

**WORKING PAPER FOR SENIOR MANAGEMENT CONSIDERATION  
- CHAPLAINCY AT UNIVERSITY OF WESTERN SYDNEY, NEPEAN**  
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*In the post-Enlightenment world there are indications that campus ministry is not only welcomed by university authorities but may also become increasingly valued as an integral component of student services. The concern for the church, therefore, is no longer about the problem of secular resistance to religious organisations, but about how to negotiate a role and place for campus ministry which is responsive to both the goals of the church and higher education authorities.<sup>1</sup>*

## **1. INTRODUCTION**

Chaplaincy began at UWS Nepean in the early 90's in a rather ad hoc way. The local Anglican Bishop wrote to the then CEO (President) Professor Maling requesting the establishment of a Chaplaincy post at Kingswood.

The CEO acquiesced to the request and referred the Church appointed person, Rosemary Roberts, to the Division of Student Affairs & Services for the purpose of "liaison and co-ordination". This task was delegated to the Counselling & Health Unit (CHU).

At the time of establishment no guidelines of expectations (duties and responsibilities) regarding Chaplaincy were established and no budget or separate facilities for Chaplains was provided.

CHU of its own initiative requested the Chaplain seek approval from the Students Union to operate on campus and through co-operation with other non-academic Divisions was able to organise a staff card, office and telephone, limited administrative and secretarial support from within CHU, introductions to inter-campus transport, timetabling office for room bookings, security, postal services etc.

Within a year the Catholic Church established two similar posts at UWS Nepean. The process of liaison between CEO and Church was then repeated as each Christian denomination asked for similar access.

However, it was becoming more difficult to provide the resources necessary due to Nepean's shortage of accommodation and CHU's very limited budget. Fortunately not all appointed Chaplains seemed equally dedicated or enthusiastic about their posts and some put in very few appearances on campus. Often the denomination would inform the University of a change of Chaplain without the last appointee ever

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<sup>1</sup> Taking Stock: Revisioning the Church in Higher Education

taking up the post! During this period of confusion as to how many Chaplains Nepean actually had (or needed), a Muslim students' group approached CHU requesting formal acceptance and were referred to the CEO to follow the established protocol and to Students Union for acceptance as a students' organisation.

The Muslim group requested prayer rooms on each campus. While this request could be met at Westmead it was because the Catholic Chaplain who had been granted an office and a group room was willing to share the latter with the Muslims. The situation at Kingswood was less satisfactory. No existing group room was available and so the Muslims were only granted use of a room on a semester by semester basis after other timetabling commitments had been met. No ongoing provision of space could be made.

By this stage, much valuable counselling time was being taken up with ongoing "liaison" on behalf of an ever changing numbers of Chaplains and the bi-annual search for space to accommodate the Muslim students. More and more CHU funds were being spent on the provision of Chaplaincy printing requests.

CHU through Division representation requested Senior Management set some formal guidelines to govern Chaplaincy at UWS Nepean (see copy of Paul Woloch's memo of 15 April, 1996 referring to a "protocol"). CHU's request and the CEO's response led to this Working Paper, to assist Management in its deliberations. Prior to preparing this report (and after lengthy consultation with the more active Chaplains and the Muslim group) I determined to attend the Annual Conference of "The Tertiary Campus Ministry Association" (Canberra October 1996) to more widely canvass views and collect opinion from across Australia as to the organisation and control of Chaplaincy at universities.

In addition to canvassing personal opinion, a questionnaire was used to collect data on practices at 28 Australian universities. The report focuses particularly on the reciprocal expectations of Church (or faith group) and the University with regard to the appointment, responsibilities and duties and ethical code of Chaplains on the one hand and the provision of facilities and support to be provided by the University on the other - a mini concordat.

## **2. NATURE OF CHAPLAINCY**

The historical origins of Chaplains and Chaplaincy appear to remain significant to the matters needing clarification and specification at Nepean today. (As it does at many other Australian Universities.) Possibly this is because the aims and purposes of Chaplains have not really changed much over the centuries.

