



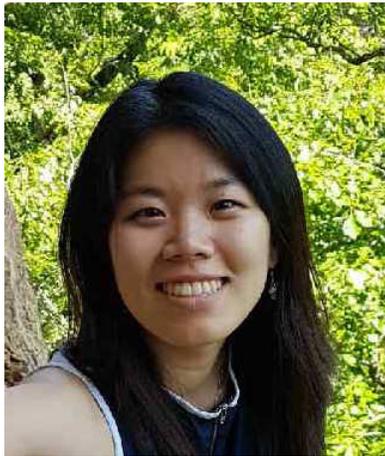
NORTHEAST REPORT

NEWS OF REFORMED UNIVERSITY FELLOWSHIP IN THE NORTHEAST

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Closer to God and Friends



Here are some things you'll find at Summer Conference: time, time, and gaga ball.

After being worn by a hectic semester and errant sleep, I gain much-needed retreat at Summer Conference. It refreshes me with unrestrained time to draw deeply from God. It takes me away from the noise of life and

directs my heart simply to God and simply to worship. Not that we don't pray and worship during the school year, nor take time to refocus our hearts, but there is something clarifying and unique about being physically removed from my everyday environment. The million things on my mind don't weigh so much.

The conference is not just a plethora of time to spend with God, but also with fellow sisters and brothers in RUF. It always catches me off guard how subtly but surely bonds form in something as trivial as a late-night Denny's run. From playing board games, to hiking and kayaking, to jamming to music gathering around a campfire, we get such quality in the time spent with each other that these experiences connect our hearts together. Through seminar discussions, small group prayers, and vulnerable conversations, we center ourselves and our desires as a unit on God. Deep, true fellowship abounds.

The conference is also a learning opportunity. The seminars and sermons are a great way to fortify or expand my understanding of Biblical living and thinking. Controversial conversations and books encourage my spiritual maturity by challenging what I know and believe of my faith and God. Designated quiet times encourage spiritual discipline and the habit of starting every day with reflection and prayer.

Summer Conference is unique for me because it begins as the school year ends. Pressing responsibilities subside and I can pursue community with God without incessant worrying and putting a cap on the time. It gives me a chance to sit at his feet and to notice him. I get to fellowship with peers that I have mostly related to as comrades

in war. (Pardon the hyperbole. I struggle with enjoying my job as a student.) I get to participate in epic gaga ball tournaments and spontaneous heart to hearts. Through the conference, at times I find deep rest, other times a revival, and other times an answer.

I assure you it's worth it. And wouldn't you want epic gaga ball showdowns and a nonsensical nickname of your own?

– by Sarah Jeon, Lehigh University

SuCo 2017 Snapshots

University of Vermont

What a fantastic week we had at SuCo 2017! Every morning we sat down to breakfast and sat in some amazing seminars. In the afternoons we hit the beach, swam in the pools, and competed in a variety of sporting events. Finally, in the evenings – before small group discussions, dance parties, and/or late-night dessert runs to Thomas' – we gathered for Large Group worship and heard some of the most impactful preaching ever delivered at SuCo. We are already looking forward to SuCo 2018. *John Meinen, Campus Minister at University of Vermont*



Students from the University of Vermont

New York City

Last week, several of our students mentioned to one of our interns how they walked away from SuCo (Summer Conference) wanting to know Jesus more deeply. Many of the students grew up in the church and know a lot about Jesus, but they left SuCo wanting to know how to commune with Jesus, how to better engage in and enjoy their relationship with him. What a great desire to have ignited in your soul! I look forward to walking with these students as they learn to see and savor Jesus more deeply. *Matt Terrell, Campus Minister in New York City*



The Reverend Russ Whitfield preaching to 500 students

Millersville University

Student quotes:

“SuCo is a wonderful way to focus on specific aspects of your relationship with the Lord while growing with your Christian community.” Megan (freshman)

“It was a refreshing break full of some much needed rest. It was a great time with friends spent in the word of God. It was challenging and encouraging.” Alyssa (sophomore)

“What a perfect send off for the seniors! I feel spiritually charged for this next stage of my life.” Madeline (graduated senior)

