

PARTNERING IN MINISTRY

If you seek to reach more international students in your area, you will need an increased commitment to unity among ministries. Working hand in hand is easier than making excuses for competitive work.

Webster defines synergism as “interaction of discrete agencies, agents, or conditions such that the total effect is greater than the sum of the individual effects.” Here are some suggestions as to how to create “synergistic conditions”:

1. **Partner in prayer.**

As you pray for each other and for lost students you will naturally hear each other’s hearts and bind together.

- Plan to meet an hour each week to pray with each other and for the internationals on your campus or in your area. In time, this will grow into a time of planning together.
- Don’t just limit prayers to ministry items—share and pray for personal and family needs.

2. **Enter this relationship with the attitude of serving and learning.**

- God has given ministries various gifts and abilities. As we work together, we are far more effective than when we work on our own.
- Make every effort to serve one another in joint and separate events (assistance with set-up, clean-up, giving rides, etc.).
- What meetings or events could we help with?
- Would helping the other group also meet your needs?

3. **Communicate**

- Share your calendar of events so that your partners can pray.
- Keep the emails flowing—so there are no surprises.
- Protect your relationship. If disagreements develop, go directly to your ministry partner. Do not talk with others about the problem. Trust can be easily broken.

4. **Offer methods, tools, manpower and training to the other group.**

- Orientation meetings and welcome packs.
- Student training conferences
- Evangelism training
- Holiday events
- Friendship partner training
- Conversation Café (ESL Event)

5. **Its okay to ask the question: “How will I benefit from this partnership?”**

- Think about what your ministry wants to receive from this partnership. Be as specific as possible.
- If you have these objectives firmly in mind, you can communicate them to the other ministry and then try to find ways to accomplish your objectives within the partnership. The other ministry should also share its objectives.
- Share your goals early in the relationship so you will be able to evaluate later if the partnership is working.

6. **Treat each other’s objectives as “non-negotiable.”**

- If partnering ministries start to do things that keep you from accomplishing your purpose, an adjustment should be made or the partnership should probably end.
- If you start doing things that keep the other ministry from accomplishing its objectives then, likewise, an adjustment should be made or the partnership should dissolve.
- Without agreement on each other’s objectives, each group will continue to plan its own events. This will limit overall growth.

7. **Think with a “Kingdom Mindset.”**

- Consider united promotion–advertise both ministry’s events / conferences together.
- Allow the other groups to promote events at your events or do that promotion yourself. This will demonstrate unity in ministry-a positive message to the international students.
- Create meetings where both partners can accomplish their objectives.
- If the other group is effectively reaching certain nationalities or cultures, consider directing your energies to other nationalities or cultures.

A Word of Caution: No ministry group-including your own-will ever be perfect. However, certain weaknesses are more disabling than others. Please be aware that partnerships under certain conditions could prove ineffective or even harmful to your ministry. We recommend

that you avoid partnering when certain problems exist with another organization(s):

1. **Serious doctrinal issues.** We're not talking about minor disagreements that well-meaning and sincere born-again Christians often face. Rather, we're talking about major issues like the deity of Christ, salvation by grace through faith, assurance of the believer, and those things that directly effect salvation and the Christian walk.
2. **Credibility of the leaders.** If you are aware that there is concern about the public or private walk of the other group's key leaders, you will probably want to postpone or avoid a partnership.
3. **Overall reputation in the community.** If the other organization has a weak reputation for any number of reasons, a partnership could ultimately hurt your ministry.