

# Career Connections

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## Ministry

### OBJECTIVES OF THE PROGRAM

The Ministry Career Connections program is intended to encourage you in your discernment of a ministerial vocation, especially in the midst of all the opportunities a liberal arts education provides. Through coursework, on-campus clubs and activities, off-campus opportunities in varied volunteer work and internships, and mentoring relationships, you will find many ways in which to gain self-understanding and to hone skills for ministerial work.

Those involved in various ministries are involved in many different activities: officiating at baptisms, bar and bat mitzvahs, weddings, funerals, and other rites and ceremonies of congregational life; pastoral care and counseling for those who are troubled; support of and participation in care for the homeless, jobless, and suffering; visitations at hospitals and nursing homes; study of sacred scripture and preparation of sermons and other lessons; leadership and design of worship services; leadership and design of educational programs; and visiting the homes of those recently bereaved. This service is built on a deep core of faith, for the main point of ministry is to encourage people as they seek to live out their faith in day-to-day life.

As this encouragement in faith takes many different forms, ministers are constantly honing a wide range of skills. A liberal arts education is an excellent background for these activities. Ministers must be able to work with people; thus, they must be able to communicate clearly, both in written and spoken form. Because ministers must be able to help people in various situations of need, they need to be prepared to do everything from helping a teenager sort through a problem with his parents to providing temporary aid for a battered woman who has just left her husband. In these above-mentioned situations, ministers are understood as interpreters of their faith and as those who help others interpret their own faith.

There are at least two important things to remember as one prepares for ministry. First, ministry follows upon a sense of calling or vocation. While one may try ministerial work in order to discern whether one is called to ministry, commitment to ministry is based on a sense of vocation. Second, the vast majority of ministerial study is undertaken after college in seminary or divinity school, where the future minister undertakes specialized training. If you are considering ministry as a vocation, your undergraduate years will be best spent discerning who you are and what moves you. Any major can be preparation for ministry, and any major will be acceptable to seminaries and divinity schools *if* you can write well, think critically, and clearly articulate your understanding of faith. College is the time to test whether or not you are interested in service to others, how you are called to meet the needs that are all around you, and whether or not you have the skills of “everyday” theology: the ability to aid others in interpretation of their faith in the day-to-day so that they can live in the light of that faith.

### RECOMMENDATIONS

#### Exploring Options

Work in the field of ministry is emotionally, intellectually, physically, and spiritually demanding. In addition, it is not work that one enters in order to make lots of money. Although rich with great rewards, ministry should be considered carefully and entered advisedly. As you begin exploration of ministry during your

Hanover College career, it is important to speak to those in the field, perhaps with either of the chaplains, as well as with the pastor(s) of your church. They will be able to give you a realistic sense of all the ups and downs of ministerial work.

Take advantage of the Vocation Library, sponsored by the Hanover College Lilly Vocation Project, on the third floor of Science Hall, which has a wide range of books dedicated to questions of discernment, ministry, calling, and the relationship of these questions to the Bible, spiritual formation, and particular careers. Also sponsored by the Lilly Project is the opportunity for vocational mentoring throughout your four years. Contact one of the chaplains or the Assistant Director of the grant, Julie Witherup, for information. Likewise, we strongly encourage you to seek out the fruitful resources of the Career Center, including contacts with Hanover College alumni who are in many and varied forms of ministry.

Exploration of ministry can also be pursued in the pre-ministry discernment group called *Consilium*. *Consilium* is a Latin term that means “advice, assembly, consultation, council, deliberation, plan, purpose, suggestion, and wisdom” and aptly describes what this group will be about. Students who are chosen to participate must covenant with the chaplains and with each other to meet regularly throughout the school year, complete readings, participate in retreats, attend and participate in on- and off-campus worship, assist the chaplains, attend worship in different settings, and participate in some form of ministry off-campus. Participation in this group gives students the chance for intensive investigation into the demands and expectations of professional ministry, a hands-on experience with ministry-related activities, individualized attention and mentoring from the chaplains, and opportunities to observe and talk with a variety of worship leaders and denominational representatives.

There are a variety of helpful websites for those who would like to know more about ministry. For example, at <http://www.exploreministry.org/> you will have the opportunity to take a short quiz on your suitability for ministry, to read real life stories of current ministers, and to have many of your basic questions about the field answered. And if you’re wondering how to pay for seminary, don’t overlook <http://www.thefund.org/>.

If you are seriously interested in ministry, you should find an avenue of spiritual direction or mentoring with someone involved in ministry to help you discern the way in which your personal faith relates to the faith and ministry of your religious tradition. In addition, study the relationship you see between worship, community, everyday life, and your faith tradition. Like any other work, the work of ministry should be a natural outgrowth of the way in which you interact with the world. You should recognize that ministry is not the sort of work one starts only after one has received training, but something that begins before the training is undertaken. If you do not naturally pursue various tasks of ministry apart from training, then perhaps you should reconsider the choice of ministry.

## **Academics**

Ministerial work will never be sustained without your passion, and so the very best undergraduate major for future ministerial work is whatever you love to study. Seminaries and divinity schools accept all sorts of majors from universities and liberal arts colleges. Graduate study will provide the concentrated work in theological study, biblical studies, Christian education, and pastoral care that you will need for ministerial work.

