

ACF Client Analysis Paper

Taylor King

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Auburn University

Auburn Christian Fellowship

I. History

Auburn Christian Fellowship is an organization that has developed an impeccable reputation throughout its history as a unique group of people that build community and love others through the love of Christ. ACF is a non-denominational ministry that caters to college students attending Auburn. According to Perry Rubin (2014), “It is a place that helps puts a diploma in your hand and the love of Christ in your heart,” (personal communication, September 20, 2014). The ministry has come a long way growing an attendance of 75 to now hosting 300 plus regularly (Rubin, 2014). ACF is simply a place of love and a place to be welcomed into—a community.

Mission

This is the official mission of Auburn Christian Fellowship: “To love one another and share God’s love here in Auburn and around the world,” (Lynch, home page, 2014). The ministry aspires to disciple and create followers of Christ while they attend Auburn University, then sharing that love with the world after leaving. ACF believes that we are called to, “go and make disciples of all nations,” (Matthew 28:19, NIV). Currently more than 50, former members of ACF are in full-time Christian vocations (Lynch, 2014). Auburn Christian Fellowship believes it is more important that the former students are across the globe, witnessing to a growing audience (Lynch, home page, 2014).

History

The spring of 1978, Dean and Jill Collins graduated from Atlanta Christian College, and after some consultation from leaders- decide to start a campus ministry for the students attending Auburn University (Perry, 2014). After developing the concept for how to accomplish this the

two founded Auburn Christian Fellowship, Inc. in the fall of 1979. ACF was immediately granted a 501(c)3 tax exemption status. The original members, about 50 of them, met every Sunday morning for worship and would host a Thursday night spaghetti dinner. These activities were originally done in the Collins' home. During the early 1980's, ACF purchased two homes on Miller Avenue that served as a meeting place for the ministry until 1988. Attendance went from about 50 to 75 regular attendees in worship and free dinner. By 1987, Dean Collins secured a deal with the University where the Collins' sold the two houses on Miller Avenue to Auburn (currently where the Auburn Alumni Center is located) and in exchange, ACF was provided with a house and large building on the corner of Gay St. and Casey Ave. An additional aspect of the deal was the conversion of the large building into a meeting center. In 1988, Dean Collins earned his Master's degree in Counseling from Auburn University and resigned in the summer of 1989.

Collins replacement as campus minister was Scott Seagraves. This period was a hard time for ACF because Scott was simply "not doing his job," said Perry Rubin. Seagraves did a bad job of securing funding and that lowered the operational budget of ACF (Rubin, personal communication, 2014). As a result, Seagraves secured unauthorized loans in order to fund ACF and he did this without consent, permission, or acknowledgement to the Board of Directors, which sits above him in the decision making process. Seagraves' poor leadership also made students lose focus and the numbers decreased significantly. After only three years, Seagraves was asked to leave ACF in 1992. Bruce Greco was chosen as the interim campus minister until the summer of 1993, when the ACF Board of Directors hired its third campus minister, Perry Rubin. By the end of Rubin's first year, attendance increased to an average of 50-80 students weekly. The ministry also began a mission trip to Juarez, Mexico during spring break to build homes for the poor.

During the fall of 1995, ACF had enough money in the operating budget to offer an internship program for students interested in exploring an option of service following graduation. Brian Rosenbalm was the first ACF intern under Perry Rubin. Since then the ministry now reaches out to 120 students. In 1996, ACF stopped its Sunday morning services in favor of a casual Sunday evening service offered monthly. ACF expanded and purchased the adjacent property beside them on Gay St. to expand its capacity in 1998. During that year, ACF hired its first assistant campus minister, Lara Miller, to increase the work done with the students.

In 1999, the ACF Board of Directors finalized plans to construct a larger meeting facility located on the Gay St. property. The building was completed on August 29, 2000. The next year, the board reorganized and rewrote ACF's by-laws. The student attendance reached 170 weekly. In 2003, Perry Rubin became the longest serving campus minister with 10 plus years and numbers increased to 200 per week. In 2007, ACF expands again and develops the community room and offices for the campus minister, full time staff and interns.

