



NORTHEAST REPORT

NEWS OF REFORMED UNIVERSITY FELLOWSHIP IN THE NORTHEAST

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A Home on Campus



A little lost and a little lonely, Michaela Ploutz walked to her first class at Millersville University in Lancaster, PA. In addition to the trepidation most incoming freshman experience, Michaela worried that her unique circumstances – a

commuter and an older freshman – would affect her ability to form friendships. Michaela had been warned that living off campus and commuting 30 minutes to classes could isolate her from university life.

Additionally, Michaela had started college two years later than most. After graduating high school, Michaela worked full time as a massage therapist, but she quickly realized that the physical demands of her job would eventually wear down her body. Massage is not a 40-year career choice. So Michaela enrolled in Millersville University hoping to eventually own and manage a spa. Michaela continues to work as a massage therapist while studying business administration with a focus on management. Although she has a clear vision of her future career, Michaela's first week of work and study was particularly trying and potentially lonely.

Fortunately, a friend from Michaela's church, Westminster PCA in Lancaster, PA invited her to an RUF Bible study. Within moments Michaela felt intimately connected to the members of the group. "I just met them, but I felt like I knew them for years. From the first day on campus," Michaela says, "I felt like these people had a vested interest in me."

Michaela initially struggled to adapt to her new schedule and workload. But she was comforted knowing that at RUF she would see people who cared about her. Michaela recalls, "RUF was a raft to latch onto during that first week of college."

Throughout the first week of classes, RUF members faithfully invited Michaela to orientation events and weekly activities. RUF Millersville scooped free snow cones, played Frisbee, and even offered a "beer" pong game. Many

party-oriented students, who would not ordinarily stop at a RUF event, lingered to toss a few ping-pong balls into the plastic cups and receive candy, rather than an alcoholic drink, as a prize.

Every Friday night RUF offers a fun alternative to partying for Christians and non-Christians, and RUF members are encouraged to invite friends. Before the festivities begin a student will briefly introduce RUF and its vision and invite attendees to Bible studies and large group. This year's activities have included a bonfire and a games night.

Michaela regularly attends Friday night activities, small group Bible study, and large group worship. When sickness forced her to miss a large group gathering, several friends from RUF noticed her absence and texted her. When they heard she was ill, they prayed for her. Michaela, touched by their concern, knew she had found a home on campus, even while living off campus.

– by Rebecca Trudeau

Reaching Students for Christ

University of Vermont

When students move into their dorms at the University of Vermont, they show up with all sorts of baggage. There are boxes full of tangibles – cardboard brimming with clothes, the obligatory poster of one's favorite band, pictures of family and friends back home, etc. Tossed in there are all sorts of intangibles too – questions like, "Where am I? Who am I? What do I want to do? Who do I want to be? Does it mean anything?" How one unpacks and answers those questions will shape the course of one's college career – indeed, the course of one's entire life. That is why RUF is at Uvm. We help students move-in and fit in. We help them settle into their dorms but also into a relationship with God, into the church, and into a faith community right here at Uvm. And when all is said and done, we help students move out – out into the world on mission with a newfound awareness of and appreciation for who God is, who they themselves are, and what it means to do good work in the world. *John Meinen, Campus Minister at University of Vermont*

Penn State University

Freshmen outreach is busy, organized, and communal. The first 10-14 days of a semester on campus is chaotic, because no one has really found her place or her rhythm yet. We organize information booths on campus, we plan activities to meet freshmen (hiking, ultimate frisbee, game

night, etc), and then we follow up relentlessly with every single new contact made. The days are long, the activities are organized, but the payoff is that freshmen outreach is a communal effort. It's a joy to watch our students own the reality that the future of this fellowship depends on their investment in freshmen today. Freshmen outreach means long days for a campus minister, but if it doesn't also mean long days for student leaders, then it is all for naught. Praise God that he has given our leaders a kingdom vision and work ethic to love and pursue students, as they were once loved and pursued. *Joe Dentici, Campus Minister at Penn State University*

University of Connecticut

Something that those of us who do RUF in the Northeast are forced to remember at the beginning of every year is the importance of getting there first. Because we minister on campuses that offer lots of opportunities to get involved and RUF is still relatively unknown, it is especially important to meet new students as soon as possible. Because we ultimately believe that the gospel in the lives of students is at stake, we need to think creatively about ways to pull in new students before classes get going. A couple years ago with this in mind I discovered "Late Night." At Late Night there are different activities throughout the Student Union, from tie-dying t-shirts to a scavenger hunt. I sent out some e-mails to those in charge of Late Night asking if we could have a table to give freebies to new students and promote our group, and they said yes!



