

# THE CURRENT STATE OF YOUTH MINISTRY THEOLOGICAL EDUCATION: CONSIDERING THE PRESENT TO STRENGTHEN THE FUTURE (Preliminary Report Presented at 2016 SPCE/AYME Conferences)

## Abstract

The *Survey of Youth Ministry Degrees in Higher Education* (SYMD) is an inquiry into the recent changes in youth ministry degree programs in higher education in North America. Anecdotal data suggests that youth ministry degree programs are declining in prevalence and attendance. Is this true? How have youth ministry degree programs changed? Collected records from national accrediting agencies combined with survey responses from members of the Association of Youth Ministry Educators (AYME) provides important preliminary findings about the current trends in youth ministry higher education. Faculty and administrators faced with decisions related to the future directions of their institution's degree programs will find the content of this study helpful.

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## Introduction

The last several decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century ushered in the broad scale professionalization of youth ministry in North America.<sup>1</sup> More and more denominations, churches, and para-church organizations hired youth pastors and ministry leaders to attend specifically to the needs of the youth in and out of the church. Consequently, the need for biblically grounded, academically trained youth ministers increased exponentially as well.

As an applied academic discipline in institutions of higher education, the field of *Youth Ministry* (YM), and related degree programs, experienced a great proliferation at the undergraduate and graduate level.<sup>2</sup> In a 2003 study of the youth ministry professorate, Cannister found that the majority of undergraduate and graduate YM professors reported increasing enrollments (92%) and increases in the scope of their programs (68%). Most of the rest of the programs were, at the least, maintaining their size (30%). Remarkably, only 2% of the programs were downsizing at that time.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Mark Cannister. "Growing Up Without Selling Out: The Professionalization of Youth Ministry." *YouthWorker Journal*, December 21, 2009. <http://www.youthworker.com/youth-ministry/growing-up-without-selling-out-the-professionalization-of-youth-ministry>

<sup>2</sup> Wesley Black. "Youth Ministry in Christian Education Programs: A Compiled Summary of Youth Ministry Trends." *Christian Education Journal* 3, no. 6, Supplement (2009). pp. S-131-132.

<sup>3</sup> Mark Cannister. "The State of the Professoriate: An Empirical Study of Youth Ministry Professors in North America." *Journal Of Youth Ministry* 1, no. 2 (Spring 2003) 65-78. *Academic Search Premier*, EBSCOhost (accessed August 23, 2016). p.72.

However, at a recent gathering of the *Association of Youth Ministry Educators* (AYME), a number of youth ministry professors expressed concern that youth ministry higher education programs have begun to decline in number and scope. They lamented that a number of their institutions had recently cut funding and reduced staff in their youth ministry departments. Several faculty members have had their programs cut altogether and their jobs eliminated.

While there seems to be some anecdotal data suggesting that youth ministry degree programs are declining in popularity, there is little substantive data to support or deny those claims. Further, if there is a decline, there is little data related to possible contributing factors of this phenomenon. In contrast, several other AYME members have reported that they have created new youth ministry degree programs, particularly at the graduate level, and are still experiencing significant growth in enrollment and program expansion. What are we to make of this dichotomy?

What is the true current state of youth ministry higher education? To what extent over the last decade has it changed? And why has it changed? The answers to these questions could impact the future of YM degree programs and youth ministry in general. These questions motivated the research team, comprised of current and former executive board members of AYME, to launch an inquiry into the recent changes in youth ministry academic programs. The preliminary findings in this report provide a “*You Are Here*” arrow on the map of the current youth ministry education landscape that can enable faculty and administrators to better determine the direction of future programming.

### **Youth Ministry Construct**

Throughout this study, the term *youth ministry* (YM) is used in its broadest sense to include programs that primarily seek to minister to adolescents but may also include children, young adults, and/or their families. The phrase *youth ministry degree program* (YM program) is operationalized as any academic program(s) of an accredited higher education institution that consists of some form of academic youth ministry related training. This ranges from full youth ministry undergraduate or graduate degrees, to youth ministry minors or concentrations, emphases, or certificates within related programs such as Christian education or general ministerial or Bible degrees. The specific nature of a given program is noted in the discussion of that program.

