

# Why Do A University Christian Ministries Internship?

By Brady C. Bobbink

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The words “Campus Ministry Internship” seem to lack the zing needed to grab most readers’ imagination. But before you pass over this article, consider the following question:

Have you ever been operated on? I have faced that unpleasant but needed experience in life. I was calmed considerably knowing the practical supervised preparation required of my doctor before he was set free to work on me.

Consider the teacher, counselor, pilot, or doctor. All of these fields and many more have long realized the need for supervised “in-field” training. This training (especially in the medical field) is known as an internship, and is considered an essential aspect of credible preparation.

What should we then think when it comes to the field of pastoral ministry? What is the level of expectation we hold for “in-field internship” training for people who believe themselves called to serve God in this way? Do you and I or the churches as a whole see such training as an essential aspect of proper preparation? I have generally found the expectation is much lower than in other arenas of service. This attitude prevails in spite of the fact that the minister (be it campus, church, or missions) is a “spiritual” teacher, counselor, pilot, and doctor.

The campus pastor, missionary, or church minister will be a teacher of eternal truths and will be called on to give counsel to countless numbers of students or other adults. He or she will have to guide (pilot) the Christian community under his/her care through many opportunities. The campus minister is a surgeon of the soul who must learn to rightly use the scalpel of the Spirit.

With these things in mind and in light of Scripture’s concern for the proper testing of leaders (1 Timothy 3:10), one wonders why we place so little stress on meaningful internships in the training of our pastors. It is time we recognize that an internship is not irrelevant, it is essential.

You may be thinking, “I’ve been to the university, or perhaps Bible School, maybe even seminary, so why should I do an internship?” Good question!

Pastoral ministry, like the surgeon, pilot, or electrician, entails much more than simply mastering theological truth and ministry philosophy in a formal classroom. There must also be an extended time of testing one’s character, discovery of one’s gifts, and the development of needed skills in “real world” settings. If this is to be done realistically it requires “hands-on” experience.

It was this conviction regarding hands-on experiential training that motivated me to pioneer the first CMIT program in the nation for Chi Alpha Campus Ministries in 1977.

My experience over the past thirty years of training interns from Bible schools, seminaries, and secular colleges has confirmed that each and every one of them needed and greatly benefited from the practical and supervised training they received. This need for **practical training** is the first reason to do an internship.

Another significant reason for participating in a campus ministry internship is the need you or I have to adapt to the atmosphere of vocational pastoral work in the **secular campus context**.

A missionary must spend significant time becoming acclimated to his/her new culture before he can hope to become effective. In the same way the perspective campus minister needs the time afforded through an internship to become familiarized with the unique characteristics of campus ministry.

Perhaps we could sum up with the words of a wise intern: “When I came I was confident in myself, but when I left my confidence was in God. When I came I felt I had a handle on most things, but when I left I felt like I had begun to truly grasp essential things. Back then I wondered, ‘do I really need this?’ Now I wonder what I’d have done without it.”

## What is a Campus Ministry Internship?

A Campus Ministry In Training (CMIT) internship is a **ten-month long** intensive training program for future Christian ministry. It is our purpose to train interns through their active participation in campus pastoral leadership under the supervision of a veteran campus minister.

Each intern will be afforded the opportunity to receive broad first-hand experience in an encouraging atmosphere before venturing out to establish or help lead a campus ministry.

## Is The Internship Only For Those Called To University Ministry?

While some internship centers elect to work with men and women who sense a clear calling to university ministry the internship program in Bellingham has embraced a broader agenda. We gladly, room permitting, welcome men and women whose vision for serving God may be other than the university. Some have come unsure of their calling but desiring to “test” their gifts and vision. Others’ focus is on local church ministry or international missions. Still others simply want to deepen their knowledge and skills before pressing forward into their calling to serve God in the marketplace and the local church. Each is a legitimate motivation for doing an internship and we attempt to accommodate all who desire to “mature in Christ Jesus.”

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## What Does An Internship Offer?

The ultimate goal of the UCM internship at Western Washington University is to offer an authentic place of spiritual growth and excellence in preparation for service to our Lord. Rest assured that as an intern you will not be relegated to being a staff person's gopher or a "special projects" person.

Instead, an intern joins our staff as a co-worker under training. In that position, he takes on the work, experiences, and intensity that each of us face in an ongoing way as campus leaders.

As an intern you will receive consistent and personal mentoring from the staff. At all times you, your sense of calling, and your future will be treated with respect and care by the UCM staff.

## A GENERAL DESCRIPTION OF THE UCM CMIT PROGRAM FOR THE 2012-2013 ACADEMIC YEAR

The UCM program has three primary focal points: [1] the intern's theological and biblical training; [2] the intern's character; and [3] the intern's general ministry skills.

### I. The Minister's Biblical Training

Our goal is to introduce each intern to the world of biblical and theological studies and to concentrate on establishing firm theological foundations. We aim to leave each intern with the skills and knowledge needed to pursue a life-long development of his/her intellect.

