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Faculty members offer students Christian solutions to problems

By Beth McDonough
Reporter

Faculty Friends is an organization for professors who wish to make it known that they are Christians. These professors make themselves available to students who want to ask questions and discuss issues in a Christian context.

In 1983, four professors brainstormed to find a way to identify themselves as Christians, said Michael Neely, western region director of Christian Leadership Ministries, a faculty Christian workshop. The professors decided to place an ad in *The Battalion*, he said.

At the time, there were 23 names in the ad. The most recent ad, which ran on Sept. 8, had more than 110, Neely said. The ad listed the professors, their phone numbers and their departments.

Christian faculty are encouraged to identify themselves as Christians at the beginning of the semester, during the introductory period.

Also, the professors usually clip the ad from *The Battalion* and attach it to their office doors with their names highlighted.

Many people wonder about the relationship between Faculty Friends and the A&M Mentor Program.

Dr. Stephen W. McDaniel, assistant professor of marketing and a faculty friend, explained that the Mentor Program is a group of faculty who devote time to students' problems, yet the problems are not necessarily Christian problems.

McDaniel, who is also a mentor, said mentors talk about anything. Faculty Friends is on a more narrow scope. Only Christian faculty are involved, McDaniel said.

Faculty Friends is not affiliated with any other Christian organization, Reed said.

"We want to assure people that we are faculty supported and faculty comprised," he said.

Michelle Smith, a senior speech communication major, said she happened to see an ad posted on a door and checked to see if a Christian professor taught a class she was registering for.

Margaret Bierwirth, a junior speech communication major, said the list is a good idea.

"If I had known there was a list, I would have consulted it," she said. "I have a lot of humanities and science credits left and I would prefer a Christian professor. I once had a professor who made fun of religion

in the classroom and openly discussed his philosophy and humanistic views."

Bierwirth said it is good that people in faculty positions are standing up for their beliefs.

Faculty Friends is financed entirely by its members. They pay \$10 a year and the money is used to pay for *The Battalion* ad, Neely, who is overseer of Faculty Friends, said.

Professors become involved in

their department and to recruit them for Faculty Friends.

He said Faculty Friends tries to merge Christianity with different disciplines.

"We emphasize the sciences because of the misconception that Christianity is unscientific," he said.

Dr. John McIntyre, faculty friend and professor of physics, agreed.

"A myth that people tend to believe is that science has shown that

have to stop thinking in order to be Christian."

Neely told a story of a professor on another campus who was receding a thought for the day using religious verbs. The American Civil Liberties Union wrote him a letter saying it had been brought to its attention that he was introducing religious content to his agricultural economics classes. The professor believed he had the right to present what was within him to his class through freedom of speech, Neely said.

McDaniel said professors should have freedom to talk about a variety of subjects.

"As long as it deals with the subject matter in the course, professors should be able to discuss anything," McDaniel said.

An academic environment should not have any restrictions on the faculty, he said. There should be academic freedom so professors can discuss any pertinent topic, he said.

McDaniel explained that in a classroom, within the perimeter of the course, he will discuss Christian views of ethics dealing with home and other areas.

"I am very much aware of the responsibility I have as a professor. On the other hand, I believe certain things, such as what is right and wrong," McDaniel said. "Through my teaching, these views will naturally emerge."

Neely said the goal of Faculty Friends is not to force or manipulate students to believe Christian thoughts. If the opportunity arises, faculty members may share what has been helpful in their lives with students.

Reed said many people would want to have their names associated with being a Christian. Some are willing to identify themselves as Christians, but are wary of attaching themselves to overtly evangelistic activities. He said there could be numerous reasons for this.

One may be uncertainty about the quality of certain activities. For instance, a Christian might be uncomfortable having his name associated with the Rev. Jim Bakker or the Rev. Jerry Falwell, whose names have been associated with undesirable activities.

"On TV we see that so many of the sellers of religion personally profit from it," Reed said.

Neely said the spiritual area is important; a student could be a straight A's but still could be hurt inside.