There are a great number of elective courses that would support your on-going work of ministry. Here again it is important to explore your passions and interests. There are many different forms of ministry, with emphases on different aspects of ministerial work. Are you interested in working with children? Are you interested in the more studious side of helping people live out their faith? Do you find that you enjoy administrative activities like organizing and planning events? Would you rather avoid sermons and focus on care for the elderly? Thinking about these sorts of questions will help you sort through what sorts of classes and activities you want to pursue now. The goal of the suggestions below is to help you in developing a complement of ministerial insights and skills.

No matter what your major, consider the following courses, depending on your interests:

Theology courses to deepen your ability to reflect on scripture and ethics. For example:

THS 323, *Historical Issues and Figures in Christian Ethics*

THS 224, *Contemporary Issues and Figures in Christian Ethics*

THS 325, *Contemporary Theology*

THS 336, *The History of Christian Thought*

THS 356, *Paul and the Church's Struggle to Survive*

Psychology courses to deepen your understanding of human beings and human interaction. For example:

PSY 111, *Basic Principles of Psychology*

PSY 244, *Childhood and Adolescence*

Anthropology and Sociology classes to deepen your understanding of cultures, societies, and questions of religion, racism, etc. For example:

ANTH 112, *Introduction to Anthropology*

ANTH 238, *Middle East: Peoples and Cultures*

ANTH 316, *Comparative Spirituality: Islam and Buddhism*

SOC 335, *Sociology of Religion*

Political Science classes to deepen your understanding of various current events and their impact on everyday human life. For example:

PLS 115, *Introduction to Politics*

PLS 212, *American Foreign Policy*

Communication courses to deepen your understanding of and skills in public speech.

Philosophy courses to develop skills of analysis and perception, and to deepen your understanding of the fundamental questions of human experience. For example:

PHI 211, *Philosophy of Woman*

PHI 226, *Medieval Philosophy*

PHI 324, *20<sup>th</sup> Century Philosophy*

## **Co-Curricular Activities**

Since ministry is intimately tied with your sense of vocation and your understanding of your connection with God and because ministry has as its goal the support of human beings in a faith-oriented context, how one reflects on co-curricular activities is the most important consideration. We do not suggest being a Peer Advisor, for instance, just so you can get experience with people. Instead, one should be fully committed to the goals and work of being a PA; because of the similarities between pastoral care and peer advising, the reflection on that work could help in your decision-making process.

## **On-Campus Activities**

There are many activities on campus that will be good preparation for ministry. Any group in which you are able to envision, plan, and carry out a particular event will be useful for typical activities in ministry. You might consider serving as chaplain of your sorority or fraternity, as an officer or a member in any of the religious affiliated groups on campus, or as a volunteer with the youth fellowship at a local church.

Participating in student religious groups, chapel activities and events, and other panels or presentations in which human experience and current events are examined will also be excellent preparation.

Beyond these more closely linked options, a range of other activities might be valuable for you. For example, if you decide to become a Peer Advisor, you will find you have experience useful for that aspect of ministry that entails support for, care of, and listening to others. Consider gaining experience in mediating decisions or running complex organizations, such as serving as the standards or personnel chair for an organization or serving on Judicial Board, being a member of Student Senate, or being the VP of Membership for Senate. Involvement with some of Hanover's social justice groups, including People for Peace, HASAH, or Love Out

Loud, among other opportunities, will expose you to the concerns ministers face as their communities deal with conflict and faith.

### ***Off-Campus Activities***

Regular participation in worship, participation in the life of a congregation, volunteer work in various community organizations, and involvement in service projects are all excellent building blocks for a life of ministry. The Off-Campus experience requirement can also be a good opportunity for the exploration of the way different people think and see the world.

## **Work Experience**

### ***On-Campus Jobs***

Serving as a Resident Assistant might enable you to assess your interests in tasks related to the ministry. For example, RAs have the opportunity to counsel others, to serve as positive role models, and to hone their teaching and program development skills.

### ***Off-Campus Jobs***

Local congregations often seek help with their youth groups, music, or administration. Being right in the mix of a church will give you experience you cannot get elsewhere. Summer jobs in churches and other religious settings, non-profit ministries, church-related camps, etc. can help you to develop relevant skills and self-understanding as you begin to explore ministry. These are excellent opportunities for discernment of your own call to ministry, as they will help you sort through just what sort of work you are skilled for and enjoy.

### ***Internships***

Internships are available for students interested in exploring calls to ministry. There are a wide variety of ministry internships. For example, recent Hanover students have worked as a camp counselor in Wyoming, leading groups of youth on adventurous, outward-bound expeditions to grow in their faith and relationship to God; as a “summer ministry intern” in South Dakota, gaining first hand experience in a wide variety of pastoral duties, including serving as youth director for the Church’s youth group; and as a medical missionary, traveling to Jamaica, providing basic, daily care and medical treatment to children. For more information about these and other similar opportunities, contact the Career Center or the Lilly Vocation Project.

Chris Roseland  
Theology Department and Chaplain

*(Last Revised 6/08)*

## Take Action to Begin Career Connections Today!

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1. Read through this booklet to familiarize yourself with the field of Ministry
2. Set up a meeting to plan your initial Career Connections related activities by contacting;

Career Center, Ext. 7127  
careercenter@hanover.edu or  
Top Floor, Brown Campus Center

Chris Roseland  
roseland@hanover.edu

3. Meet with your Career Connections advisor at least once a semester to update your Career Connections chart and plan for future activities.