



NORTHEAST REPORT

NEWS OF REFORMED UNIVERSITY FELLOWSHIP IN THE NORTHEAST

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RUF and the Secular Campus

Everywhere I go people ask me about RUF's progress in ministering on campuses in the Northeast. One of the concerns that has been coming up frequently is the climate on campuses toward evangelical ministries. Many people have heard about the problems at Vanderbilt, in which most evangelical ministries have been pushed off the campus. More recently problems have arisen in the California State University system and other colleges.

By God's grace the ministry of RUF has not been hindered by any of these developments. RUF is not presently working on any Cal State campuses, and we are still going strong at Vanderbilt. There may come a day when RUF has to choose between faithfulness to the gospel and a presence on some campuses, but praise God that day is not here yet.

In fact, we have remarkably good relationships with the campuses on which we work. We attribute this happy situation to God's blessing, but I think He uses our efforts to serve the campuses where we minister to create favor with the administration. Following are reports from our campus ministers about the relationship with their universities.

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RUF Outreach Team at the University of Vermont

### University of Vermont

Two months ago Reformed University Fellowship (RUF) became the newest SGA-recognized club at the University of Vermont (UVM). To put things in some perspective, UVM sits atop a hill in Burlington, Vermont – the “least religious city” in the “least religious state” in the country. And it is here – in this particular place, in a near unanimous vote – that students voted “yes!” for RUF at UVM: “yes!” – we want a safe and hospitable space for us to explore Christianity and discover who Jesus is; “yes!” – we want a com-

munity where we can connect with others who are like and unlike ourselves; and “yes!” – we want pastors and peers who will encourage us to grow personally, relationally, intellectually and spiritually, too. Here, in Burlington, Vermont, students voted “yes” for RUF at UVM. *John Meinen*

### Boston University

RUF is in its second year at Boston University. BU generally has a very positive attitude towards religious groups on its campus as long as each group follows the rules it has established. Since RUF's approach to relating to the university administration at a new university is to “go through the front door,” I as the campus minister am doing all I can to build rapport with the administrators who oversee religious groups on campus, while also working with students to move forward in the application process to become an official group. This is an essential step in establishing RUF at BU for the long term. We believe God has called RUF here and that He will carry us through. Please pray with me towards this end! *Nathan Dicks*

### Massachusetts Institute of Technology

With over 450 student groups on a campus of about 4500 undergraduates, it is not easy for a new group to be welcomed at MIT, as it seems there is something for everyone already. In May MIT “opened its doors” to RUF as an official student group as the student government was convinced that RUF offers the university something that is novel and beneficial – a group that seeks to explore and experience the historic and Protestant Christian faith, in an environment that welcomes people of all backgrounds, yet challenges them to think about faith and doubt with the same core assumptions that they apply to their academic work, while being committed and connected to the church. We are grateful to serve both the church and the university by offering a community where students do not need to choose between the ‘secular’ and the ‘sacred.’ *Solomon Kim*

### Harvard University

Harvard has a reputation in Christians circles – and it is not a good one. Yet RUF has been on campus for 19 years, and our conviction to respect the university has paid off. We enjoy a chaplaincy status, and our reputation – despite how strongly some might disagree with our beliefs – remains strong. It is not always easy to maintain such strong relationships. Occasionally, specific agendas will arise that attempt to pull us in their wake. But RUF's respect for the university, care for students, and obvious deep theological roots have helped us weather those storms. Please keep praying that our sincere love for the

university would shine through all of our interactions!

*Jeremy Mullen*

### **Brown University**

In the eyes of Brown University, RUF is a student-led group and I am its Religious Life Advisor on campus. Last Spring I was recognized as Advisor of the Year by the Student Activities Office. Timothy Shiner, Director of Student Activities and the student union at Brown, said he had heard about me and RUF from “all over campus” including a variety of administrators, faculty, and staff. We are grateful to God that, at Brown, we have made significant strides in forging a positive relationship with the school, its faculty, staff, and administrators. *Eddie Park*

### **University of Connecticut**

RUF has a very good relationship with the administration at UConn. To be official at UConn, we are part of the Area Association of Religious Communities (AARC), and I attend monthly AARC meetings to keep up good relations with the administration. We are also an official student organization, which requires having officers, a constitution, etc., just as any club would have. In general, UConn sees religious life as a valuable aspect of student development, and is happy to have a variety of religious organizations active on campus. It is fairly easy to have access to space on campus, as well as parking and other amenities. We are generally perceived to be a positive voice on campus, although no one in the UConn administration knows exactly what we believe. In general, our relationship with the administration is a positive one. *Lucas Dourado*

### **New York City**

As secularism grows on the college campus and in culture as a movement and ideology, the pull for pluralism (all religious views get a voice at the table) to take root within the authority structure of the college campus is equally growing. However, there are two types of pluralism – militant pluralism that says you can have a voice at the table as long as you only voice opinions and views that all basically sound pluralistic, and also true pluralism that allows space for differing religious views no matter how committed people are to those views. RUF in New York City finds itself often working with campuses and administrators that are processing and working through both these views of pluralism. Happily we have been a part of many great discussions that are building true pluralistic paradigms, though we also have been affected by militant pluralism as well. *Michael Keller*