Internal Structure

Currently, Auburn Christian Fellowship is working with more than 300 students per week among its Tuesday night free dinner, Thursday night worships, and First Sunday worship. Along with the three full time staff members and four interns, there are three student leadership groups. The leadership groups are called Roots, Gorillas and Big Dogs with each currently maintaining around 60 members this school year. The ministry is under the oversight of a board of directors, a group of adults that were once students attending ACF from all over the country that have mutual and vested interest in Auburn Christian Fellowship. The board oversee budgetary decisions and help determine mission and vision. ACF, a non profit organization, is currently supported- either financially, spiritually, or both- by 25 churches in Alabama and Georgia, and

with over 175 mission partners (Rubin, 2014). ACF has an annual budget of \$281,000. There are two full time assistant ministers, Emily Anne Kennedy and Nicole Lynch who assist Perry, along with the five interns on staff in 2014.

Services

Auburn Christian Fellowship provides many functions as a service organization. Most importantly, it supports the staff and the minister who work there, allowing them to focus on the ministry with full dedication. ACF provides a physical place for students gather, experience, fellowship, and revel in the love of Christ, and also hang out and build community with each other. Auburn Christian Fellowship allows the more than 60 members of the leadership teams to develop their leadership skills in a way that is suitable for Christians. The leadership groups have a regiment of prayer, bonding with each other, service to the Auburn Christian Fellowship community, and outreach. For the upperclassmen leadership team, the Big Dogs, a chance to meet with Perry Rubin weekly and grow spiritually together and make decisions that affect the organization.

ACF provides many services, however, it produces unique experiences on behalf of the people it serves. New freshman at Auburn are often unclear with who they are and what they want from life. ACF works with these students and helps mold them into individuals focused on God and His plan for life. The freshmen leave with an eternal fulfillment and unspeakable joy that comes from Christ Jesus and his teachings in the Bible.

Internal Structure

The structure at ACF is very collaborative and hosts a positive atmosphere, where students, seen as a team member, can talk to Perry Rubin, seen as very high-level management. The following demonstrates this sentence:

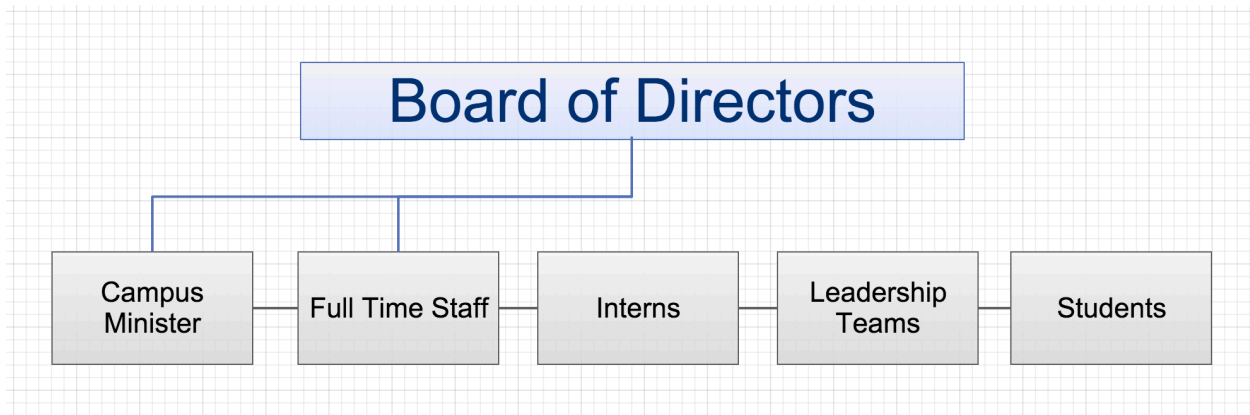


Figure 1: ACF Organizational Chart (Creately, 2014)

The Board of Directors is an oversight committee comprised of 13 volunteers from all over the country. Previous members of ACF, the board meets three times a year with Perry Rubin to discuss budget changes, fundraising, the mission and the vision of ACF. The Board of Directors generally meet with only the campus minister, but full time staff also has access to this group.