Chaplaincy has to do with the observance of religious practices and the need for a place of worship (Chapel) when people are temporarily part of an institution and away from their home community (and home Church).

Originating in the fourteenth century, a Chapel was a place of worship (but not a Church or Cathedral) with its own altar for communion where a designated Chaplain conducted religious ceremonies and executed ritual practices (and in the past stored holy relics).

The word comes from “cappê” - or cloak. (The cloak of St Martin’s of Tours was the banner of the French King’s Army.) The Chaplain was appointed to serve the religious needs of those in the army and away from their home diocese. For this work a “Chapel” (sometimes portable) was necessary. At Nepean we have accepted Chaplains but have not readily recognised the need for a religious space (other than an office or shared office).

Over time Chaplains have come to serve not only armies, but hospitals, jails, schools and universities. Traditionally Chaplains were Christian but in multicultural societies Jews and other faith groups have also appointed Chaplains. What has changed however has been the nature of chaplaincy. While the provision of ritual services has been retained, most Chaplains now offer broader pastoral care, viewing staff and students holistically. Pastoral counselling, broader welfare and social issues are included in their work (See 6 below)

### 3. UWS’s MISSION AND GOALS

The University’s goals and values stress “developing potential” of people, ...“developing the nation socially and culturally” ... “a concern for people” and “respecting their rights” etc. The University can thus hardly ignore the religious and spiritual needs of its members.

If religious organisations are willing to provide Chaplains at no direct salary cost then Nepean should endeavour to provide “Chapels” and/or the necessary physical support for the spiritual growth of its community members.

### 4. COMMITMENT TO THE SACRED AND SPIRITUAL

If Nepean is to commit resources to the development of the sacred, it is suggested that the following principles be applied:

**Co-operation.** Chaplains and the faith groups they represent will be expected to co-operate with one another and not compete for any facilities or in the recruitment of members one from another. They should operate as a team supporting one another. Since the facilities that might be made available to Chaplaincy work are limited, those wishing to participate must be willing to share and co-operate wherever reasonably possible, to maximise facility utilisation, be it chapel, office, group room, computer or whatever.

**Visibility.** Chaplains must be allowed to advertise their activities on campus in a non intrusive manner. Chaplains need inclusion at public University functions (eg

graduation). Chaplaincy accommodation should be easily accessible to staff and students.

**Voluntarism.** No Chaplaincy activity should involve compulsion, even indirectly, or be intrusive to those who are atheist, agnostic or indifferent to religion. Participation in special university events (eg annual faculty student orientation) should occur only by invitation).

**Equity.** In our multicultural, multi-religious society, all faith groups - Muslim, Jewish, Christian, Hindu, Buddhist, Baha'i etc, who wish the opportunity for religious expression on campus should have equitable facilities provided in proportion to the number of its members on campus. (While not every faith group may be granted full time Chaplains they should be granted at least part time or visiting Chaplains, see 5 below).

**Availability.** Since Nepean is an open and free community any facilities provided for religious expression should be accessible to all Nepean students and staff who are willing to observe the custom of the particular faith group.

**Respect.** The Nepean community, in inviting Chaplains on campus, would have to offer protection from intimidation, harassment and ridicule. Similarly the rights of atheists and agnostics need protection so that intrusive and aggressive proselytising and the invasion of privacy should not be accepted.

## 5. TYPES OF CHAPLAINS

It would seem reasonable to provide for three types of Chaplains according to the amount of time the sponsoring church group makes Chaplains available to UWS Nepean, and to apportion the facilities provided by the University appropriately.

### a) **Full Time Chaplains**

Full time Chaplains must commit themselves to being available on campus for at least 150 days in the year (30 weeks). "On campus" is taken to mean any work with the Nepean community including such practices as hospital or home visits, student camps etc. Full time Chaplains would in return receive maximum facility provision - an office and access to shared group rooms. They would be expected to participate in Chaplaincy management.

