

FINDING, INVITING, AND MEETING FACULTY

Practical guidance for the prospective stage of faculty ministry

At a Glance

Finding Faculty <i>Map your network, pray, prospect</i>	Making Contact <i>Warm, personal, low-pressure</i>	The First Meeting <i>Listen, share, and discern together</i>
□ Start with network mapping: brainstorm your circles of connection □ Look for lists of new faculty hires; search university communications □ Attend campus lectures and events where you might meet faculty naturally □ Cast your net broadly, not only evangelical or Protestant faculty	□ Reference the mutual connection in the subject line and opening □ Offer flexible options: short or long, office or off campus, coffee or lunch □ Frame yourself as listening, not arriving with a program or plan □ Wait 2–3 weeks before following up; give it space after 2–3 attempts	□ Ask about their field, faith journey, and experience on campus □ Come prepared to share a bit of vision for the Four Loves □ Offer 2–3 books as a gift; let the professor choose □ Ask who else they might connect you with before you leave

This guide addresses the prospective stage of faculty ministry: the season of listening, learning, prayer and laying groundwork. Before a community forms, there is the faithful work of meeting faculty where they are, hearing their stories, and building trust and relationships. Think of new faculty outreach not as a program to launch but as an ongoing, year-round practice.

Finding Faculty

Start with [network mapping](#): brainstorm your circles of connection and identify local partners who may already know faculty. Consider attending lectures and events on campus where you might meet people naturally.

For **new faculty hires**, explore whether the university makes a list available. If not, look to your network, university communications, and press releases. A trusted contact may be able to help you make a warm introduction.

Cast your net broadly. You don't need to limit outreach to Christian faculty, or only Protestant or evangelical faculty. When asking for referrals, try language like this:

"Do you know any faculty who might be interested in connecting with me and/or with other Christian faculty or faculty of faith? I'd be happy to connect with any professor who's interested, whether they are Christian or not."

Inviting a Professor to Meet

A good invitation email is brief, warm, and low-pressure. A few things to include:

- How you learned about the professor; mention the connecting person by name. Including that name in the subject line works well (e.g. "meet you? Bob R connection")

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- ☐ A brief introduction to yourself and your work
 - ☐ Language that doesn't assume they are evangelical or Protestant; be thoughtful about your phrasing
 - ☐ Flexible options: a short visit or a longer conversation, their office or off campus, coffee or lunch. The meeting location they prefer might depend on how public or private they are about their faith. Let them decide
 - ☐ What you're hoping for: to hear their story and learn about their *faith and vocational journey*, not to sell a program
 - ☐ A sense that you're in a season of listening and learning, not arriving with a set plan

See the sample email at the bottom.

When You Don't Hear Back

Faculty are busy, and a non-response may not mean disinterest. A few principles for staying persistent without being intrusive:

- ☐ Wait 2–3 weeks before following up, and keep a record of when you reached out
- ☐ After 2–3 attempts without a response, give it space. Try again after a break or the following semester. Schedules shift and sabbaticals end
- ☐ Think of it like MPD outreach: this is a place to grow in both persistence and prayerful patience

Having a Fruitful First Meeting

The first meeting is mostly about listening. Come curious and unhurried. Here are questions that tend to open good conversation:

- ☐ Tell me about your field and the research you're doing, or your role, teaching, and work at the university
- ☐ What has your faith journey been like? Are you part of a church community here? What has that been like for you?
- ☐ What has it been like to be a Christian, or a person of faith, on campus and in your department?
- ☐ Do you know other faculty who might be interested in connecting with me or with other faculty of faith? Would you be open to making an introduction?
- ☐ How can I be praying for you?

Come prepared to share a bit about yourself and your hopes for faculty community. When the moment feels right, typically mid-to-late in the conversation, consider:

- ☐ Bringing **2–3 books** and offering the professor a choice as a gift. A list of titles faculty have responded to well is below
- ☐ Sharing a **Faculty Four Loves** bookmark or card as a way to briefly share vision in a way that connects with this person

If time and the conversation allow, invite the professor's own hopes and ideas:

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- ☐ If a group of faculty were to start gathering for community, learning, service, or mission, would that interest you? What would be valuable or appealing for you?
 - ☐ Are you in a season where you'd want to connect with other Christian faculty? If so, what might that look like?

A few things to pay attention to (you may or may not want to ask directly):

- ☐ Their relationship with church: do they attend? Has the church supported them in the Four Loves, or are there gaps?
- ☐ What has their experience been as a Christian in the university? How have they approached being public or private about their faith on campus or in their department?
- ☐ Their "integration journey": how they think about the relationship between faith and academic work
- ☐ Some may be cautious about evangelicals or InterVarsity (or not know much). It's important to not make assumptions about their faith or about their knowledge or feelings about InterVarsity.

Recommended Books

The titles below are ones faculty have tended to choose most often when offered a book as a gift. Bringing 2–3 to a first meeting and letting the professor choose is a natural way to learn what's on their mind.

Teach Us to Pray, Gordon Smith

The Seamless Life: A Tapestry of Love & Learning, Worship & Work, Steven Garber

Living the Christian Year: Time to Inhabit the Story of God, Bobby Gross

A Long Obedience in the Same Direction, Eugene Peterson

Answering God: The Psalms as Tools for Prayer, Eugene Peterson

Who Stands Fast? Selections from Dietrich Bonhoeffer, a Trinity Forum Reading

Take Care of Yourself: Survive and Thrive in Christian Ministry, Pablo Martinez

Mapping Your Academic Career: Charting the Course of a Professor's Life, Gary Burge

The After Party: Toward a Better Christian Politics, Curtis Chang and Nancy French

Return of the Prodigal Son, Henri Nouwen

Note: These titles represent a starting point, not an exhaustive list. Over time you'll develop a sense of which books resonate with the faculty you're meeting on your particular campus.

WHAT IT LOOKS LIKE | Sample Email from the Field

An example of what an effective first-contact email looks like in practice

The example below shows what the principles in this guide look like in a first-contact email. Notice the warm, personal tone; the reference to the mutual connection; and the way it keeps options open without overwhelming the reader.

Sample First-Contact Email

Kathy sends this type of email when a trusted—usually another faculty member—refers her to someone who might be interested in connecting. The subject line names the mutual contact, the email stays brief, and the ask is low-pressure.

Subject: *Meet You? (Connection with Aaron and Faculty Ministry)*

Hello Bob,

I hope you are well! I work with InterVarsity's Graduate & Faculty Ministries, serving faculty at universities in RI.

I'm in the process of getting to know Christian faculty on campus. It's been a rich season of listening, learning, and prayer. I've really enjoyed hearing about people's work and stories!

I recently met up with Aaron (Physics) and asked if he knew any faculty who might be interested in connecting with me and other Christian faculty in the area. He mentioned you as a friend from church and encouraged me to reach out.

I'd love to meet sometime and hear about your work, research, and faith journey, as well as your experience at URI.

Thanks for letting me know if you'd like to get together for coffee or a meal, or a short visit during office hours. I live in Providence and am happy to meet at URI or wherever works best for you.

peace,

Kathy

ABOUT THE AUTHOR | Kathy Cooper



Kathy Cooper is an InterVarsity Campus Minister serving Faculty at Brown University and universities in Rhode Island and southeastern Massachusetts. She loves helping students and faculty come alive to Jesus through Scripture, theological reflection, and the sharing of life stories. The practices and conversation starters in this guide are drawn from her experience in the prospective stage of faculty ministry.