### **Purpose of the SYMD**

The purpose of the SYMD was two-fold. First, the desire was to provide YM faculty and administrators with some substantive information regarding the nature of and current trends in Christian, North American YM related higher education programs. Has the number and/or types of programs and degrees offered changed in the last decade (the primary research question)? If so, how and in what ways have they changed and what are some possible contributing variables to the changes? Findings could provide important insights assisting those responsible to create or re-structure their institution’s youth ministry programs. The hope also

includes the desire to consequently strengthen the professional development of YM faculty and the field and practice of youth ministry in general.

The second goal was to provide data for AYME pertaining to institutions that offer academic YM degree programs. In identifying institutions holding YM programs not currently represented at AYME, it is believed that this data could be used as a tool to expand the sphere of influence of AYME, and thus, enhance the reciprocal influence of the organization and those committed to the teaching of youth ministry. After the conclusion of the first phase of the SYMD, the research team plans to evaluate if there is a need for a more comprehensive second phase that would investigate contributing variables to better understand the trends indicated in the initial phase.

## Methods

The initial phase of the SYMD consisted of two concurrent data collection sub-phases: the *Survey of Accrediting Institutions* and the *AYME Membership Survey*. These two sub-phases were designed to work in tandem to provide triangulated, and thus, more comprehensive data.

### Accredited Institutions Represented

In the spring of 2016, the research team solicited records from the top three national accrediting agencies (ATS, CCCU, and ABHE), asking for a list of institutions that were currently accredited by them that had some form of a YM related degree program with “youth,” “student,” and/or “family” in the program name in the 2015-2016 academic year. Christian Education or general ministry degrees were not included in the accrediting data phase, and regional accrediting agencies were not contacted for comprehensive lists. ATS returned an initial list of 21 institutions, CCCU listed 82 institutions, and ABHE listed 33 institutions, equaling 136 total institutions initially reported that had some form of youth ministry programming.

Using the lists initially provided by the agencies, the team searched each individual institution’s website for specific degree information. During the course of those searches several other institutions that were affiliated with or members of one or more of those three agencies were found that were not on the lists provided by the three agencies. There were also some institutions on their lists which did not actually have any YM related degree programs. Several institutions were listed with more than one agency.

The compiled list of accredited institutions and programs was then compared to the AYME membership list from 2014-2016 to determine the number of members who reported having accredited YM programs but were not listed by any of the three national agencies. That comparison revealed 15 additional institutions with national and/or regionally accredited YM programs. Those member institutions were added to the other institutions already identified.

After duplicate and errant listings were eliminated and others added, there was a total of 176 institutions (n=176) listed as accredited or affiliated with one or more accrediting agencies, and as having some form of undergraduate and/or graduate level YM degree, concentration, emphasis, specialization and/or certificate program (125 CCCU; 23 ATS; 13

ABHE; 15 Other). Institutions were identified with their primary accrediting agency in cases where the institution is accredited by and/or affiliated with more than one agency. Of the 176, 159 were from the U.S. and 17 were from Canada.

### AYME Member-Institutions Represented

The list of AYME members from 2014-16 formed the initial potential sample for the survey of AYME members phase. The list was edited to eliminate potential redundant reports from professors from the same institution (e.g. some schools have 6 AYME members). Gleaning efforts produced a list of 115 potential relevant and unique contacts. An email was sent to the final list of potential contacts containing a unique link which allowed the tracking of those who had responded and those who had not. As this was a convenience sampling, respondents had to choose to opt in to the survey. Four persons who received the initial survey wrote back indicating either that they were personally no longer in YM higher education, or that their school no longer had a YM program. This took the number down to 111 potential respondents.

From the 111 contacted, 46 SYMD responses were received. One of these was a duplicate not originally caught (two responses from the same program in the same school) and one was from a member who teaches at a school outside of North America. These two responses were eliminated, leaving responses from 44 different schools in the U.S.A. and Canada for a response rate of 38.2%, which reflects a good response rate from a select purposive group, especially given the detailed answers required in the survey.

### Procedure

As indicated earlier, the Survey of Accrediting Institutions (SAI), the first of the two sub-phases, was aimed at examining the prevalence and type of academic youth ministry programs in higher education institutions in North America. The national accrediting agencies of Christian higher education: 1) the Association of Theological Schools (ATS); 2) the Council for Christian Colleges and Universities (CCCCU), and; 3) the Association of Biblical Higher Education (ABHE) provided the data for the SAI sub-phase of this research, which focused on answering the primary research question. While the team hoped for access to historical (dating back to 2005/2006) and present member/program records, two of the three accrediting bodies do not maintain long-term chronicles. Thus, the data was not as extensive as originally desired.