### b) **Part Time Chaplains**

Part time Chaplains must commit themselves to service of at least 50 days a year. Part time Chaplains would have access to shared group rooms and shared use of an office of a full time Chaplain by mutual agreement.

### c) **Visiting Chaplains**

Visiting Chaplains will have access only to facilities provided to them by full or part time Chaplains who invite them to assist them in their work for specific

purposes. Visiting Chaplains will be under the control of the proposed "Chaplaincy Team" and the inviting Chaplain.

d) **Associates**

Associates may be paid or unpaid associates to a chaplain provided by the denomination/faith group. Where a full time Chaplain wishes to make particular office accommodation available to associates, this is acceptable if the denomination has its own office. It is not reasonable to expect a full time Chaplain of one denomination to share an office with associates of another denomination. It is not reasonable for students (who are often appointed chaplain's associates) to have access to office accommodation of another denomination especially as confidential documents may be stored there or confidential counselling may occur in such an office. Where associates are students of Nepean they will be expected to form a student organisation under the auspices of the Students Union and apply for facilities through the Union rather than the Chaplaincy.

Office space is made available to Chaplains, it is not provided to specific denominations.

## 6. EXPECTATIONS OF CHAPLAINCY

Full and part time Chaplains will be expected to:

- i) be available on campus for 7 hours a day for at least the designated number of days - subject to 5a above.
- ii) conduct religious services/ceremonies when requested by University management.
- iii) offer pastoral guidance to any member of staff or student requesting it on a free, voluntary and confidential basis.
- iv) offer related activities that promote spiritual development according to Chaplain's interests and talents, eg religious study, social activities, camps, retreats, religious services etc.
- v) participate in University affairs including attendance at University events (eg graduation), contribute to committees when requested, compile an annual report, liaise and co-operate with Division of Student Affairs & Services, Students Union, Staff Unions etc.
- vi) attend Chaplaincy team meetings and co-operate in any roster system that ensures maximum Chaplaincy availability across the academic year and across Nepean's various campuses. (See 7 below.)
- vii) Christian Chaplains will be expected to work ecumenically.

## 7. APPOINTMENT OF CHAPLAINS

Chaplains may be appointed as honorary staff members in either of two ways.

- a) A faith group may nominate a designated Chaplain of its choice which Nepean through an appropriate Selection Committee might accept or reject.
- b) UWS Nepean may advertise a Chaplaincy vacancy and select an applicant through an appropriate Selection Committee. (Selection Committee would comprise representatives of Student Affairs & Services, Students Union, Pro Vice-Chancellor, Academia and existing Chaplains.

Chaplains must be official members of a designated religious body recognised by proclamation of the Governor General in accordance with the provisions of Section 26 of the Commonwealth Marriage Act 1961 (as amended).

Initial appointment will be probational for one year followed by review. After review appointment will be for five years with extensions thereafter.

The number of Chaplains to be appointed will be determined by the President of UWS Nepean in accordance with the physical facilities she/he wishes to make available for Chaplaincy work. At a minimum an office and access to a group room shall be provided for a full time appointment.

From amongst the Chaplains appointed, it is expected that they will elect one colleague to act as team leader and co-ordinate the work of Chaplains across the various campuses so as to ensure maximum availability to the Nepean community by negotiated staff roster. The team leader will be responsible for the equitable sharing of facilities provided, induction of new Chaplains, liaison with Head, Counselling & Health Unit and University management generally, the production of the annual Chaplaincy report and the holding of team meetings (at least one per semester). This role should rotate if possible.

Where a faith group wishes its members to have expression of worship on campus, but does not wish to have a designated Chaplain, it must nominate a staff or student member to represent the organisation and take responsibility for its members' actions. The nominated head is to co-operate with the Chaplaincy team leader with regard to physical resources.

Chaplains are to be subject to the same rules and regulations governing staff members of UWS, and the policies and procedures of UWS Nepean, even though they remain responsible to the faith group/denomination they represent. They are additionally to abide by the Chaplaincy Code of Ethics.

