

As high school seniors transition into college, one of the greatest gifts their youth ministers can give them is a way to become active in a United Methodist campus ministry or Wesley Foundation as they begin college. While exciting and full of many new opportunities, starting at a new school can be an extremely stressful time for many students. Having a faith community with students and campus ministers who understand what new students experience can help make their transition much smoother. Campus ministry provides students the opportunity to connect to a community of faith, to build relationships with other students and the campus minister, and can be one way that students remain connected to the church during their college years. The United Methodist Church's connectional system works best when there are people (like youth ministers) who help students bridge the gap from one faith community to the next.

Here are ten things you can do to help your students' transition to college:

1. Find out who the United Methodist campus minister or chaplain is at their college and send that person your students' names and e-mail addresses. The General Board of Higher Education and Ministry has a database where you can search by college or university to find out who the campus minister is for that institution. Click Here for that database (<http://umc.gbhem.org/asp/campusMin.asp>).
2. Visit the university's website to look for student organization listings. Some list the religious organizations separately.
3. During orientation encourage students to ask about the campus ministry organizations. If a United Methodist campus ministry or Wesley Foundation is not active on that campus, encourage your student to go with a group of friends to visit UM churches that are close by the campus.
4. Encourage students to find out about chapel services that are held on campus and to attend when possible.
5. Sponsor a "Transitions" night in your local church for graduating seniors. Include information for parents and students about local United Methodist churches near their new college. Also include resources for getting involved in campus ministry or a Wesley Foundation.
6. Share information about the e-zine, *Orientation*, that provides new students with hints for making a smooth transition (<http://umc.gbhem.org/orientation/>).
7. Remind students of scholarships and loans that are available for United Methodist students through the General Board of Higher Education and Ministry (www.gbhem.org). Scholarships and loans are available for all UM students, whether they attend a UM institution or not.
8. Connect students to the United Methodist Student Movement (www.umsm.org). UMSSM sponsors an event each Memorial Day week-end called Student Forum for college students from around the country. It's a great place for students to develop networks, receive leadership development training, and be involved in worship and Bible study with students from across the United States.
9. Remind your local church to stay in touch with students during the year – via e-mail, cards, letters and care packages. Oftentimes there is a committee or group in the church who will enjoy preparing and sending care packages to students.

10. Work with your annual conference to develop a way to share names of graduating seniors with colleges in your area.

In order for high school students to successfully transition to college, help and support is needed from a variety of resources. Youth ministers can provide important resources and information as students transition. Don't let your ministry end when students leave for college. Provide lasting support by helping them bridge the gap between high school and university life.

Additional web sites:

- United Methodist Student Movement - www.umsm.org – Includes information about the annual Student Forum event and links to the UMSM Facebook group.
- Campus Ministry – www.gbhem.org/campusministry - Includes links to downloadable resources, including “What About God Now That You’re Off to College?” and “17 Ways to Welcome College Students”
- Explore Your Calling – www.explorecalling.org – Provides resources and information for those who are exploring how God is calling them to serve – whether in ordained ministry or another vocation.