The AYME Membership Survey (AMS) sub-phase addressed the secondary question supporting the primary research question. This sub-phase consisted of soliciting and collecting survey responses from AYME professors/members (2014-2016) pertaining to the nature and changes in their institutions' degree programs and possible contributing factors. The research team collaboratively created a 29 item instrument. The survey questions were then assessed by three other current and previous YM faculty members as to the consistency between the survey and the research goals. Minor revisions occurred to ensure clarity. Survey questions were both quantitative and qualitative in nature. Several open-ended questions and opportunity for a narrative statement at the end complimented dichotomous and Likert scale type questions. AYME members (2014-2016) provided feedback via *Survey Monkey* (see Appendix A).

Several steps were taken to ensure the accuracy and consistency of these survey responses. Percentages were adjusted on some of the items tallied by Survey Monkey. Survey monkey included N/A responses in their factoring of percentages on Q 12-15. For example, those who checked N/A on whether or not they saw a change in enrollment in their undergrad program (because they indicated earlier they did not have an undergrad program) were included in the percentage reported, which greatly reduced the real percentage. Additionally, all open-ended responses were coded relative to dominant and unique themes.

## Results

### Survey of Accrediting Institutions

The initial frequency results obtained from the accrediting institutions provided a comprehensive synopsis of nationally accredited YM programs. Results yielded a list of 176 accredited institutions in N. America that offered some form of YM degree programming (159 in the US, and 17 in Canada). There were 106 different institutions that offered some form of full YM degree. At the undergraduate level, 92 offered either a BA and/or BS in YM. Eight of those institutions offered both a BA and a BS, while 3 offered two different YM related BA's. At the graduate level, 25 schools offered a full master's level YM degree of some kind. Nineteen schools offered an MA and 17 offered an MDiv, while 11 of the 25 schools offered both MA and MDiv. Of the 92 institutions offering an undergrad degree in YM, 11 of them also offered a graduate degree in YM.

Additionally, many schools offered opportunities to study youth ministry in a way other than as a major. At the undergraduate level, 14 institutions offered a Minor only, 47 institutions provided only a YM Concentration within other degrees, and 11 offered a YM Certificate. At the graduate level, 13 schools delivered only a YM Master's level Concentration, and 14 offered graduate Certificates in YM.

Among the 139 YM degrees offered (undergrad and grad), there were 23 different names of YM related degrees. Minors, concentrations, certificates, etc. under a non-youth ministry specific degree were excluded. The vast majority were named *Youth Ministry(ies)* (n= 77; 55%). Other names included *Youth & Family Ministry(ies)* (n=17; 12%); *Youth & Young Adult Ministry(ies)* (n=9, 6%); *Student Ministry* (n=7; 5%); *Children, Youth, and Family Ministry(ies)* (n=7; 5%); and, various others (n=22; 17%) (see Appendix B for full listing of names).

The national agencies were also petitioned for a list of accredited institutions with YM programs in 2005-06 that could be compared with the 2015-16 list to indicate longitudinal changes. Only ATS was able to provide historical data relative to master's degrees for that time period. ATS reported that in 2006, they accredited 8 institutions with YM master's level degrees. In 2016 they accredited 18 institutions with YM specific degrees, which represent a 125% increase the institutions they accredited in a decade. Seven of the eight graduate programs reported by ATS in 2006 were still in existence in 2016. Of the 176 institutions reported with some form of YM specific degree program, 102 (58%) of those institutions have had at least one person registered as a member of AYME during 2014-16.

## AYME Membership Survey

### *Demographics of Respondents*

The Membership Survey provided valuable insights into the number and/or types of programs and degrees offered in the last decade and how they may have changed over that time. Results demonstrated the respondents were a highly educated, experienced, and tenured group of youth ministry education leaders. Of the 46 respondents, almost 59% have an academic Doctorate (Ph.D., Ed.D.) while another 13% have a professional doctorate (D.Min). The others have various M.A. or M.Div. degrees, and 5 are doctoral students. Over three quarters of the respondents held some form of professor title, with 37% having the title of full Professor, 30% Associate Professor, and 11% Assistant Professor. An additional 9% are adjunct faculty. Respondents also were actively involved in administration with over 41% holding the additional title of Director, Department Chair, or Dean.