## **8. PROVISION BY THE UNIVERSITY**

The minimum provision for Chaplaincy work will be:

- i) A furnished office for each full time Chaplain appointed by UWS Nepean.
- ii) A shared group room on each campus on which the President wishes Chaplaincy to function.
- iii) Staff/student fellowship coffee room on each campus.
- iv) Part time Chaplains may have access to a shared furnished office.
- v) According to funding available the University will endeavour to provide
  - (a) telephone access to local numbers
  - (b) personal computers and email access
  - (c) reprographic facilities limited by an annual budget allocation
  - (d) parking
  - (e) temporary access to shared university accommodation through the timetable office
  - (f) honorary staff status rights - staff card, library membership, inter campus bus access, internal post, etc.
  - (g) designated noticeboard space.

Eventually the University hopes to provide Chaplaincy with a designated religious centre - a purpose built multi-faith facility comprising Chaplains' offices, group rooms, preparatory ritual washing facilities, a Chapel, staff common room, and a "quiet place".

## CHAPLAINS CODE OF ETHICS

1. Chaplains will promote the spiritual growth of those who invite them to do so. They will do no harm to their clients and will seek the well-being of the whole University community.
2. Chaplains will respect their clients' rights with regard to:
  - personal dignity
  - personal responsibility
  - confidentiality
  - privacy.

Where confidentiality is limited by law they will inform clients of those limits before acting. No information will be communicated to another in any form unless written informed consent is obtained.

3. Chaplains will refer students when appropriate, eg Academics, Student Administration, Student Affairs & Services, where professionals in areas other than the spiritual have additional expertise from whom clients might benefit. This obligation to refer will be particularly relevant when client's mental and physical well-being or academic progress is concerned.
4. While Chaplains will naturally represent the perspective of their own faith group/denomination/sect to members of that group they will minister to anyone in the University requesting their assistance without pressing secretarian notions. Nor will Chaplains compete with one another to increase the membership of their sponsoring body.
5. Chaplains will be free to promote notions of social justice in an orderly democratic and non-violent manner, being cognisant not to engage in activities which conflict with the mission and goals of UWS Nepean or that will disrupt the educational progress of University members or increase the potential for violence or racial animosity. They will respect those in the community who hold different social, moral, ethical and religious views from their own.
6. Chaplains will not abuse the power and privilege attached to their position. They will not take advantage of those to whom they minister whether that advantage be personal, financial, political or institutional.
7. Chaplains will not enter into any sexual relationship with those to whom they minister. Sexual harassment in any form will not be tolerated.
8. Chaplains will treat colleagues with respect, consideration and fairness, and will seek mediation where conflict occurs.

9. Chaplains will seek professional development through supervision, training and worship. They will attend courses, seminars, retreats, conferences etc to ensure their own spiritual and personal growth as well as the enhancement of professional skills and knowledge.
10. Chaplains hold the position of honorary staff member of the University. If they receive a complaint or wish to complain about another Chaplain or any member of the University, they will use the formal and informal grievance mechanisms in the same way as other Nepean members, and in accordance with relevant policies .
11. Should a Chaplain feel that counsel or instruction from their sponsoring faith group is in conflict with this ethical code, they will inform the University of their decision to withdraw from the Chaplaincy Team/Service.

## COMMON PRACTICES AT OTHER INSTITUTIONS

### 1. AGREEMENTS

Most Australian Universities often only had verbal agreements - (half forgotten over time) with Churches concerning Chaplaincies. There may have been ad hoc minutes recorded in various committees of University governance but these are not easily locatable. A few have recently moved to formal signed agreements (concordats).

Through investigation it was possible to locate:

- i) UWS Hawkesbury agreement between Student Services and individual Chaplains
- ii) University of Queensland - The Chaplaincy Strategic Plan 1997-2000
- iii) University of Newcastle - Guidelines for the appointment and work of Chaplains
- iv) Charles Sturt University-Chaplaincy Agreement - December 1992.