Interns can anticipate time being given daily to develop the disciplines of devotion and personal study, as well as group gatherings weekly to discuss the essentials of an evangelical biblical faith.

Each intern will participate in the following study/discussion programs during his/her internship.

#### Spring and Summer Preparatory Studies

Each intern will be assigned and complete five introductory Berean correspondence courses before the beginning of their internship in September.

#### The Intern Book Study and Teaching Lab

**Fall Term:** Each intern will study a NT book using a verse by verse inductive approach. The "Intern Study Lab supervisor" will give weekly assignments guiding the interns through their NT book. Each week the interns and supervisor will discuss the section previously studied.

Toward the end of the Fall term the interns will be introduced through readings, lecture, and discussion to the issues surrounding the art of public preaching. Beyond this each intern will do relevant research and commentary reading on his/her Epistle.

**Winter Term:** During the winter term each intern will prepare and deliver 4 twenty-minute sermons. These sermons will be given to their fellow interns and lab supervisor who will evaluate each sermon on the basis of sound theology, skill of delivery, and the relevance of the texts' application to students' lives. Interns will also be involved in other opportunities in public speaking in dorms, small groups, etc.

#### Critical Pastoral Concerns (CPC's)

**Fall through Spring Term:** The CPC's are a series of studies addressing practical and biblical issues that confront the vocational minister. Each CPC requires individual preparation followed by a group discussion led by a UCM senior staff person. Through the CPC's we address specific concerns such as the ministry of the Spirit, relating in a denominational setting, and various personal/philosophical issues pertaining to ministerial ethics and leadership.

#### The Theological Round Table Studies

**Spring Term:** The Round Table is eleven week series of studies aimed at introducing each intern to the sweep of major doctrines within historic biblical Christianity.

The interns will read various articles and chapters from theological works concerning and then gather together for a discussion group. The Sovereignty of God; The Primacy of Scripture; Man and his nature; the Deity of Christ; the Cross and Atonement; Salvation by grace and faith; the new birth; personal holiness; the church; and final judgments.

#### Interns and the Berean School of the Bible

As already noted each intern will complete a series of 5 Berean School of the Bible (Global University) courses and seminars during their internship. These classes will cover Synoptic Gospels, Acts, Prison Epistles, Introduction to Pentecostal Doctrine, and Assemblies of God History, Missions, & Governance. These courses are completed before the internship begins.

It is the goal of the internship to not only introduce interns to the broad realms of biblical and theological studies, but to also prepare them for credentials with the Assemblies of God for those who so desire. Credentialing is obtained through completing both the Berean course work, the one week "Reach the U" campus ministry conference in June 2012, and the Internship successfully. In this way interns

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will be able, if they so desire, to be credentialed as ministers which is required before obtaining a position with Chi Alpha Campus Ministries.

Beyond this each intern will have opportunity to participate in classes offered to the student group at WWU.

## II. The Minister's Character

To promote character growth (which is Scripture's overwhelming concern for pastoral leaders, see 1 Timothy 3 and Titus 1), each intern will be personally supervised by a staff person. Each week the intern meets with his/her pastoral supervisor for prayer and discussions that touch on the ministries, attitudes, and disciplines, of our lives.

It is the staff person's responsibility to address and train the intern in areas of personal integrity (financial, time, relational, sexual, etc.) and to assist the intern in developing the spiritual disciplines of a growing spiritual leader. (Fasting, confession, prayer, etc.)

Further character formation takes place through living with other interns and staff in one of our "ministry houses." Here the practical development of our personal relationships and lifestyles are strengthened in a natural and caring environment. Married interns will be assisted in finding suitable housing apart from the ministry houses.

## III. The Minister's Skills

Finally, there is the broad area of skills. We are deeply aware and committed to the reality that intellectual knowledge only becomes a helpful skill when that knowledge is allowed to be experienced and applied repetitively in a person's life. Therefore an intern can expect not only training but also the opportunity to "do the work of the ministry:"

Below you will find a partial list of the type of activities each intern will find himself or herself participating in during his/her internship. While this list is incomplete and fails to capture some of the intensity and personal nature of the internship, it does give a reasonable sense of the program.

### THE INTERN WILL HAVE THE OPPORTUNITY TO . . .

- a. Participate as a member of the UCM staff and participate in the weekly staff prayer, planning and administration meeting.
- b. Lead a men's/women's discipleship/mentoring group. (Plan and carry out a weekly meeting that incorporates worship, prayer, bible study, personal support for the students, and training in areas of personal life management, bible study skills and evangelism).