### **Penn State University**

Penn State sees the value of ministries on campus. Students who find a place in campus ministries tend to be happier in college, and the university benefits from this. In recognition of this, Penn State has built an impressive building on campus dedicated to campus ministries. This semester RUF has utilized this building for our weekly large group meetings. While the administration is openly pluralistic in worldview, this is not to say that Penn State

expects its ministries to be pluralistic as well. RUF has been given the freedom to proclaim the exclusive claims of Christianity, and is encouraged to be in dialogue on campus. Our students are allowed to share their faith, which is something that we are eager to do! We are thankful for the place that Penn State has given RUF on campus, and are happy to use our place on campus to further the Kingdom of God. Pray that God keeps these doors open, and that we would take advantage of the freedom that we have. *Joe Dentici*

### **University of Pittsburgh**

I am occasionally asked by the concerned supporter just how the University, or the Bureaucracy, treats us. Often, the concern seems to be prompted by an expectation of antagonism, as though the System were out to get us. Now, certainly there is a System and a Bureaucracy at PITT, a vast but necessary one given the size and structure of the school. Like life within any large bureaucracy, there are inconveniences and things I would like to change (like our Large Group room). But I must say, and I do say to those concerned, that I have found the University always to be fair. We are treated no differently than any other student organization. Moreover, within that faceless Bureaucracy, there are countless folks who want students to flourish – people who want to see groups like ours thrive. So I am truly thankful for the university, and count it a privilege to work amidst that System, and alongside those countless fellow servants of the student body. *Derek Bates*



Millersville students lining up for RUF snow cones

### **Millersville University**

The “front door” to Millersville University runs through the Student Affairs office, so any campus ministry that wants to be a recognized organization must work with this office. In my last three years I have been received with such joy. The Assistant Vice President for Student Affairs has created a monthly meeting to meet with the all the Campus Ministers. We discuss the spiritual climate of the campus, campus events, and even close in prayer for the campus. We have been asked to sit on search committees for Student Affairs staff. I even had the opportunity to teach a seminar on conflict in the work place and was able to use principles from *The Peacemaker* by Ken Sande. I was

asked to return and teach more this coming spring.

*Trip Beans*

### University of Maryland

The relationship with RUF at the University of Maryland is healthy and a blessing. I often thank the Lord during prayer time for the University of Maryland and the freedom we have to meet and practice our faith. We have never been denied room rental or infringed upon by administration to preach and proclaim the Gospel and disciple students on campus. We have had access to buildings and space through student involvement. *Chris Garriott*

### Delaware State University

Most Friday mornings I pray with a group of friends early in the morning. We pray for the campus, our country, and personal issues. However, this past Friday was different. I attended a breakfast on the campus of Dsu and prayed with the President and Senior staff of the University, the Chaplain and dozens of other clergy and believers throughout the Dsu community. It was a fantastic event. The Dsu choir sang wonderfully and God's Word was preached faithfully by a local pastor. The President prayed for the campus to be covered by the Blood of Jesus.

Strange? Indeed! This is not normal for a university with a diverse campus of nearly 5000 students. It is even more strange for a state school with no historical religious affiliation. However, that is the culture of the average HBCU (Historically Black College and University). It is a blessing to be at a place that openly welcomes people of faith; however, it seems the university's desire to be heavily involved with spiritual life on campus also creates problems.

Rather than allowing students to exercise their faith freely, the university has developed a bad case of hover-momitis. RUF has developed a positive relationship with the helpful on-campus chaplain; nonetheless, while the administration means well – there are simply just too many rules and hurdles. Having a full-time campus minister here is not only good – it is essential to accomplishing anything. If the normal secular university kills ministry with an AK-47, Dsu kills ministry by smothering it into oblivion! Give us air!

That being said, nothing can separate us from the love of Christ. Pray for administrative diligence and continued freedom to minister the gospel. Pray for wisdom and patience. Lastly, pray that this shallow religious culture would grow into a deep seated relationship with our Lord Jesus Christ – for the students and also for the administration. *Daryl Wattley*

## Your Connection with RUF

The stories that ordinarily make the front page of newsletters like this are those of student conversions, discipleship, outreach, and growth in grace. And that is good, because those are the stories that touch us most deeply. But as you can see, RUF's interaction with campus authori-

ties is more than a necessary evil to reach students. Our campus ministers are penetrating the campus by conducting themselves like Christ before the leaders of the university. We are grateful that positive university relations facilitates student ministry, but we also rejoice in the opportunity to witness to university administrators. Your prayers and donations are part of this ministry. Thanks for joining us in reaching our universities with the gospel!

