



External Review of Chaplaincy Programs

Suggested Guidelines developed by the
Presbyterian College Chaplains Association

Overview

An external review is a means for assessing the strengths of a college chaplaincy program, as well as identifying areas for improvement. In structuring the review, it should be clear that the focus is the Chaplaincy and NOT the chaplain. The review also serves as a source for recommendations about how the chaplaincy can be developed and institutionally supported to more effectively meet the needs of the college community. Such reviews should take place regularly as a matter of course (on a 7 – 10 year cycle, for example). Reviews may also be initiated if the chaplaincy is troubled or if the need arises to alter the vision, personnel or institutional placement of the chaplaincy. The external review process should be overseen by the chaplain's supervisor, though the chaplain may take the lead in making the specific logistical arrangements related to the review.

External reviews at Presbyterian church-related colleges and universities are normally conducted by individuals from other institutions with expertise in college chaplaincy and church-related higher education administration. In certain contexts and if resources permit, the external review can assume a broader, more future-oriented vision. In addition to the reviewers mentioned above, it can include consultants such as futurists, theologians, sociologists of religion and experts in the spirituality of young adults.

The external review team members visit campus for several days to interact with students, faculty, staff and administrators in assessing the current staffing, facilities, resources and program of the chaplaincy. They also can reflect upon emerging trends in higher education in order to consider what a strong and visionary college chaplaincy should look like in the context not only of the given institution but also of the wider culture. Among the questions to be addressed could be: What current developmental issues related to students need to be taken into account? What are the future trends in higher education related to religious and spiritual life? How does a college properly support a ministry that is responsive to students living in a multi-faith/multicultural world? What skills, aptitudes and education do chaplains need to serve as leaders and pastors for the entire academic community? Is this chaplaincy located in the institution's structure for effective access to essential constituency and resources?

Criteria for the Review Team:

- Representatives from peer institutions (in terms of academic rigor, student population, and endowment)
- Experience at Presbyterian church-related institutions

- At least one college or university chaplain (preferably 2)
- Someone with a prior relationship with the institution (if possible; e.g., alum)
- Dean of Students (or other position that supervises a college chaplain)
- Denominational official (if appropriate; e.g. executive presbyter responsible for higher education ministries or college-church relations)
- Prominent external consultant with specialized knowledge in the current and future directions of the religious/spiritual climate among young adults
- Theologian, futurist, sociologist of religion, etc.

Preparations for the Campus Visit:

- Begin the process early in the semester before the semester in which the review will take place
- Conduct internal surveys (of student / faculty / staff perceptions of chaplaincy)
- Possibly examine the chaplaincy programs, staffing and resources at peer institutions to establish a context for comparison to normative “best practices.” Prepare a report on how these campuses have arrived at the particular style of chaplaincy they have. Include responses to questions such as: “How did you get where you are?” “What mistakes did you make to get here?” “Who was involved in the shaping of this work?” “What criteria do you use to recognize success in your program?”
- Discuss hopes / expectations with review team (via conference call)
- Budget: \$2000 – 5000
 - Honoraria: \$500 - \$750 for 48 hours on campus (e.g. Wed. noon – Fri noon); honoraria for prominent external consultants and theologians may be higher
 - Reviewers’ travel, room & board
 - Group meals on site
 - Conference calls, photocopies, postage, other materials
- Send information packet to members of review team
 - Description of the evolution of chaplaincy program over past 15-20 years
 - Annual reports (2-3 years’ worth)
 - Budgets (up to 5 years’ worth)
 - Chaplain’s Office current publications / promotional material
 - College view book / catalog
 - Denominational agreements / covenant with the college / university
 - College mission statement
 - Chaplaincy mission statement
 - Appropriate position descriptions

- Organizational chart

The following people should meet with review team during their on-campus visit:

- College President
- Chaplain
- Chaplaincy staff (both professional and support)
- Chaplain's supervisor
- Involved students (both leaders and participants)
- Uninvolved students
- Involved faculty and staff
- Advisory board members
- Chaplain's divisional colleagues
- Denominational campus ministers who work with groups on campus
- Area clergy / Presbytery officials
- College admissions representative
- Trustees

Details for the Review:

- Schedule the review at a time that the reviewers may be able to attend regularly scheduled student activities related to religious life
- The chaplain should not have anything else scheduled during the days that the review is taking place, as there are many details that crop up and need to be attended to
- Make travel & accommodation arrangements reasonably early
- Set dates of review well in advance (6 months)
- Get on the College President's schedule as soon as dates of review are established
- If possible, schedule meeting with President towards the end of the reviewers' time on campus
- Reserve meeting rooms on campus well in advance
- Set a deadline by which the written review is to be submitted to the chaplain's supervisor by the chair of the review team
- Schedule time for an individual meeting with the Chaplain