- c. Meet one to one with the members of his/her small group each week for at least one hour for personal growth and support.
- d. Be trained and participate in 7+ hours of personal evangelism (book table, contact and follow up work, dorm talks, etc.) each week.
- e. Work with students in his/her area of campus to plan and present evangelistic outreaches to the student population in their dorms.
- f. Befriend an international student one-on-one every week to build a friendship and share the love of Christ.
- g. Learn hands-on time management skills by keeping an hour by hour time sheet each week of his/her internship.
- h. Attend at least one NW District ministers' sectional meetings with the UCM staff. Each intern also will spend a day with the NW District Assistant Superintendent to discuss the benefits of denominational affiliation and to ask questions that may interest or concern the intern.
- i. Learn how to prepare and send a monthly newsletter to his/her support team.
- j. Participate in the weekly small group leader's training and support class.
- k. Participate weekly in the main group meeting on Friday nights — actively ministering to people before, during, and after the meeting in various appropriate ways.
- l. Attend one board meeting in order to see how UCM relates and reports out to its overseeing board.
- m. Possibly visit a church in the area in order to observe the diversity of expression and vision of various pastors and congregations. These visits may be in conjunction with "itineration" (fund raising) trips with a staff member.
- n. Lead a 10-day spring break missions outreach. The interns will interview, select, and train their teams. Each intern will oversee each and every aspect of his/her team's trip.
- o. Participate in various kinds of biblical and theological studies each week.
- p. Enjoy numerous other opportunities for personal growth and pastoral care.
- q. Participated on the "Creative Team" - a group of students

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who meet and plan creative elements for our Friday Night Service.

- r. Administrate and oversee either the Christmas Party or Spring Picnic for the CCF community, as well as participate in the "behind the scenes" administration of running a campus ministry through weekly office hours.
- s. Attend a mid-year prayer and fasting retreat for reflection and solitude with God.
- t. Participate in the annual May SICM conference (Student Institute of Campus Ministry).
- u. Attend the LIGHT Conference - a gathering of Chi Alpha pastors and interns from WA, OR, ID & Canada.
- v. Visit Dr. Houston, founder of Regent College in Vancouver, BC.

## IV. The Intern's Living Situation

As noted earlier under the section, "The Minister's Character," all single interns live in one of our ministry houses, while married interns will be assisted in finding appropriate housing.

## V. The Intern's Finances

The intern works "full-time" throughout the internship, having raised his/her personal and ministry budget through summer employment and other various forms of fund raising. The intern will work on average about 55-60 hours a week at his/her studies and ministry duties throughout the internship.

Each intern accepted to the program, (with ample help and training from the UCM staff), is required to raise his/her own support for the internship year. In the same manner as the UCM staff, each intern enlists the support of his/her family, church, friends, and past work associates who will pledge their prayer and/or financial support to help make the internship a reality.

There is a one-time \$30 dollar non-refundable processing fee that is required by the national Chi Alpha office at the time of applying for the UCM internship.

UCM is a non profit organization and all gifts to the internship are tax deductible.

## VI. When Does The Internship Begin and End?

The Internship begins September 1<sup>st</sup> & ends on June 30<sup>th</sup>.

## VII. Is There Fruit?

Since our first intern came to us in 1977, I have had the joy of seeing over 200 interns participate in the WWU CMIT program. Today over 75 of them are in "vocational" ministry positions around the world. They are ministering from Louisiana to Montana. From California to China, they are campus pastors, church ministers, seminary educators, and cross cultural missionaries.

To name just a few, Michael Mowry, Linda Seiler, Charles Gravelly, Jennifer Hughes, Lanier Nail, John Engles, Lindsey Hawley, Kyle Crouch, Julie Solbrack, Karen Davis, Shelly (Dayton) Weiser, Kevin Yeadon and Joe & Rachel Gavin all came and now are effective ministers with Chi Alpha. Steve Hawthorne came and is now being wonderfully used as a Senior pastor, and Mike Dittman and Gary Gillespie came and are now serving as a Seminary Professors. Kim Robbins Kenyon came and is ministering to students with her husband in Asia. Emma Hansen is now a Chi Alpha missionary to the Netherlands. John & Kristen Koeshall both did the internship and are now doing Chi Alpha in Germany.

Beyond that there are a host who came and are now owners of businesses, lawyers, teachers, homemakers, and men and women in all kinds of places of service for the cause of Christ.

Is there fruit? Yes indeed there is. There are presently over 55 graduates in college ministry; 15 overseas missionaries; 16 who are serving as church pastors; and 15 who are counselors or professors.

But, what is needed today in ever increasing urgency are workers for the expanding mission field. Perhaps Christ is speaking to you about the needs of one hundred million plus college students in the world or perhaps your heart resonates with the vision to be more deeply trained for service to the church and the marketplace. Whatever the vision, doing an internship will only help you accomplish it with skill and success.

Our commitment to you is that we as a staff will endeavor to offer to you a year of first rate training. We aim to offer an experience that is personal and practical. We take your dedication of a year of your life seriously and in all we do we aim to do it with excellence and in a manner that honors our Lord.



*Brady Bobbink helped to pioneer the WWU Chi Alpha group as a student. After graduating with his degree in Education (English/Speech), Brady became the ministry's first director and has continued to serve Christ in that position for the past 35 years. In 1977 Brady established the first Chi Alpha internship program. Brady's masters' level studies in Theology have been done at Fuller Theological Seminary and Regent College.*