

**University of Dayton
Program for Christian Leadership**

**Faculty Fund for Vocational Exploration (FFVE)
Focus Group Discussion with
Faculty Grant Recipients**

**Research Sponsored By
Dr. Maura Donahue and the Program for Christian Leadership**

**Research Conducted By
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And

**The Business Research Group
School of Business Administration
University of Dayton**

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Program for Christian Leadership

Faculty Fund for Vocational Exploration (FFVE) Focus Group Discussion with Faculty Grant Recipients

EXECUTVE SUMMARY AND OVERVIEW

The following major topics were addressed during this discussion.

- General perceptions of the Faculty Fund for Vocational Exploration (FFVE) grants, including the position of the grant relative to other funding sources, administration of the grants, and the desirability of continuing the grants.
- Reactions to the goal of the FFVE grants to cultivate in undergraduate students an awareness of vocation.
- Reactions to the goal of the FFVE grants to impact the professional vocation of the faculty.

The Business Research Group (BRG) at the University of Dayton administered the focus group. Eight participants came together for this discussion on April 11, 2005 in the BRG research facilities in the School of Business Administration at the University of Dayton.

The key findings include:

General Perceptions:

- The FFVE grants have a unique position relative to other funding sources and that unique position is closely aligned with the mission of the University of Dayton.
- The FFVE grants serve to expand the meaning of vocation.
- The administration of the grants is successful. However, the description of the grant should make clear that the grants are available all, Christian and non-Christian alike.
- More emphasis could be given to the university's philosophy of "learn, lead, and serve."
- Given the unique position of the FFVE grants, they should definitely continue to be offered in the future.

Student Awareness of Vocation:

- As a result of their work with the grants, these grant recipients do talk with students regarding vocation. These conversations, however, are limited in order to avoid any sense of indoctrination.

Faculty Professional Vocation:

- The FFVE grants gave these recipients the opportunity to reflect on their own vocation and to share their work with others on the faculty.
- The FFVE grants also provided focus and allowed faculty the opportunity to become more articulate about vocation.
- The grant experience also provided motivation for the recipients to engage in additional activities such as mentoring students, sharing in discussions with others, and finding ways to relate directly to the “learn, lead, and serve” philosophy.

Program for Christian Leadership

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PROJECT OVERVIEW AND RESEARCH ISSUES

The purpose of this research was to assess the Faculty Fund for Vocational Exploration grants relative to the goals established by the Program for Christian Leadership. Faculty who have received the grants were invited to participate in a focus group to discuss outcomes associated with their FFVE grant projects, specifically the impact of the FFVE grants on their professional development and on their interactions with students.

The following major topics encompass the research issue:

- General perceptions of the FFVE grants, including the position of the grant relative to other funding sources, administration of the grants, and the desirability of continuing the grants.
- Reactions to the goal of the FFVE grants to cultivate in undergraduate students an awareness of vocation.
- Reactions to the goal of the FFVE grants to impact the professional vocation of the faculty.

The discussion of the findings presented in subsequent sections of this report will be organized around these topics. The specific issues encompassed in each area will be detailed in that discussion as well.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The Business Research Group (BRG) at the University of Dayton administered one focus group designed to address these research issues. The focus group was conducted on April 11, 2005 in the BRG research facilities at the University of Dayton.

Dr. Maura Donahue, Director of the Program for Christian Leadership, identified the participants, including all faculty members who had received one of the FFVE grants. Invitations to participate in the focus group were extended from BRG, with BRG providing all follow-up communications.

A list of the eight faculty members participating in the focus group appears in Appendix A.

Rebecca Wells, a faculty member in the Department of Management and Marketing at the University of Dayton, prepared the focus group guide (found in

Appendix B), moderated the discussion and prepared this summary report. Comments from the discussion are aggregated, so none are attributed to any individual participant. Quotes, when used, are paraphrased, not verbatim.

GENERALIZATION OF THE FINDINGS

Qualitative research provides a valuable source of information to clarify issues and generate ideas, and to give direction to future research. Although participants were recruited from the group of interest, they were not selected on a statistical basis. Therefore, the information provided through this research should be valued for its insightfulness, but should not be generalized to others.

RESULTS OF THE RESEARCH

The content analysis discussed in this section is organized around the three major research issues.

- General perceptions of the FFVE grants, including the position of the grant relative to other funding sources, administration of the grants, and the desirability of continuing the grants.
- Reactions to the goal of the FFVE grants to cultivate in undergraduate students an awareness of vocation.
- Reactions to the goal of the FFVE grants to impact the professional vocation of the faculty.

GENERAL PERCEPTIONS OF THE FFVE GRANTS

Discussions of the participants' general perceptions of the FFVE grants included the following specific areas:

- Position of the grants relative to other funding sources
- Administration of the grants
- Continuation of the grants.

Position of the grants

Participants were asked to discuss what attracted them to this grant and what, in their opinion, made this grant unique from others available to them at the University of Dayton. Their discussion suggested that the FFVE grants have a unique position relative to other funding sources and that unique position is closely aligned with the mission of the university.

The participants considered the opportunities offered by the FFVE grants and agreed that the outcomes may be different depending on the specific work supported by the grant. They described the following:

- The grants offer the opportunity to bring diverse people together to discuss community and vocation, and to make a difference.
- The grants provide the opportunity to extend our understanding of vocation and to see how people are living this in their daily lives.
- The projects supported by the grant serve to expand the meaning of vocation. An individual's (student or faculty) vocation may be explored through mentoring, through involvement in research, through service learning

There was a big hole in my research and I needed to do something very specific. This grant was the opportunity. My reason for applying was very pragmatic.

