



Special invitations to students provide a teaching or leadership experience that not every student will pursue or qualify, but they are opportunities for everyday students who have a passion for the course and diligence that goes beyond the average.

Reaching Everyday Students One by One

STEVE KIMPEL

Department of Health, Rec & Human Performance

In the New Testament we read various accounts of an understated miracle performed by the Savior as He walked with Jairus to visit his dying daughter. The image is one of the Savior walking through a tightly packed group of people. Suddenly, the Savior stopped and asked, “Who touched my clothes?” (Mark 5:30). To his disciples, this was a surprising question because of the number of people in the crowd and their proximity to Jesus at that moment. Peter said, “Master, the multitude throng thee and press thee, and sayest thou, Who touched me?” (Luke 8:45) Such sensitivity on Jesus’s part was as incredible then as it is now, but His capacity for charity and service are two qualities we as faculty may seek in a quest to reach the “one.”

As BYU–Idaho continues a steady upward course to serve more students and raise the quality of education (Clark, 2005), faculty will increasingly find themselves “pressed” by the multitude both in and out of the classroom. This provides both a challenge and an opportunity.

How can BYU–Idaho simultaneously increase enrollment and make the quality of experience more personal for the everyday student? These goals would, at first glance, seem mutually exclusive. By traditional thinking they are not compatible at all. This is because

traditional views on teaching focus on faculty needs and content delivery. However, at BYU–Idaho, we might view teaching as an opportunity to minister, and academic content as the vehicle for developing disciple-leaders and building the Kingdom of God.

Last summer I had a unique opportunity to interview a number of faculty, staff and administrators. In my interview with Academic Vice President Henry Eyring, he encouraged me to read *A Steady Upward Course*. As I read, I had a feeling that I could play a small but important part in fulfilling those prophesies, if I was diligent and willing to be led by the Lord in my teaching. I felt it was important to counsel with the Lord to determine how He would have me develop a teaching style to reach everyday students one person at a time.

MENTORING DISCIPLE LEADERS

In David A. Bednar’s inaugural response he taught that everyone at Ricks College was a teacher (Bednar, 1998). Nothing has changed. One of the most rewarding parts of my teaching ministry are Friday meetings with a member of our teaching team and our teaching assistants as we prepare the things the TAs will help teach in the upcoming weeks. Each TA is a former student of the class who demonstrated passion for the subject, diligence in preparation, and professionalism in behavior. These character traits allow us to give them significant responsibilities both in the classroom and in activities they help with to prepare for the class. If you were to visit the classroom you would see that it looks similar to a team presentation in a conference or clinic. Although they don’t



always speak to the entire class, they have the latitude to add to the discussion or clarify anything I might have missed.

Our TAs also serve as a sort of advisory board for course curriculum in those Friday meetings. Student perspective is a tremendous, yet underused, resource in course development. Seeking ways of involving students in meaningful course development activities is one of the ways I have tried to model building students while they are here.

REACHING THE EVERYDAY STUDENT BY SPECIAL INVITATIONS

Special invitations to students provide a teaching or leadership experience that not every student will pursue or qualify, but they are opportunities for everyday students who have a passion for the course and diligence that goes beyond the average. Identifying those students is not usually difficult. Sometimes it has been as easy as praying to be shown which students to encourage, followed by some creativity to determine what special invitation would be appropriate.

Once I had a feeling that a student could benefit from giving a class presentation. I couldn't offer extra credit; nevertheless, the student was pleased to have been asked. When I introduced her topic to the class and explained that the reason for the presentation was her diligence and that I was interested in learning from her, I sensed several in the class wished they had been selected. Being allowed to speak to the class became an honor, not a class-wide assignment of drudgery where some individuals fail to strive above the minimum requirements.

I've repeated this a number of times over the years, but I don't do it every semester; it simply depends on whether I have someone I feel would benefit from the experience. I've never had a student turn me down and every one of them has hit a homerun with a 12 to 15 minute learning activity they created after receiving well-defined parameters.

