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Reviewing *Campus Life: In Search of Community*

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Campus Life: In Search of Community. By Drew Moser and Todd Ream, eds. Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2019. 208 pp. ISBN 13: 978-8308-5259-8 (PAPERBACK) \$20

In a new and expanded version, the editors of *Campus Life: In Search of Community* sought insight from various Christian authors and leaders about the subject of authentic community. Based on the current climate and polarizing political state, the need for relationship amid teaching and learning is a heightened priority, especially among our college campuses. A resurgence of *Campus Life* is meant as a guide for campus leaders, those working in Christian higher education, and all who aim for deeper community among faculty, staff, and students.

Campus Life is organized in two parts and includes a discussion guide for leaders to engage in conversations surrounding community. Part One entails new contributions from pairs of authors working in academic and student development at prominent Christian colleges. Part Two houses the original work from Ernest Boyer and a special report from the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, published in 1990. More specifically, both Part One and Part Two are segmented into six chapters (i.e., themes) each with identical titles. Here, the authors and contributors reintroduce the insights/themes established in the original edition of *Campus Life* (1990) while simultaneously creating relevance for today's culture and classroom.

The first theme in both parts of *Campus Life* is “a purposeful community.” Both the original and expanded versions include the aspects of a well-crafted mission statement and profound vision for any university. For Christian colleges, these mission and vision statements concern head and heart. However, this is not enough to fit the needs of today's learners. Those in purposeful community acknowledge the heritage of the past while also preparing for future generations through interdisciplinary solutions to today's most significant needs, such as immigration and sexuality.

Like Jesus, who is both fully God and fully man, Christian institutions of higher learning seek both academics and Christian faith

simultaneously. The paradox lies in being able to explore academic freedom while maintaining institutional beliefs and theology fully. This paradox leads to the second theme, “an open community,” which includes freedom of expression, freedom of belief, and diverse opinions. All higher education institutions constrain freedom because of implied values and ideological biases, but the challenge for Christian colleges is leveraging core, privileged, and neutral beliefs. An open community pursues truth and communicates clear and consistent ideas while valuing open dialogue and diverse perspectives.

The third and perhaps most important theme is “a just community.” The authors invite the reader to go beyond awareness or pursuit of diversity and social justice to embrace a more profound and authentic responsibility toward change. Requiring humility, honesty, self-reflection, and responsiveness, Christian colleges must exemplify their faith statements in tangible ways where diversity and uniqueness are valued and revered. The sign of a just community is one where administration, faculty, staff, and students participate in making a difference in the lives of others, including the marginalized and hurting people locally and globally.

A less popular theme is “a disciplined community.” The disciplined community entails individual responsibility amidst well-organized governance that guides student behavior inside and outside the classroom. The original report called for a civic code to address the most significant concerns, as identified by college presidents. Those concerns included substance abuse and drinking, student apathy, campus security and crime, inadequate facilities, and intercultural relations. These are visible extensions of the classroom and deserve the reader’s attention. The original text affirms the role of Christian institutions in providing a standard of living outside the classroom, and the expanded version includes discussions for how Christian colleges can inspire discipline beyond the individual to encompass the common good.

“A caring community” is one where relationship and well-being are centralized. This fifth theme is a crucial component of learning and involves healthy identity development through friendships. The easiest method for finding a caring community is to look for communal spaces on campus such as chapel, housing, classes, and other spaces

for co-curricular involvement. In these spaces, students begin to gain autonomy while also realizing their dependence on others.

“A celebrative community” is the sixth and final theme of *Campus Life*, and this theme is still a necessary part of any institution. The authors reiterate the importance of celebrating university successes, history, and traditions; however, the expanded version reminds the reader of current trends in higher education that seemingly distract from this ideal. For example, changing demographics in most institutions affect how colleges can and should acknowledge their past accomplishments. For this reason, the authors suggest connecting with new students from diverse backgrounds in methods that are culturally appropriate and sensitive. In this, the college is more inclusive for all while still acknowledging the past.

I would be remiss if I did not acknowledge the Forward by David Brooks. This eloquent essay on the need for Christian Higher Education and the value of whole-person education is both raw and revealing. In his words, secular colleges and universities “are not places that integrate the mind, the heart, and the spirit. These places nurture an overdeveloped self and an underdeveloped soul” (as cited in Moser & Ream, 2019, p. x). Brooks applauds the efforts of Christian colleges and universities and how they nurture commitment, discipline, and community.

We have many broad and polarizing issues in higher education. Mental health, equity, immigration, climate change, and sexual assault are some of the issues facing students on campuses across the United States. What is offered is a framework to engage administration, faculty, and students in conversations surrounding community and what makes their institution distinctive. Christian colleges are uniquely qualified to address the issues of today because of their heartfelt commitment to others and their integration of conviction, emotion, and intelligence.

Overall, the book is an excellent resource for leaders at all levels of Christian higher education institutions. A great strength of *Campus Life* is the discussion guide featured in the back of the book. The questions create space for campus leaders to engage in meaningful dialogue surrounding their university, what makes it unique, and how they are

accomplishing the six themes in *Campus Life*. Another strength is the practical advice and action steps for implementing a sense of community in today's culture.

One cannot read this book without self-reflection and taking action. The ultimate aim of this book is a call to action. As the Epistle of James states, we must be doers and not hearers only. Being purposeful, open, just, disciplined, caring, and celebrative involves not only mission and vision and an others-oriented sense of purpose but also a willingness to engage in dialogue, debate, and deed. I highly recommend this resource for all stakeholders involved in building community within Christian higher education.

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Moser, D., & Ream, T. C. (Eds.). (2019). *Campus life: In search of community*. Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic.

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