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! Go to <http://rufnortheast.org/> or scan this code →



If you would rather receive these newsletters by email, contact us at [Northeast@ruf.org](mailto:Northeast@ruf.org).

And if you would like to receive weekly prayer requests by email, also contact us at [Northeast@ruf.org](mailto:Northeast@ruf.org).

## Focus on Solomon Kim



On September 4 the freshmen class at Massachusetts Institute of Technology swarmed to the athletic center for the activities fair. For the first time, RUF set up a booth beside more than 450 student groups, all hoping to attract new members. The RUF minister, Solomon Kim, and a

friend from church handed students water bottles and popsicles. After two hours, Solomon had no water bottles and contact information for over 20 freshmen.

In addition to these names, two sophomores have committed to attending weekly Bible studies. While he trusts his group will grow in the coming years, Solomon is thrilled to make inroads at this very secular school in Boston. Three years ago MIT's student paper surveyed students about their religious practice. They found that approximately 20% of the student population is active in a campus religious group. Leaders of other Christian groups told Solomon that only half of that percentage attend church. This year, Solomon hopes to draw students to faith, strengthen those who already believe, and encourage students to participate in local church life.

"Last year, I got my feet wet. This year, I'm diving in," Solomon says.

Last year Solomon had two main goals: to befriend members of the MIT community and to make RUF an official student group. Friends introduced Solomon to alumni, students, and faculty. Solomon shared his vision with them and asked them about their experiences at MIT. Two themes emerged: students face enormous academic pressure, and they have limited free time.

Some alumni and faculty warned Solomon that he might have difficulty being recognized an official student group, because a new group must prove it is distinct from other groups on campus. They were concerned that students would consider RUF as too similar to other Christian groups. Yet, Solomon quickly accumulated enough signatures to be officially recognized.

More non-Christians than Christians signed the petition. Solomon believes they signed because they liked Solomon and they recognized that RUF offered a thoughtful and distinctive way to explore Christianity. Among the people he met, one person predicted that Solomon would have little trouble becoming a student group: Dick Yue, Sc.D., an influential professor of engineering.

In conversation with Solomon, Professor Yue described MIT as a meritocracy. Students and teachers are valued almost exclusively by their scholarship. A merit-based community is both “freeing and entrapping,” Solomon says. Christians who perform well, like Professor Yue, are welcomed to the community and are free to express their faith. But a meritocracy can become a prison for those who do not succeed.

When former straight-A students no longer excel, they may experience the imposter phenomenon – a phenomenon Solomon says is common at MIT. The American Psychological Association describes the imposter phenomenon as profound self doubt. High achievers attribute their success, such as acceptance into MIT, as a fluke, and they dread being unmasked as a fake. These feelings of inadequacy are often accompanied by anxiety and depression.

Between March 2014 and May 2015, six students attending MIT committed suicide, National Public Radio reports. Research from the Center of Disease Control shows that the suicide rate among college students is increasing, but MIT’s suicide rate surpasses the national average. NPR also reports that academic pressure is rarely the sole reason for suicide. Most are prompted by troubled families or relationships.

Solomon mourned with the campus for the students. Several people he befriended knew the people who died. He

spoke with and prayed for the students in the dark days following the suicides.

To students desperate to succeed, Solomon presents Christianity as radically different from meritocracy. A person cannot earn God’s favor, instead He gives it to those who believe. God’s grace gives rest to students who rarely know rest.

– by Rebecca Trudeau

## Autumn Reflections

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“And all spoke well of him and marveled at the gracious words that were coming from his mouth.” *Luke 4:22*

“Woe to you, when all people speak well of you, for so their fathers did to the false prophets.” *Luke 6:26*



It seems like we are always prone to find one side of Jesus’ teaching and grab onto it. Some of us crave acceptance by others, and maneuver ourselves so that people speak well of us. We justify this by noticing that “all spoke well” of Jesus. Others of us revel in a counter-cultural role, and welcome opposition from the

world. We justify this by appealing to Jesus’ woe on those whom people speak well of.

It has been said many times that you cannot put Jesus into a box. Jesus is neither the smooth politician nor the caustic revolutionary. Jesus spoke the truth in love. Sometimes people liked it, and sometimes they did not.

RUF is not on campus to score points – political or religious. We are on campus to proclaim the truth about Jesus. Sometimes people will like us, and sometimes they will not – but that must not change what we do. I am abundantly grateful that so far, the universities in which we work are happy to have us there. If that ever changes, we will not change our gospel. Like Jesus, we might have to endure the shame of going outside the city. But in that day, we will find Jesus there, too.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "David Green".





# NORTHEAST

## Prayer Requests, September 2015

1. Praise God for good relations with the universities in which we are working.
2. Pray for God to continue to give us favor in the eyes of these universities.
3. Praise for excellent freshmen outreach and a great start to the new year.
4. Pray for many unbelievers to come to faith.
5. Pray for campus ministers, interns, and student leaders to be energetic in ministering to students.
6. Pray for God to bless the ministry of His word in preaching and in Bible studies.