This year was our second year giving out RUF stadium cups and sunglasses at Late Night, and the opportunity to meet new students has been tremendous. Students line up at our table and we get to welcome them to UConn and get their contact information before any of the other groups on campus do. Please join me in praying that the Lord would bear fruit through many of these new contacts this semester! *Lucas Dourado, Campus Minister at University of Connecticut*

University of Pittsburgh

Freshmen outreach at PITT is a "full court press" effort.

This particular brand of basketball requires every defensive player to give maximum effort all over the court. It can't be employed for very long, because it exhausts the team, but it can produce remarkable short term results. That kind of team-wide, intense effort is required for freshman outreach here at PITT, where it is exceptionally hard to meet people and maintain relationships. We've worked harder and longer this year than ever before, and have had more students express interest than ever before. It has been a delight to watch our students step in to this very demanding work, of meeting and greeting, of hosting strangers, of following up with individuals in one on one meetings. As we transition out of our "full court press," and settle into our year-long approach, pray that we continue to reap the fruits of our early efforts, that we might have the privilege of serving more students here at PITT. *Derek Bates, Campus Minister at University of Pittsburgh*

University of Delaware

This was our first year of fall outreach with RUF at the University of Delaware since becoming a recognized student group. One thing we did this year was give out 600 freshly made donuts (FOR FREE!!) to students as they walked by on the first day of the semester. The dialogue often went something like this:

Student: "How much for a donut?"

RUF: "They're free."

Student: "Wait, do I have to sign up for something?"

RUF: "No."

Student: (confused): "Why are you doing this?"

RUF: "We're RUF, a Christian ministry for this campus, we love UD, and we want you all to have a great first day of class."

The student happily, but still kind of confused, would walk away enjoying his donut.



One thing that baffles the mind and is so hard for us to really get is how generous our God is to us, how freely he grants mercy and grace to those who simply come to him. Donut day was a good step toward communicating to our campus what the true God is really like. Not only that, but

our students had a ton of fun giving out donuts and telling people about RUF. We met a number of students that have been coming out to Bible studies and other events we're doing on campus. God is at work at the University of Delaware, and we're grateful to be a part of it! *Nick Owens, Campus Minister at University of Delaware*



University of Maryland

"The wind blows where it wishes, and you hear its sound, but you do not know where it comes from or where it goes. So it is with everyone who is born of the Spirit." John 3:8

This verse caught the attention of one of our new Chinese students who has been coming to our RUF Supper Club this semester. Her name is S and she is in her first year at UMD. She was intrigued by our Supper Club sign which says "Food-Friends-Faith." She inquired about it the first week and has been coming to the dinner meeting since.

I was able to sit down with this S this week and after talking about her life, major, and short time here in the US, I asked her how she liked RUF, and if she understood anything about Christianity. I've been preaching a series called "Conversations with Jesus Ultimate Questions." Last week we looked at John 3 and Jesus's conversation with Nicodemus. She said John 3:8 was very beautiful and she liked the poetic nature of the wind blowing and the mystery involved. I briefly explained that this is God's Holy Spirit who is like the wind blowing and changing people's hearts. As we spoke she mentioned that in China there were some "very aggressive" Christian evangelists that she had met, and from her expression I could tell she was very turned off by them. She told me that after arriving in the U.S. she has now met some other Christians, including our RUF students, who were very nice and helpful and that her opinions about Christians are changing. She made a point to tell me that she loved the dinner and peaceful feeling she senses being with other students around a meal, especially the music. I finished the conversation by telling her that we are just glad to know her and would like her to feel comfortable enjoying the dinner and music at Supper Club. No pressure, just come and be with us.

As we left I felt assured that she would be there, and later that evening I received this text from her: "Chris, it was very delightful talking with you today. I was wondering if you can get me an English version Bible, so I could read

some time and try to understand the story a little bit. Thanks." *"The wind blows where it wishes..."*

Chris Garriott, Campus Minister at University of Maryland

Your Connection to RUF

Across the Northeast our ministers have been busy "getting there first" on their campuses, ready to share the love of Christ with students – those students who are moving in for the first time, and those returning for another year. Thanks for your support in making this happen!

You can make donations to our ministry here: <https://www.givetoruf.org> or scan this QR code. → Type the school or campus minister you wish to support in the box.

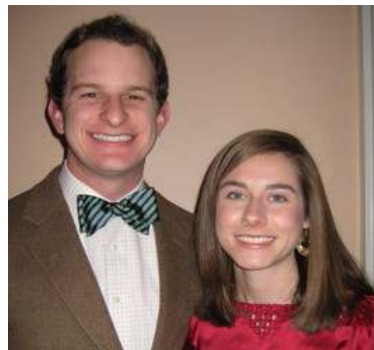


Remember to visit our RUF Northeast web site! We have pictures from our summer conference! Go to <http://rufnortheast.org/> or scan this code →



If you would rather receive these newsletters by email, contact us at Northeast@ruf.org. And if you would like to receive weekly prayer requests by email, also contact us at Northeast@ruf.org.

