

## Reflection Paper: Lessons from the Expansion of Radford CRU

I want to start off by saying how grateful I am to have conducted this Honors Capstone project with Professor Travers. If I'm being completely honest, the task of completing a year-long project seemed like a burden at first. But after working alongside him and basing my capstone on something I'm passionate about, it truly became a joyful experience. Professor Travers challenged me in many ways and provided amazing feedback and insight throughout the whole process. Most importantly, I valued our talks, learned so much from him, and have become a better student, leader, and man of faith. Thank you!

My Honors Capstone project on "Exploring the Expansion of Radford CRU" offers more than a case study of organizational growth; it provides a meaningful exploration into the mechanisms and management strategies that sustain and scale values-driven communities. As a student and observer of leadership practices, this project resonated deeply with me. Through the lens of Radford CRU's journey, I found myself reflecting not only on what makes organizations successful, but also on how individuals can be empowered through leadership, resourcefulness, and a sense of belonging.

One of the most impactful takeaways from the research was the emphasis on relational and transformational leadership. Radford CRU's leaders were described as individuals who not only guided others but also walked alongside them—fostering spiritual growth, mutual support, and authentic relationships. This style of leadership breaks from the traditional, hierarchical model. Instead, it values growth through connection. Personally, I've experienced both effective and ineffective leadership in student organizations. The most memorable leaders were those who genuinely invested in others, who empowered rather than directed. The approach described in the CRU study affirms my belief that the best leaders are those who serve with humility and vision.

Another powerful insight was how Radford CRU utilized its limited resources—particularly human and financial—in highly strategic ways. Rather than letting a lack of institutional funding limit their work, CRU leaders raised their own support and included student leaders in deciding how resources should be allocated. This decentralized approach created ownership and encouraged responsible stewardship. From a broader perspective, this shows how even nonprofit or other student-led campus ministries can achieve growth without massive budgets if their leadership is thoughtful and inclusive. In my experience, many student organizations face burnout or decline due to unclear priorities or poor resource management. CRU’s approach demonstrates how clarity, trust, and shared decision-making can make limited resources go further.

Perhaps the most striking theme was how CRU’s growth hinged on empowering student leaders. Radford CRU emphasized being “staff-directed and student-led.” As the ministry expanded, staff increasingly relied on students not only to run events but to help shape the vision and direction of the group. This transfer of responsibility wasn’t just practical—it was transformational. Students became co-creators of the community they were part of, which fueled their investment and inspired them to bring others in. I found this insight especially relevant. In many organizations, members feel like passive participants. CRU, however, modeled how real inclusion and agency can cultivate a deep sense of belonging and purpose. Reflecting on my own involvement in campus organizations, I realized how different the experience is when leadership invites participation versus when it hoards control. CRU’s model of shared leadership provides a replicable framework for fostering genuine engagement.

Despite its many successes and insights for other campus ministries and nonprofit organizations, this project also highlighted some challenges. Maintaining relational depth during

expansion, avoiding student leader burnout, and advancing diversity and inclusion were all identified as ongoing concerns. These points stood out as honest and necessary critiques—reminding us that growth is not without cost. I especially appreciated the recognition that inclusion must be actively cultivated, not assumed. As student populations become more diverse, organizations must be intentional about creating culturally intelligent spaces. In my own journey, I've seen how inclusive language, representation, and outreach make a difference in whether people feel safe to participate. CRU's acknowledgement of this ongoing work reflects both humility and forward thinking.

This project left me with several broader reflections. First, leadership is most effective when it is relational, transparent, and shared. Second, organizations can achieve remarkable things with clear values and inclusive practices. And third, community isn't built by accident—it requires intention, listening, and a commitment to ongoing learning. I also walked away inspired to apply these principles in my own contexts. Whether I'm leading a campus ministry or a church one day, I now better understand how to empower others, steward resources, and build trust. The success of Radford CRU isn't just about organizational growth—it's about intentional spiritual and human development. I'm glad that I can bring the information I learned back to Radford CRU and to other campus ministries and nonprofit organizations desiring growth.

The expansion of Radford CRU offers more than a model for campus ministries and nonprofit organizations—it presents a case study in effective, inclusive, and values-driven leadership. The combination of transformational leadership, strategic resource use, and authentic engagement has allowed CRU to thrive while remaining true to its mission. As someone who hopes to lead with integrity and impact, I find the lessons from this study both practical and deeply meaningful. It reminds me that leadership isn't about position or power—it's about

relationship, vision, and shared purpose. I'm truly grateful for this campus ministry and the way it's impacted my life these past four years. Being in this community that's centered around loving Jesus and loving people has truly made college the best years of my life! God is so good!