### *Experience*

All the respondents indicated they have at least 10 or more years of general YM experience, with 89% having more than 15 years invested. When it comes to having specific YM education experience, it was a little more nuanced. There were 43% who had 15 or more years of experience, and 32% who had 10-15 years. The remaining respondents (25%) had between 4-9 years of YM education experience. In terms of time spent at their current institution, 56% have 10 or more years. The remainder had between 5-10 years.

### *Primary Specialty Area in Teaching*

As one might assume, the largest primary teaching specialty area was youth ministry, indicated by 49%. Christian Education and Practical Theology were the second most frequent responses, each representing 13% of the survey population. Most other choices had at least one response (biblical studies, discipleship/spiritual formation, leadership, or culture/sociology); no one selected Historical or Systematic Theology as their primary area of specialty.

## Description of Degree Programs

### *Primary Degree Name for YM*

The top three choices totaled 61%, with Youth Ministry (24%), and Youth and Family Ministry (20%) as the two most prevalent choices. Christian Ministries followed closely behind (17%). Additional options included Christian Education and Student Ministries with 2 respondents each. Youth and Family Studies, Educational Ministry, Christian Formation and Discipleship, Lay Ministry, Educational Leadership, Pastoral Theology, Leadership, Practical Theology, and Bible and Religion. One school is adding a Youth Ministry and Apologetics degree in 2017.

### *Degree Options*

Nearly 70% offer a BA or BS degree, while 46% offer a MA and 28% offer a MDiv with youth ministry emphasis. There were also 6 (13%) schools that indicated they offered a doctoral degree with 4 (9%) offering a Ph.D. or Ed. D. There are a plethora of YM options available, with 72% offering YM as a major and 52% offering it as a minor. Additional options include concentration (34%), emphasis (15%), and certificate (21%). When considering only those that have YM specific names, this is in general agreement with the degree options accounted by the accrediting institutions reported above.

### *Required Courses*

The BA/BS programs broke down in the following ways: 1-5 courses – 36.67%; 6-8 courses – 43.33%; 9-12 courses – 13.33%; 13+ courses - 6.67%. As one would surmise, due to Master's programs naturally being shorter than undergraduate degrees, it is not surprising that MA and MDiv degrees require fewer YM classes. Fifty-nine percent require only 1-5 courses, with the 35.3% requiring 6-8 courses.

### *Changes Over Time*

The primary question this study asked was: Has the number and/or types of programs and degrees offered changed in the last decade? Secondly, if so, how and in what ways have they changed and what are some possible contributing variables to the changes? The following items offer a snapshot of the changes (positive or negative) in number and types of YM programs (including Christian Education and general ministry degrees) offered over the previous 10 years, as well as explores changes in degree names and enrollment.

### *Growth or Decline in YM Programs*

Overall, the participating institutions offered 81 various undergrad or master's degrees (not including doctorates, certificates or concentrations). Of the 52 participants who responded to the question about length of time the degree was offered, 42 total degrees existed longer than 10 years, and 17 existed for less than 10 years, indicating a 29% overall increase in all YM related degrees offered over the past decade.

At the *undergraduate level*, 26 (79%) schools have offered their primary YM bachelor's degree for 13 or more years, and 23 (69%) of those existed over 15 years. Conversely, 7 (21%) schools had offered their YM bachelor's degree for 10 years or less, with 4 (12%) of those having relatively new YM degrees that have been available for 4 years or less. This reflects an overall increase of 21% in YM undergrad degrees in the last decade.

However, there were some nuances in the number of undergrad degrees offered in the past decade. Three (9%) YM specific bachelor's degrees were restructured and now only provide YM courses as part of a more general ministry degree. They attributed this to low enrollment in YM, curriculum revisions, and/or the need to consolidate degrees. Conversely, 3

(9%) institutions added YM related bachelor degrees in the last decade, and one school added an AA YM degree. Three schools added minors or concentrations to existing undergrad degrees. Reasons for increasing their degrees included marketing appeal, greater accessibility, and/or broader training for a variety of YM contexts.