Administration of grants

Discussions of the administration of the FFVE grants included topics such as the language describing the grants and ideas for changing the parameters of the grants. Overall, the participants were satisfied with the administration of the grants, but they did offer a few suggestions.

Several participants thought the wording of the description of the grant seemed to give preference to Christians and suggested that it should be made clear that this is not the case. One way to do this would be to broaden the language of vocation so the grants are seen as more widely applicable. This could be accomplished by giving more emphasis to the university's philosophy of "learn, lead, and serve." This clearly links the grants to the mission of the University of Dayton.

The only parameter of the grant the participants suggested changing dealt with how often a faculty member is eligible to apply for the grant. The group concluded that if appropriate, support should be available for the continuation of the project. This could either be financial or by means of other resources and connections. In this way, a relationship with a team, a project, and/or an initiative could be established.

Continuation of the grants

Everyone agreed, given the unique position of the FFVE grants, that they should be continued in the future. The impact on the individual grant recipients and on students was obvious.

Where else would we find funding for this unique, life integrating experience.

CULTIVATION OF UNDERGRADUATE STUDENTS' AWARENESS OF VOCATION

One goal of the FFVE grants has to do with its impact on students' understanding of their vocation. These faculty recipients talked extensively about their discussions with students regarding vocation and attributed this to their work with the grants. There were, however, limits to these discussions.

In several cases, students were involved directly with the grant projects and were asked to reflect on both vocation and on the experience of actually doing research, and then to share those reflections with others. In other cases, where students were not directly involved with the grant projects, the work led to the opportunity for the faculty to engage students in discussions of vocation.

Those discussions tended to focus on vocation as a vision of life that is carried out over time, through a variety of avenues. Participants noted that students have said they don't have a chance in their classes to talk about vocation and they wanted to have that opportunity.

The participants emphasized that discussing vocation with students must be done carefully.

I talk with students only in selected classes. It is not appropriate in other classes.

I don't do more in classes because it is not our place. We are responsible for getting students to reflect on the discipline. We need to find ways to encourage them to think about vocation with appearing to be trying to indoctrinate them.

It is important to void evangelism. It is better to focus on our "learn, lead, and serve" philosophy.

PROFESSIONAL VOCATION OF FACULTY

According to these participants, the FFVE grants gave them the opportunity to reflect on their own vocation and to share their work with others on the faculty. That said, the participants also noted that just being a part of the University of Dayton community gave them this opportunity.

The FFVE grants did, however, provide focus and allowed faculty the opportunity to become more articulate about vocation. The experience also provided motivation to engage in additional activities such as mentoring students, sharing discussions with others, and finding ways to relate directly to the "learn, lead, and serve" philosophy.

I have developed a much greater appreciation of these questions.

**APPENDIX A
PROGRAM FOR CHRISTIAN LEADERSHIP
FACULTY PARTICIPANTS IN FFVE FOCUS GROUP
APRIL 11, 2005**

PARTICIPANT	DEPARTMENT (years at UD)
Mary Ann Angel	Communication (16 years)
Corrine Daparano	Health and Sports Science (4 years)
Mary Ellen Dillon	Biology (14 years)
Susan Ferguson	Teacher Education (15 years)
Brad Hume	History (7 years)
Laura Leming	Sociology (19 years)
Judith Martin	Religious Studies (25 years)
Ed Brink	Teacher Education (7 years)

APPENDIX B
PROGRAM FOR CHRISTIAN LEADERSHIP
FFVE FOCUS GROUP GUIDE
APRIL 11, 2005

**Program for Christian Leadership
Faculty Fund for Vocational Exploration (FFVE)
Faculty Recipients Focus Group Discussion Guide
Monday, April 11, 2005, 11:30 a.m.**

University of Dayton, BRG Focus Group Facility

Introductions: Moderator, facility, observers, video recording

Topic: We are here today to talk about the your FFVE project, the outcomes, its impact on you, and your recommendations for the program. Information from our discussion will be shared with those responsible for the design and implementation of the program.

Participant Introductions: Please introduce yourself by giving me your name, your department and position, how long you have been at the University of Dayton, and a brief description of the courses you teach, your research interests, and the focus of your service.

1. Lets talk about what attracted you to the FFVE grant. How did you learn of the opportunity? Why did you think it was a good match to your work?
2. Would you describe your FFVE grant work successful? Why or why not?
3. What have been the outcomes? Were they what you expected or planned for? Has there been any contribution or impact on what you do in your classes? Your research? Your service? Do you ever find yourself talking with other faculty about vocation?
4. One of the specific goals of the grant is to cultivate in undergraduate students an awareness of vocation – the ability to see their life’s work as a response to a call from God. Have your found opportunities to do this as a result of your grant project? Would you be doing this anyway?
5. How have you changed, if you have, as a result of doing the work associated with the grant?
 - a. Have you engaged in theological reflection on your own vocation?
 - b. Have you found yourself considering your scholarship, teaching, and service in relation to your faith more so than you did prior to the grant?

- c. Have you found a greater degree of integration between research in your discipline and your faith?
 - d. Do you sense a greater responsibility for deepening and communicating the religious traditions of UD?
 - e. Do you feel more closely aligned with the mission of UD?
6. Have you been involved with the Program for Christian Leadership in other ways? If yes, what is your impression of the program? What has been its impact, if any, on you as a professional? Personally?
7. What is your impression of the application process for the FFVE grants? How could it be improved? Other changes?
8. Do you believe that the FFEV grants program is meaningful at UD? If yes, what is its contribution? If no, why not?
9. Should it be continued? Would you encourage others to apply? If yes, what would you tell others about the program? If no, what would you say?