Perry Rubin currently serves as the campus minister and is in charge of the day-to-day operations and procedures. Rubin gives the sermon every Thursday night and leads the Big Dogs leadership group. Rubin also manages the staff meetings, fundraising efforts, and the internship program at ACF. The three full time staff members generally deal with keeping up the administrative and office responsibilities. The full time staff will oversee the internship program also, helping establish roles within the interns and communicating responsibilities. The intern staff are seen as the front-lines of the ministry. The full time staff are each assigned an age group and provide leadership by focusing their time and energy in relationships while providing ministry and encouragement.

Each leadership group maintains different roles:

- The sophomore class group, Roots, is dedicated to serving and executive tasks such as cleaning up, cooking and greeting people as they arrive.
- The junior leadership group, The Gorillas, start to grow more by investing in each other and providing accountability within their group.
- The upper classmen group, the Big Dogs, hold ACF up by leading small groups, spearheading events and generally becoming the leaders of the organization. Big Dogs also receive time weekly to meet with Perry in order to talk about what is working and things to make ACF better.

This system is very focused on collaboration within each segment in order to provide ACF the most comprehensive and well-balanced system that is truly focused on the students.

Internal Culture

The internal culture is best described as open, whereby a place where no one is looked down upon for voicing an opinion. Whether it is the campus minister or a student, all ideas and suggestions are encouraged. This attitude leads to a positive climate that facilitates community-based values. Overall, Perry makes decisions; yet every member and every group can communicate its opinion objectively and thoroughly engaged.

View of PR

Auburn Christian Fellowship does many things in order to promote itself among its publics. At the beginning of the year, it stands on the concourse and passes out blow pops with information about how to get connected to ACF and this is a great example of promoting and connecting interpersonally. On every level of leadership, personal communication exists, which speaks highly of their view of public relations. ACF desires to see its membership increase, yet

uphold its commitment to its primary public- the students already attending- by making every effort to keep connected to them.

Image

The image of Auburn Christian Fellowship has been made into one of community and love. There is a picture painted onto one of the walls in the worship room that simply says You are Loved. There has been constant growth and expansion within ACF since it has opened its doors in 1978, with the exception between 1991-1992. This hurt both the numbers in attendance and the spirit of welcoming ACF had been striving for up to that point.

Financial Status

ACF currently runs on an operating budget of \$281,000 annually (Rubin, 2014). Auburn Christian Fellowship receives donations and funding from 25 local churches and church groups along with 175 mission partners which account for the entire operating budget (Lynch, 2014). They have never filed for bankruptcy and only experienced any financial hardship during Scott Seagraves' tenure in the early 1990's.

Current Reputation

The reputation at ACF is positive. Throughout its history, and now into its 36th year, ACF has had almost consistently steady growth, only facing one staff termination. There has never been scandal, fraud or otherwise illegal activity. They have never received negative press from any of the local news outlets. When word of mouth is concerned, ACF has a glowing reputation founded on love and community.

PR Opportunity

Where ACF maintains a positive reputation, greater publicity is needed. From a student population of 25,912 (Huff, personal communication, 2014), that should be a direct correlation to

a place such as ACF where everyone who knows it and is exposed to it, has positive reactions to it. ACF engages everyone that they come into contact with well, and strive to follow up with all people that walk through the doors for them to feel loved and welcomed. There is an opportunity for growth at ACF; an opportunity to see more people's lives changed by the atmosphere and message that is presented. There are things done, such as freshman move in, that help plant seeds and get more people exposed to ACF. Free dinner on Tuesday nights is also the time with the most in attendance, generating roughly 200 students that night every week (Rubin, 2014). The collaborative environment that has been built is a great opportunity for others to see community incorporated into the fabric of ACF's infrastructure and management.