At the *graduate level*, the respondents reported offering 20 MA YM degrees. Of those, 65% (13) of the schools with MA YM related degrees indicated they have had their programs for 15 or more years, and 35% (7) indicated their degree programs were less than 4 years old. Among those who provided an MDiv YM option (13), 76% (10) had this degree option for 15 or more years, while 23% (3) have had their program option for 4 or less years. Overall, they reported a combined total of 33 master's degrees (MA & MDiv). Of those, 70% (23) of the degrees have existed for over 10 years, and 10 (30%) of the degrees have been added in the last 10 years. This indicates an overall increase of 39% in all YM master's level degrees in the last decade.

There were some notable variances in master's degree offerings in the last decade. Two (6%) schools eliminated their MA YM programs altogether, and one school eliminated one interdisciplinary MA (YM & counseling) but kept YM specific MA. Reasons cited were low enrollment, institution-wide curriculum revision (reduction), and elimination of all specialized master's degrees in favor of a more generally applicable degree with various concentrations. Conversely, two (6%) schools added MA degrees, and 4 (12%) added YM concentrations/specializations to existing MDiv degrees. Reasons cited for adding degrees and concentrations were marketing appeal, requirements for ordination, increasing alternative YM contexts, and accessibility of YM education to other degree programs. Four schools folded their YM degree into another broader degree, retaining YM as an emphasis or specialization, citing the need for a graduate degree with broader appeal to students, and greater applicability in the marketplace.

### *Renaming Degrees*

Renaming degrees was a significant trend among participating institutions. In the last 10 years, 50% (22) of the respondents had not changed the name of their primary YM related degree program. However, the other half of the institutions indicated they either changed their name in the last decade (15; 34%), or were planning to change their name soon (7; 6%). At those institutions, 9 YM specific degrees were reported as renamed because they were restructured to become part of another more general ministry degree with a YM concentration/emphasis (these were considered the decline in degrees discussed above).

The most common name change was to move away from the standard Youth Ministry(ies) name, with 6 different Youth Ministry degrees (8 undergrad, 2 grad) being renamed. New names included Youth & Family Ministry (3), Youth & Family Studies (2), Youth & Student Ministry, and Youth & Young Adult Studies. An oft-cited reason for adding "family" nomenclature related to wanting to better reflect current trends (e.g. youth and family), and to provide a broader degree to better represent the existing family emphasis of the curriculum. Several indicated their name change was believed to (or had potential to) be more marketable, and impact enrollment as well as benefit graduates who may serve in other than only youth



serving ministries. One institution changed to Youth & Family Ministry based on recent market research indicating a perceived need for family emphasis in youth ministry among professionals in the field. Another graduate institution changed their name to Youth & Family Studies in order to “allow our grads to better assimilate into secular [youth serving] positions that are leery of the name ‘ministries.’”

The second most common name change was renaming Christian Education degrees, with 6 degrees being renamed (3 undergrad, 3 grad), and 2 folded into Christian Ministries degrees with CE emphasis/concentration. The new names included Christian Education Leadership, Christian Formation and Discipleship, Education & Discipleship Formation, and Educational Ministry.<sup>4</sup> Reasons cited were low enrollment, and the language of Christian Education was outdated and no longer perceived as relevant to potential students... Of note is that one institution is planning to rename an MA in Christian Education to Youth Ministry & Apologetics.

### *Changes in Student Enrollment in Degree Programs*

Over the last 10 years, 31% (14) of the schools reported some level of growth in student enrollment in the YM related degree program, with 42% (6) of those indicating growth having increased in enrollment by more than 20%. Conversely, 52% (23) of the schools indicated their enrollment in the YM program has decreased over the last 10 years, with 51% (11) of those indicating a 20% or more decrease, while 16% indicated their enrollment in their YM degree has stayed about the same overall in the last decade.

While respondents offered various reasons for the increase or decrease, the vast majority of responses could be summarized under several headings. To help bring clarity, we offer both the things that were listed as helping schools grow their YM degrees, as well as those factors that contributed to the decline in enrollment. Perhaps ironically or perhaps telling of differences between institutions, there is some overlap.