One year I had a student who stuttered when she talked and I could tell she had some self-confidence issues. Ironically, I had a feeling I should invite her to serve as a TA; however, I was reluctant to ask because she would have to talk in front of groups of students to do this. Nevertheless, I invited her and she developed into an effective TA. Later, I recommended that she get involved with the Student Activities program in a similar role. Over the few years, I'd see her from time to time and I began to notice she was not stuttering when we talked. I asked her about it, and she said, "Well, not around you I don't." It's difficult to explain how I felt when she said that. I'm confident her stuttering problem still persisted on some level, but I observed the confidence she began to have after receiving a meaningful special invitation.

EMULATING THE SAVIOR

Like many classes on campus, students in my class will say just about anything. A few years ago as we were beginning class, a female student said (in front of everyone), "Brother Kimpel, I had a dream about you last night." Although I was a bit concerned about what was to follow, my fears dissipated as she continued, "I had a dream that I was drowning and you saved me. You gave me a hug and said it would be alright." I'm not Joseph in Egypt, but even I can see what that dream could mean and how students sometimes perceive teachers as foundations of safety in a world that grows ever more uncertain. It's possible there are students who have similar feelings about many teachers across campus, but may be too embarrassed or shy about sharing that vulnerability. Such reluctance is like the woman who touched the border of the Savior's garment. Luke recorded, "And when the woman saw that she was not hid, she came trembling, and falling down before him" (Luke 8:47). She had complete faith to be healed but was reluctant to face the Savior.

Most classes seem to have at least a few students who have much to offer, but are reluctant to put themselves

forward and hide their lamp under a bushel. As class enrollments increase, it will become more challenging to identify these students unless it becomes a conscious effort on the part of faculty members. One key to being better able to identify such students is to increase our capacity to have true charity.

If we become filled with charity we shall be like the Savior (Moroni 7:48) who was able to perceive one woman's touch in the midst of a throng of people. A prayerful effort to develop greater charity will no doubt result in an increased sensitivity to the still, small voice directing us to reach out to a student who needs our personal touch the most in that moment.

IN THE HOLLOW OF HIS HAND

As BYU-Idaho continues to grow, many of us worry about keeping the Spirit of Ricks alive on both an institutional level and in our individual teaching ministries. When I begin to feel "pressed by the multitude," I am encouraged to remember that I don't have to try to reach every student in each of my classes on a deep level. Our students have enrolled in BYU-Idaho classes as part of the Father's larger plan to fulfill His purposes; therefore, they are in the Hollow of His hand. All He requires of teachers are diligent efforts to love, teach, and serve, and He will make up the difference. He makes up the difference with the combined talents of all BYU-Idaho employees. Nobody can do this work alone, because no single person possesses all the gifts and talents necessary. "For all have not every gift given unto them; for there are many gifts, and to every man is given a gift by the Spirit of God" (Doctrine and Covenants 46:11).

We have been encouraged to collaborate as teaching teams to better our course content and teaching activities. While this is certainly important, I've found that informal conversations with other faculty members regarding students we have in common has been a gratifying experience. On several occasions one colleague and I have talked about such students. There was never a goal in these discussions; these students' talents or passions just came up in conversation. However, each conversation typically resulted in me feeling more connected to the student and having some ideas of things I could do to engage them more or provide a special invitation.

PROPHECIES FULFILLED

As we strive to lift our students and love them, the Lord will help us and them fulfill the purposes he has for them. In speaking to BYU-Idaho students Elder Henry B. Eyring prophesied,

"The day will come that that capacity to influence people around you for good will have you singled out as one of the great leaders in whatever place you're in. They will not quite know why, but you will know that the reason you are being singled out is not because of your innate gifts as a leader, but because you have done what the Savior would do—learned how to, and did, reach out to those around you to try to lift them, to help them to be better." (Eyring, 2001)

While this applies to our graduates, I think it is equally true for faculty. What an amazing place BYU-Idaho is! In our respective roles in fulfilling the prophecies given to BYU-Idaho, we faculty have the opportunity to stand in the Savior's place each day as we seek to increase the number of students we serve on a more intimate and personal level. He is the Master Teacher. The more we seek to acquire His attributes and come to see these students as He sees them, the greater capacity we will have to achieve this noble goal.

References

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- Clark, Kim B. (2005). "Inaugural Response." Brigham Young University-Idaho.
- Eyring, Henry B. (2001). "A Steady, Upward Course." Brigham Young University-Idaho.