Not having enough reach within the target publics is something that affects almost all of the stakeholders invested into ACF. The limited reach affects the students because they are missing out on opportunity to be with more people, learn from more experience and have fellowship with friends on a larger scale. This also affects the leadership groups because they will be comprised of fewer people and therefore can't be as effective at serving. It affects the fundraising capabilities of ACF in the long term plan because the more people you can incorporate into the "has-been" (Lynch, 2014), or alumni, group the greater your chance is for a larger operational budget. This carries over into more chances to expand ACF in ways such as hiring more staff or increasing the size of the buildings that ACF currently builds community in. The key element to all of this is simple—exposure. ACF needs to address more ways to foster intentional exposure to more students. This in turn, will boost the loving community to new heights and create more graduates, who serve ACF's purpose of people leaving with a diploma in their hands and a devotion to Christ in their hearts (Lynch, 2014).

All of the events that have occurred in the history of ACF have produced a unique culture and student/alumni base that should be shared with more people. Auburn Christian Fellowship is “a place to feel welcomed no matter what background, a place to ask questions big and small, a place to get poured into by others and a place to give yourself to others,” (Lynch, 2014.)

II. Objectives

In order for Auburn Christian Fellowship to reach its key publics on a broader scale, the organization must enhance its community relations.

Community Relation issues that need to be addressed in order to facilitate more growth and better encourage ACF’s unique and loving atmosphere to the city of Auburn include:

1. To better educate the current ACF Participants on the challenges in community relations and strategic management.
2. To increase community awareness of ACF and its internal and external work throughout the community.
3. To increase ACF’s commitment to the new strategic plan for community relations.

III. Strategies

Auburn Christian Fellowship is known among few in the community, and this sets up a community relation’s opportunity to get ACF’s name and all the good they do out to the residents of Auburn University and the local community.

To accomplish these objectives, ACF will be implementing the “Go Forth” campaign. The name is a reference to the scripture found in Matthew 28:19, which says, “Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.”

The goal is for those within the community to see the needs of those outside and for those outside to see the good being done within this organization in order to produce a larger more caring community. This communication of the campaign will be achieved with the following objectives and strategies:

Objective 1: To better educate the current ACF participants on the challenges in community relations and strategic management.			
Strategies	Key Public(s) Addressed	Channels	
Develop program to discuss our current engagements and plans to increase awareness of “Go Forth.”	Employees; Leadership groups; Students involved	One to Small Group	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - A staff member will attend each leadership group meeting at periodic intervals throughout the semester with a reminder for students to stay involved in the partnerships we have along with finding volunteers to contribute on the testimonial site. - Evaluation: Provide the staff member a sheet in order to document how students have stayed involved.
		One to Large Group	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - A staff member will address the congregation at the end of Bible study on Thursday nights once a month with a reminder to stay involved with the monthly partnership with outside organizations. - Also to announce what next month of “Go Forth” will consist of. - Evaluation: Staff will discuss in meeting held next morning how students reacted, if they seemed engaged and excited about partnership potential.

	<p>Personalized Message Tool</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Staff members will be reference tools for members of the community. Students or those involved in leadership will come to them with questions or potential partnership ideas. - Evaluation: Determining if anyone on staff has gathered any ideas or potential partnerships from students. 	
	<p>Special Event</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - At the beginning of the new semester there will be a “Go Forth” kickoff night featuring local organizations ACF intends to partner with. This event will build momentum within the community and increase their knowledge of these places. - Awareness will increase of the program and the special event will bring new participants into ACF’s community. - Evaluation: Count the amount of new member registrations at the end of the night to determine how many more people ACF brought in for this event. 	
<p>Create a weekly debriefing session to evaluate events.</p>	<p>Employees</p>	<p>One to Small Group</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - This meeting held at the end of the week will discuss current outreach programs and where the staff is with publicity. - The meeting is also a time to brainstorm the partner organization two months out and secure details on progress of the next month’s