### 2. APPOINTMENTS

The most common practice appears to be for churches/denominations to nominate a Chaplain and for the University to appoint that person. Usually this is done by the Vice-Chancellor granting honorary staff status.

In most cases Chaplains are paid by their sponsoring churches/denominations. In Brisbane the local Christian denominations combine to appoint and pay the Chaplains at local universities. In Victoria a Chaplaincy Committee for the State nominates suitable Chaplains to the universities. At only a few universities are Chaplains paid a stipend. Charles Sturt advertises for Chaplains and appoints Chaplains in a similar manner to other staff. They are regarded as full time staff members of Student Services and their duties and responsibilities set out and monitored by the University. Only Christian Chaplains are in attendance. Naturally at the Australian Catholic University where Church and institution are one, only Catholic chaplains are appointed.

Chaplains are responsible to the Registrar, or Manager of Student Services or a Deputy Vice-Chancellor. Some universities have chaplaincy sub committees of Senate/Academic Committees to guide them in their work.

A critical issue seems to be whether Christian Chaplains are expected to be ecumenical or not. Where more than one denomination is present most work in a team approach but there are exceptions.

Many Australian universities only have Christian Chaplains, though the presence of greater numbers of Muslim students has seen the growth of designated prayer rooms. Sometimes Muslim worship is included within the Chaplaincy arrangements

and at others it is seen as a separate agreement between institution and student group outside the Chaplaincy.

Prayer space may in some cases be provided by Students' Union without reference to university management. Only at the most integrated campuses are Jewish Chaplains and Muslim student groups co-ordinated from within Chaplaincy. Larger universities sometimes have purpose built accommodation in a Chaplaincy Centre providing for the needs of all religious groups.

### **3. UNIVERSITY PROVISION**

Universities provide a range of support facilities. As mentioned above a few have purpose built religious centres comprising chaplains' offices, Chapels, prayer rooms, group activity rooms, ritual washing and recreational facilities.

Varying levels of service support; communications (phone, fax, post, email), printing, secretarial, transport etc are made available. The trend seems to be that the more University support is provided the more control it exercises over the Chaplaincy function including personnel appointment, reporting, meeting attendance requirements etc.

Attitudes towards Chaplaincy do vary, not only across institutions, but within institutions over time as senior management changes. The function of chaplaincy may humorously be described as "loitering with intent" and official recognition as sanctioning space for this to happen. Generally, academic attitudes can be summarised as "indifferent tolerance." Only in a few instances is there open hostility or zealous support. Possibly senior management does not want to be seen as unsupportive of an activity affecting student welfare but wishes to co-operate at the least possible expense.

### **4. HISTORICAL FACTORS**

While Australian Universities were based on a British model and later influenced by American education, their attitudes towards chaplaincy have possibly changed more markedly in the second half of this century than has occurred in England or the USA. One can speculate that Australia's convict origins and the close association of the Anglican church with early Government were factors making local universities more suspicious of chaplaincy work. Another may have been the rivalry that existed between Anglican and Catholic private secondary education. Academics did not wish to see divisions carried over into the tertiary sector.

Early Australian Universities thus set themselves against Church involvement in their internal affairs. The preparation of candidates for the ministry tended to occur in Church colleges rather than State Universities and Theology and Biblical Studies were not common courses at early sandstone institutions. In order to have some influence on tertiary students Churches responded by building colleges to

accommodate university students on or close to campus. Many of the Church run colleges still function today, though non-sectarian accommodation has become more common.

The second half of the twentieth century has seen more and more chaplaincy activity on campus and appropriate theological training courses being offered within the universities. All this activity remained exclusively Christian until fairly recently.

Ad hoc arrangements, between Christian denominations and University, that worked in the past in a mono-cultural Australia no longer seem appropriate for the twentyfirst century and a more inclusive codification of practices may be more appropriate for the future.

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