### *Factors for Growth*

Nearly one third (31%) of the respondents reported an increase in enrollment in their YM degree program. Respondents were allowed to select as many options that applied. The factors selected as contributing to this growth were:

- Faculty and administration recognize the importance of YM degrees (50%)
- More students wanting to go into youth ministry (43%)
- Senior/lead pastors hiring theologically educated youth workers (29%)
- School/institution redesigning degrees creating positive YM impact (18%)
- Students desire classic university/seminary training for YM (9%)
- Churches requiring youth workers have theological degree (7%)

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<sup>4</sup> For additional information regarding restructuring CE degrees see: Wesley Black, 2009. “Christian Education: A Field in Motion – Youth Ministry in Christian Education Programs: A compiled Summary of Youth Ministry Trends” *Christian Education Journal*, Series 3, Vol 6 Supplement, p. S136.

One respondent commented on the need for theological YM degrees stating that, "In our stream of the church, there is a growing sense that youth pastors should have a background in theology comparable to what senior pastors receive." Another commented on the high value that the administration and churches place on YM:

Since my role in our denomination is both as an adjunct faculty member for youth ministry and as a contact for congregations searching for youth leaders, I would say that there is evidence of an increase of the administration's recognition for the value of youth ministry training and an increase in congregation's requests for youth leaders with both theological and practical training.

Other open-ended responses regarding reasons for increased enrollment centered on the common themes of creating broader, more flexible and practical degrees that would have more appeal to prospective students, as well as better position graduates in the marketplace. Some other factors for growth included removing an enrollment cap in their YM program, strengthening YM curriculum and course content, partnering with major youth serving ministries which created joint scholarship opportunities, and the addition of highly recognized YM leaders and/or high-profile faculty. One institution strengthened their practicum program, which they believed improved learning as well as job placement potential. Another respondent attributes an increase in enrollment to the creation of an accelerated degree (3 years undergrad w/ "dual credit" courses + 2 years graduate). He or she commented:

The change comes as a result to broaden curriculum, offering a more robust collection of courses. In addition, we feel we're saving students both time and money in the way we approach ministry preparation and training... all without short-changing, however, on both practical course work as well as relevant field-education/mentoring internships.

Three respondents specifically stated that the consolidation of ministry related degrees has contributed to their growth. One commented:

While we changed our degree from a major in youth ministries to a major in Christian ministries with a concentration in youth ministries in 2009, youth ministry students today take the exact same courses that youth ministry students prior to 2009 took. The curriculum is just packaged differently so that we can also have missions students, pastoral students, outdoor educ. students major in those areas under the umbrella of Christian ministries.

### *Factors for Decline*

Over half (52%) of the schools indicated a decrease in enrollment in their YM program. Respondents were allowed to select as many options that applied. The factors selected as contributing to this decline were:

- Students want a degree broader than YM (33%)
- Churches not requiring youth workers have theological degree (29%)
- Less students wanting to go into youth ministry (27%)
- Senior/lead pastors hiring non-theologically educated youth workers (22%)

- Students want to explore YM in other ways than classic university/seminary training (22%)
- School/institution redesign degrees such that YM is negatively impacted (20%)
- Faculty/administration do not recognize the importance of YM degrees (18%)

There were a great many open-ended responses regarding specific reasons for a decline in enrollment supported the above factors. Open-ended responses regarding the responsibility for decline in enrollment were attributed to several main locales of influence, often in combination: the institutional level, the departmental level, the student level, and/or the church/denominational level. The vast majority of the comments centered on several main themes: perceived lack of value of YM, lack of institutional support, financial related issues, students desiring broader more applicable and lucrative degrees, and major redesigns of curriculum.

### *Perceived Lack of Value of YM*

As indicated above, 18% of those who experienced a decline in enrollment in the last decade cited that their faculty and/or administration at their school do not recognize the importance of YM degrees (or department). As one person lamented, "...our previous religion department chair was telling students that youth ministry as a career was a 'waste of a degree.' This is something we are working hard to change, but it is a slow and frustrating process." Also, several respondents felt that churches and/or denominations do not value youth ministry, which may be one underlying factor as to why they do not feel the need to hire theologically educated youth workers. A few respondents remarked that their denominational requirements or recent emphasis tended to make it more challenging for students to enroll in YM programs if they also intended to seek ordination. One indicated that more conservative churches in their denomination had bought into the idea that youth ministry is not biblical and is a detriment to formation, as promoted by recent multiple ponderings of a few within the field and by the movie *Divided*.<sup>5</sup>

### *Lack of Institutional Support*

Nearly a dozen open-ended comments lamented the lack of institutional support for the YM department. Lack of perceived value of YM may be one of the underlying factors in administrative and institution-wide decisions such as lack of marketing and advancement of the YM program, and lack of financial and/or administrative support from the institution, which can have an impact on the faculty workload in the YM program. One respondent commented,

"... there has never been a direct budget for a full time youth program and it has been staffed with adjuncts like myself or religion professors who need to get their course load but do not necessarily have a degree in that area. This has created quite the battle for me."