	<p>partnership. - Evaluation: Seeing progress on future engagements with the organizations ACF will partner with.</p>
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Objective 2: Objective 2: To increase community awareness of ACF and its internal and external work throughout the community.			
Strategy	Key Public(s) Addressed	Channels	
Create an addition to the current website where community members can write stories on the internal and external involvement.	Community members; Employees; Partner Organizations; Leadership Groups	Individual Channel	<p>- A staff member will facilitate the content production from members of the community by reaching out to leaders. - There will be two posts a week involving all parts of ACF. Examples include reflections on what Freshman year meant from a member who is now post graduation or a Freshman talking on how they view the ACF community. - Evaluation: Counting the amount of regular new content and posts that ACF produces.</p>
		Social Media	<p>- The new section of the website will be powered by WordPress. This will be a user-generated content place. - The new blog will be called "Go Forth" but it will include external activities (such as the monthly partnership), internal perspectives and words from those</p>

		<p>that have already graduated and moved past college life. All of this will become a new “online community” branch of ACF and increase it’s community reach through new content being linked into social media outlets.</p> <p>- Evaluation: Checking WordPress generated Statistics feature to track views and guest per day. Also, listening for feedback on the site and writing notes on those suggestions to give to the site manager.</p>
<p>Target new opportunities for the ACF community to be involved in through the community.</p>	<p>Partner Organizations; Potential Partners; O-A News; The Plainsman; Alumni</p>	<p>Publication</p> <p>-Distribute the media kits to current partner organizations (school in Nairobi, Kenya, City of Refuge, East Alabama Food Bank) so they have material if another organization comes to them for help.</p> <p>- Send to potential partners and local organizations in order to show others ACF is a place that wants to help, thereby increasing overall visibility.</p> <p>- Send to O-A News and The Plainsman in hopes they pick up a story on ACF giving back to the community by being a community to further ACF’s outreach potential.</p> <p>- Evaluation: Count new stories written involving ACF or the organizations we have partnered with.</p>

		Publication	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Include a section in the newsletter (sent monthly) that is sent out to the alumni that ACF is always looking for more partnerships. If they have any potential partners to let ACF know so they can contact them. - Evaluation: Count the amount of alumni that contribute ideas towards partnerships.
Create a media kit.	O-A News; The Plainsman; Financial Supporters; Community Members; Board of Directors	Publication	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Media kit will include: - A fact sheet that lists an abbreviated history of ACF, all contact information and links to the website and blog, attendance numbers, list of partnerships and an overview of the “Go Forth” campaign. - A news release on the new “Go Forth” campaign. - A feature story from one of the alumni of the organization talking on how ACF instilled community and how they continue to use this. - Quotes from staff members and students that attend currently. - Evaluation: Count the amount of new stories that are produced after the media kit is distributed and note the difference in volume from before media kit was released.

Objective 3: To increase ACF’s commitment to the new strategic plan for community relations.			
Strategy	Key Public(s) Addressed	Channels	
Develop progress reports for the staff to complete.	Employees	Personalized Message Tool	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - In an effort to keep all staff accountable towards their efforts and responsibilities in this campaign, they will complete self-reports on their effectiveness in the “Go Forth” campaign. - The reports will also include a section where they can make suggestions on how to better streamline the process. - Evaluation: Read the self-reports and make sure the staff follows through on improvements they outline for themselves.
Create an additional meeting at the end of every week to evaluate future events and how they can be better publicized.	Employees; Leadership groups	Individual Channels	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Focus groups or brainstorming sessions will occur with the staff and any members of the leadership groups that wish to attend. - Encouraging these groups to work together on an even playing field will produce new results not seen before the collaboration. - Evaluation: Creating a document after every meeting outlining the suggestions put forward to be discussed in the next staff only meeting. This way the proposals are moving forward instead of being only talked about.

IV. References

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