Focus on Eric Lipscomb



Isolation within a city of eight million seems improbable, yet few students at Columbia University form intimate friendships, says Eric Lipscomb, the RUF minister. He cites two factors that inhibit close relationships: a scarcity of free space and a

performance-oriented campus culture.

Set in the heart of Manhattan, Columbia University offers students a unique opportunity to live in the nation's largest metropolis, the home of Wall Street, and the headquarters of the United Nations. Among Columbia's community of alumni, graduate students, and faculty are 82 Nobel prize laureates and 11 U.S. Supreme Court justices.

Despite Columbia's advantages, one commodity it lacks is space, Eric explains. Columbia University has few outdoor spaces and a relatively small student union. Because apartments are expensive, most students live on campus, in cheaper, but much smaller, dorms. Without open spaces, Columbia students struggle to develop friendships through casual interactions.

The campus culture also deters relationships. At this Ivy League school, students seek excellence in academics at

the expense of social activities. Often, those relationships that develop begin as study groups, and these interactions tend to be more transactional than relational, Eric says. Additionally, students are encouraged to appear as experts. These students avoid being vulnerable, which is necessary for intimacy.

Eric seeks to create a counter culture that nurtures friendships. In *The Reason for God*, Tim Keller explains that Christians strive to revitalize relationships because they serve a personal, relational God. "The gospel makes sense of our profoundly relational character," Keller writes, "so Christians work sacrificially to strengthen human communities around them as well as the Christian community, the Church."

To strengthen Columbia's community, Eric fosters an environment that encourages vulnerability, and he provides space for the students to gather. Frequently, he and his wife Brittany welcome students in their rental apartment. During the first week of school, RuF held several events, including a pancake breakfast in Eric's apartment. That morning, Columbia students sat on Eric's couch, ate syrup-saturated pancakes, and hung out. After many such informal gatherings and structured Bible studies, Eric has seen the beginnings of intimate friendships within RuF.



Last year, Eric invited six students to form the leadership team of RuF. These students understand the pressures and experiences at Columbia better than Eric, and they will use this knowledge to shape RuF to best serve their campus. Additionally, by learning to lead on campus, the students are preparing to lead within the church at large. In this way, Eric explains, RuF ministers "to students and through students."

The ministry team meets twice a month for training and has recently developed a vision for RuF Columbia. They want the ministry to be known as a group committed to Scripture while welcoming the curious. Columbia RuF, they hope, will demonstrate compassionate love to others

and foster warm friendships among its members.

Eric formed RuF Columbia two years ago with three student contacts and many concerns about living in the United States' largest metropolis. This year, approximately 16 students attend weekly large group worship. Eric says that the students who found RuF stayed, in part, because they experienced "sustaining relationships" in the community.

Despite their initial reservations, the Big Apple has charmed Eric and Brittany, who are seeking to purchase an apartment near campus. The couple relishes New York City's "life-giving" energy, Eric says. They look forward to raising a family under its glistening skyscrapers.

— by Rebecca Trudeau

Autumn Reflections



"But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and felt compassion, and ran and embraced him and kissed him." *Luke 15:20*

Tolerance is a big issue on campuses these days, and it does not appear to have run its course yet. If by tolerance we mean refraining from verbally or physically assaulting people we do not like, tolerance is a virtue. But it is a pretty weak virtue, and it is not particularly biblical. God calls us to something much stronger and better than tolerance.

In the Parable of the Prodigal Son, the younger son treated his father shamefully, bankrupted himself, and ended up on skid row. In his squalor he decided to return to his father. In spite of having been shamefully treated, the father does more than tolerate this profligate young man. To say that he accepted his son is not quite accurate either. No, the father watched for his son, ran to him, and kissed him. This is a picture of the searching, embracing love of God for wicked sinners.

RuF is on campus to do more than tolerate unbelievers. RuF is not here merely to receive all who come to us. Like God our father, RuF runs to sinful students, joyfully embraces those who oppose us, and loves those who have wasted their lives. We do this all year, but freshman outreach in the beginning of the fall is the most concentrated effort at reaching students for Christ. May God grant that we always remember that we also are sinners who are in daily need of this embracing God, and never grow weary or resentful of people different than we are.

NORTHEAST

Prayer Requests, October 2016

1. Praise God for the freedom and opportunity to reach thousands of new and returning students on our campuses.
2. Pray for God to draw many students into RUF ministries.
3. Pray for God to help RUF ministers, interns, and students to be as embracing of sinners as our father God is.
4. Pray for God to convert many unbelievers and strengthen Christians through RUF.
5. Pray for funds and ministers to begin new RUF ministries at Rowan University, West Virginia University, Indiana University of Pennsylvania, Johnson & Wales University.