“You don't need good weather to have a good time with your fellow Rufians! Also, what a privilege it was to sing in the band, strengthen friendships, and learn to grow in grace.” Pearl (sophomore)

“I was refreshed spiritually, physically, and socially. I also laughed a LOT.” Serena (junior)



Trip Beans, campus minister at Millersville University, teaching a seminar

Boston University

Boston University's chapter of RUF sent its first three students to Summer Conference. (It was their Campus Minister's first time, too!) The students enjoyed getting to meet other students from schools around the country, learning from the seminars during the day, and the time in the sun after a long winter in Boston. One student who had been rediscovering Christianity over the school year through the

ministry of RUF said this was one of the best weeks of his life! *Nathan Dicks, Campus Minister at Boston University*



Students from the University of Connecticut

Lehigh University

Due to scheduling problems, RUF at Lehigh always has its own separate summer conference near the PA/NY border. It's fantastic to see God at work every year to build up students who have little background in Christianity through a relaxed time of studying God's word and rest. *Scott Mitchell, Campus Minister at Lehigh University*

University of Maryland

Almost 100 students from three RUF ministries – University of Maryland, Delaware State, University of Delaware – and three churches in Maryland spent a long Memorial Day weekend at Northbay Camp. The Reverend Sammy Rhodes, Campus Minister at the University of South Carolina, spoke on the Gospel of John. We were all encouraged by the number of new students and churches involved and look forward to growing this conference in the coming years. *Chris Garriott, Campus Minister at University of Maryland*



University of Delaware

This was the first year UD students attended summer conference. We brought 14 students and had a few brand new students and non-Christians join us for the retreat. Our

student leaders led small group discussions after each of the messages. I was encouraged to hear that in these discussions people were very open with each other, even non-Christian students participating and reflecting on the sermons. One group talked for about 3 hours after the large group on Sat night. It was a great opportunity for everyone to reflect together and process Jesus and what the gospel means for our lives. *Nick Owens, Campus Minister at University of Delaware*



Students from Delaware State University at the Northbay Camp. Campus Minister Daryl Wattley is in the middle wearing a red jacket

Your Connection to RUF

RUF ministers, staff, interns, and student leaders proclaim the gospel every week on campuses. But as Sarah said, “there is something clarifying and unique about being physically removed from my everyday environment.” RUF summer conferences have a profound impact in the lives of students through solid preaching and teaching, but the opportunity to spend a week at the beach or in the woods helps to focus our attention on spiritual matters.

It costs a lot to take one or two dozen students to summer conference. Thanks for your help in providing the funds to make this ministry possible!

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.



If you would rather receive these newsletters by email, contact us at Northeast@ruf.org. And if you would like to receive weekly prayer requests by email, also contact us at Northeast@ruf.org.

Focus on Richard Smith

“How do you handle failure?” asked the Indian doctoral student who had until this point succeeded in all his ventures. In India, he had risen to second in his field before pursuing his Ph.D. at Pennsylvania State University. De-

spite these achievements, he was recently passed over for a job. Richard Smith, the RUF-International minister, listened attentively to the student and then shared his own experience with failure.



Richard had had a list of tasks to accomplish one day but was frustrated at every attempt. “I decided to go to Five Guys and drown myself in grease,” he

says. At the cash register, he saw a Penn State student from Chile with whom he had lost contact. As he re-established their friendship, he realized that connecting with this woman was the only task God had wanted him to accomplish. “It is really that simple,” he told his Indian friend. “God has his plans for you, and you will soon learn why you didn’t get that job in India.”

One week later, the student was hired by Penn State. Richard was thrilled. While the student has been attending church, he has not yet embraced the faith. Hopefully, the young man will become a Christian soon and understand why God did not grant him the job.

Like their Indian friend, God upended Richard and Lynne Smith’s life plans. Until two years ago, Richard had never lived further north than his South Carolina hometown, and his wife, Lynne, had only lived outside Georgia during her college years. They never imagined shoveling snow as they did this winter.

Before campus ministry, Richard shepherded Northgate Presbyterian Church in Albany, Georgia for 15 years. While there, his church began a ministry to international students enrolled in the local school, Darton State College. The church’s first event was a Thanksgiving dinner attended by one student, but soon many others were participating in activities and Bible studies at Northgate.