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— Dr. Stephen W. McDaniel, assistant professor of marketing and a faculty friend

Faculty Friends through referrals from other professors. An informational letter is mailed to faculty members asking if they know of anyone who might be interested, Neely said, and membership is increasing yearly.

"The professors are making themselves known as Christian counselors by allowing their names to be published in *The Battalion*," Neely said.

Dr. Bob Reed, professor of economics and a faculty friend, said Faculty Friends has officers — three directors who serve rotating terms, one being replaced yearly.

A look at the Faculty Friends ad reveals that not many women are members. In the most recent ad there were about five women listed. Reed said that the ratio is proportional to A&M's women faculty.

"It's pretty close, if not greater than the number of women faculty at A&M," Reed said.

Quite a few administrators are represented in Faculty Friends, but they are not recognized as such in the ad, he said.

Many other universities and colleges have programs like Faculty Friends. Some of these schools are the University of Alabama, Western Kentucky University and Pennsylvania State University. But the idea of placing an ad began at A&M, Neely said.

Also, not all academic departments are represented in the ad. Reed said this happens because whoever currently is represented is more likely to identify Christian faculty in

religion is a myth and it belongs to the past," McIntyre said.

McIntyre said science began in a Christian culture, and that it was Christian ideas that led to scientific beliefs. However, Neely said, people are being told they cannot mix religion and education because of separation of church and state.

"There is a broad-based misconception that people cannot identify themselves as Christians," Neely said. "There is a great difference between presenting ideas for discussion and indoctrinating ideas in a person."

Another faculty friend, Dr. Rick T. Irvin, associate professor of toxicology and genetics, said it would be hard for anyone who was dissatisfied and objected to Faculty Friends' goals to do anything to stop it, because the faculty that are represented are such well-respected, powerful professors on campus.

"If anyone ever tried to tell us that we couldn't relay Christian beliefs in the classroom we wouldn't listen because we have such a large and distinguished group of professors," he said.

Reed said he thinks Faculty Friends has encouraged students by letting them know that faculty members are Christians.

"Many have been taught that Christianity is a faith of the heart and not of the mind, so one has to suspend one's mind in order to become a Christian," Reed said. "Faith involves using one's mind and heart. So, recognizing that intelligent individuals are Christians encourages students to know that they don't

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LOUPOT'S CONNECTION

BEFORE YOU LEAVE FOR THE HOLIDAYS:

- * Remember to pay all your utility bills due before your return in January 1988. Otherwise you may find that your utilities have been cut off.
- * Leave a faucet dripping to avoid frozen and broken pipes.
- * Do not leave keys hidden outside your home.
- * Do not leave notes indicating that you are away.
- * Stop all deliveries including mail and newspapers.
- * Engrave personal property with your driver's license number.
- * If possible, take all valuables with you.
- * Use an automatic (on-off) timer on a lamp.
- * Lock your doors and windows.
- * If possible, ask a friend to watch your home. Leave a telephone number where you can be reached.
- * If your home has been entered, call the police immediately.

HOW TO PREPARE FOR FINAL EXAMS

- * Get a general picture of what has been covered. Note your weak areas.
- * Rather than reading all the material, skim it. Concentrate on your weak areas.
- * Go over old tests, and pay attention to the kind of questions asked.
- * Look at questions and problems at the end of the chapters. Try to predict exam items and prepare answers.
- * Know your professors and their biases. Pay attention to areas emphasized during lectures or labs.

These tips are only part of the information included in "The Aggie Guide to Conquering Your Finals" and in the "Self-Help Guide for Test Anxiety". Both are available for your use at the Student Counseling Service (845-4427).

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

Loupot's Book Store at Northgate and in Redmond Terrace sponsored the Off Campus Connection. From Mr. Loupot:

"I wish to send Season's Greetings to all Aggies and to wish them a Very Happy New Year".

Stories and artwork are provided by the Off Campus Center.
Editor: Erika M. Gonzalez-Lima
December 7, 1987

OFF CAMPUS AGGIES

GENERAL MEETINGS 1988

January 27 - 7:00 p.m. 102 Zachry
February 10 - 7:00 p.m. 102 Zachry
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