

## SoTCM - Focus Group Summary

### Faculty:

- Like the faculty as people
- Respect their intellectual abilities
- Believe the balance between academic and pastoral experience of the faculty is a strength
- Found most faculty accessible when approached
- Pat Jafry is the department “mom”
- Students expressed some concern about the strains in the interpersonal relationships among the faculty
- Expressed limited concerns about the teaching of select faculty (no longer in the department)
- Concern that faculty sometimes extend too much “grace” and don’t hold students accountable to deadlines.

### Program positives:

- Philosophy students enjoy the seminar style of the classes
- Philosophy students indicated that they felt supported in wrestling with personal/life questions
- The breadth of the material covered in each majors (Philosophy-Theology the exception)
- The intellectual rigor of the majors

### Program suggestions:

- A more practical emphasis to the curriculum:
  - Additional classes on, and experience with, preaching
  - Information on the nuts and bolts of church administration (finances, Boards, legal issues, etc.) and church leadership
  - Training for roles other than youth ministry
  - Expanded internship program
  - Increasing the amount of church-based practical experience including pushing students to be involved in a local congregation
  - Increased classes on the Bible (particularly how it is used in pastoral contexts)
- A clearly defined path through each major (e.g. advising guides, stated sequences, etc.)
- Look at and revise the curriculum in the majors (this appeared in many different ways)
  - Reduction of the duplication of information in classes
  - Reduction of the amount of reading so that students can spend more time with individual texts
- Find a way to address the perception that students going into ministry are second class when compared to those who want to go to graduate school
- Form a better connection with Spiritual Development
- Form a better connection with the CPL

### Mentoring:

- Students want mentors to help with:
  - Spiritual formation and life modeling
  - The reconstruction of beliefs after the deconstruction of beliefs (this came up several times in a variety of ways). Students want more time dedicated to and support for reconstruction.
  - Practical guidance on ordination and/or other career options
- Students want these mentoring relationships to be faculty initiated (they recognize that if they reach out most faculty members will respond)
- Some students suggested Band or Class meetings

### Other comments:

- Philosophy-Theology students are “orphans” – the department isn’t interested in the major
- BIB101 and 102 are the classes where the “tearing down” of beliefs begins. Students suggested making it clearer to those in the classes what is happening and the end goal for the process.
- The perception that students are being asked to substitute faculty beliefs for their own as part of the tearing down and rebuilding.

