they may come to you to ask the meaning, as the disciples did with Jesus after he gave word-pictures. I am not saying that you should be horribly obscure or that there

would be no point to the skit. I am just saying to use a little imagination and try for a higher level skit than the usual basic, "you-need-to-come-to-Jesus-or-you're-going-to-hell" skit.

Other Ideas

1. Take every opportunity to set up information tables. Come up with different ideas on what to do at your table. BE CREATIVE. Example:

Have someone roll a huge ball up hill only to have it roll back down repeatedly (Sisyphus). A table nearby could have the sign "What's the point of it all". You could have handouts explaining the meaning of life (in a creative way) or even better you could offer to listen and record what people think the meaning of life is. You could set up a "Question table" and offer to question people's answers. You could set up an advice table and offer only scripture verses as advice to problems. (In this case it would be helpful to print a variety of verses for different issues and have them on hand to give out.) It would be better to use only scripture verses to maintain unity on issues, to avoid giving "bad advice" and to force people to face God's word rather than someone's view. At all information tables be sure to attach information on UCCF and make it clear that it is a UCCF venture.

2. Give out small prizes periodically to non-UCCFers who can tell you three topics that UCCF has done, or for knowing who the president of UCCF is or . . .

3. Does your audience eat in the Dining Halls? If they do, you have a captive audience. Use table tent cards. This is simply a card folded over in two and pasted on each table in the dining room. Of course you need to have permission to do this. Use the same tips as for posters. Remember, BE CREATIVE!

ABOVE ALL . . .

The best publicity comes from your members. If the UCCFers on campus are friendly, helpful and open people, that goes a long way in advertising your meetings. Counsel your UCCFers on not being condemning but being loving and of service not only to new students who may be interested in UCCF but also to people who continually mock your meetings, to "hardened sinners", to people who started coming but stopped. In short, to everyone. People respond more to compassion than to rebuke. They will be more likely to come if you are genuinely concerned for them and for their lives in general. This is in fact the attitude we ought to have for everyone, to love them as Jesus does.

Attached are some sample posters from Stephen Russell