Three years ago, Al LaCour, the RUF International Coordinator, called Richard. “I want you to move from the minor leagues to the majors,” he said. Because many cultures revere their elders, RUF-I was seeking experienced, older ministers. Richard’s ministry at Darton State College made him the ideal RUF-I candidate. But Richard declined. Over the next year, however, God changed his mind, leading him not only to campus ministry but -- unexpectedly -- to the Northeast.

Richard’s ministry at Penn State has blossomed. With approximately 40,000 students attending, Penn State University is the sixth largest college in the U.S. More than 9,000 of those enrolled are from outside the country, mak-

ing Penn State host to the 13th largest population of international students in the U.S.

In two years RUF-I has grown to be one of the largest international ministries at Penn State. Richard has an email list of over 230 names. His Bible studies are regularly attended by 25 students, and an additional 40 students have visited at least once. He attributes his success to his volunteers from Oakwood Presbyterian Church. Last year, Richard trained these volunteers to welcome international students into their homes and to assist with Bible studies.

RUF-I has a three-prong approach to ministry: welcome, explore, and equip. Because many international students come from cultures that emphasize hospitality, they eagerly accept invitations to dinner or events.

While students are very receptive to welcoming gestures, the next prong, exploring the gospel, is harder. The average American college student usually has a cultural understanding of Christianity and sufficient English skills to easily read the Bible. Many international students have neither. Consequently, Richard and his volunteers spend time defining words and providing context before they study the Bible. Despite these challenges, a handful of students are serious contemplating becoming Christians.

Finally, RUF-I equips Christians to return to their countries of origin. In the fall, RUF-I at Penn State will offer a class on the Apostle's Creed designed to prepare any international student who converted to Christianity to return home. By emphasizing the basics tenets of the faith, Richard hopes students will find faithful churches and be able to answer questions from skeptics or curious friends.

Next fall an intern will join Richard's ministry. She will seek to reach some of the Muslim women on campus who are not permitted to speak with men outside their family. In the past, Lynne, Richard's wife, has shared the truth with these women. When the intern arrives, Lynne will continue assisting with ESL and maintaining administrative tasks.

On the last day of 2017 spring semester, seven prominent international musicians who Richard befriended performed a concert at Oakwood. After they finished, they presented gifts to Richard and Lynne. One of the gifts was a picture of themselves framed with the words "Thank you" in each student's language. Richard became teary eyed. He says, "When things like that happen, you know that the gospel is touching lives."

— by Rebecca Trudeau

Summer Reflections



"Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were uneducated, common men, they were astonished. And they recognized that they had been with Jesus." Acts 4:13

The religious leaders in Jerusalem sound a lot like some modern intellectuals. They could not understand why Peter and John had a successful ministry considering that they were not credentialed through the established channels. Eventually they realized that what made these "uneducated, common men" different was that they had been with Jesus.

Education is a huge blessing! I am very grateful for my university and seminary education, and I think I am more effective in ministry because of it. But what is far more significant in ministry and in life is being with Jesus, which for us means reading the Bible and praying. We might appear educated by having attended university and seminary, but we will only be spiritually helpful and fruitful by having been with Jesus.

The great thing about summer conference is the opportunity to be with Jesus. As Sarah said, we can be with Jesus during the school year, but a week away from our normal routines provides a priceless opportunity to still our hearts and minds and hear from Jesus more clearly. This is why summer conference is such an important part of RUF's ministry, and this is why Ruth and I love these weeks with students and ministers. The beach and the woods are wonderful, it's refreshing to be with friends, but Jesus makes summer conference a transforming experience.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "David Green". The signature is cursive and fluid.



NORTHEAST

Prayer Requests, June, 2017

1. Praise God that over 2,000 students were able to attend RUF summer conferences this year!
2. Pray for Brent Kilman, new campus minister starting RUF at Rowan University in New Jersey, esp. for raising funds.
3. Pray for Michael Goodlin, new campus minister replacing Scott Mitchell at Lehigh U., esp. for raising funds.
4. Pray for Peter Green, new campus minister starting RUF at West Virginia University, esp. for raising funds.
5. Pray for funds and ministers to begin new RUF ministries at Indiana University of Pennsylvania, University of Massachusetts, and a university in the D.C area.