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<sup>5</sup> Dividedthemovie.com; A youth-ministry "documentary" suggesting that the concept of modern youth ministry is unbiblical and ineffective. It has created and contributed to trending criticism of youth ministry in general today.

Another respondent offered data echoing this concern:

In the spring of 2005, we had a donor approach us about endowing a chair in youth ministry on our...campus[es]. To ensure we were using the money properly, we hired a company to do market research. Long story short, the vast majority of senior/lead pastors, as well as youth pastors, indicated they did not see graduate level theological education as being important for doing youth ministry. The majority of pastors felt that their youth pastors could suffice with conferences and seminars for their youth ministry knowledge and thus really did not need theological education...In 2014, we hired a marketing research company to look at whether churches desired youth workers with graduate theological degrees. Similar to the 2005 study, the answer was overwhelmingly no."

### *Financial Concerns*

Financial related issues were a common theme among respondents. Several schools indicated they were facing significant institutional financial problems, which resulted in consolidation or elimination altogether of several degrees, including YM. Institutions struggling to recover from the great recession were mentioned as a factor by several people. Respondents also felt that financial concerns in the minds of potential students (and their parents) were a factor, and students fear they may not find a YM position with a salary that will offset the high cost of their education.

### *Desire for Broader Degree*

Nearly one quarter (22%) of the respondents who experienced decline in enrollment in the last ten years indicated they believed students were looking for alternative ways to explore YM other than the traditional university/seminary setting. Relatedly, one third (33%) indicated they believe students, parents, and/or denominations desired a degree that was broader than just youth ministry. This was supported by many of the open-ended comments, particularly those at the graduate level. As one remarked,

We generally find that students who study youth ministry choose degree plans that they see as giving them credentials for future phases of ministry, which may not include youth ministry. Most of our youth ministry students opt for the MDiv with a Concentration in Youth Ministry, or simply to add youth ministry course work to their MDiv.

Another respondent commented,

Youth ministry has unfortunately always been considered one of the "easy" degrees or as a stepping stone to other types of ministry. Because of this, students are choosing a broader course of study which allows them to either graduate sooner (interdisciplinary studies) or going with a more standard ministry degree that is not age specific (Christian Ministry).

Another seminary faculty leader cited the proliferation of undergraduate degrees as a factor in students seeking a broader degree. "Students either a) don't feel they need a seminary degree and churches hire them without it and b) they come to seminary and don't want another degree in youth ministry so they pursue MDiv, leadership, etc."

#### *Major Redesign of Curriculum*

It should be noted that there were almost as many YM programs that benefitted from the curriculum redesign as there were schools that suffered because of it. Rising educational costs, and students desiring broader more applicable and lucrative degrees may be among the underlying factors behind the major curriculum redesigns. Those that were negatively impacted believed the redesign harmed YM degree enrollment by either reducing the number of YM classes required (especially reducing the number of elective hours), or by adding a lot of non-YM classes to the degree, making it not as enticing to students. While a factor at all levels, graduate programs seemed especially negatively impacted by the decrease in number of units required for an accredited degree. A few respondents indicated they recently redesigned their outdated degree at the departmental level in order to provide a broader more applicable degree, with the hope of improving future enrollment.

Several other factors for decline were indicated in the open responses such as lack of faculty "popularity" and a need to do a better job of matching students' gifts with desired degree.

One respondent offered an insightful narrative summarizing many of the factors cited for decline:

Our school could be the poster child for the autopsy of youth ministry education. We had our first Youth Ministry graduates in 1988. Twelve years ago our school created a [center for youth leadership], recognizing that youth majors are a core element of our school. Significant investments were made in marketing, personnel, & programming. 10 years ago we peaked at over 125 Youth Ministry Majors & 80 Youth Development Studies Majors (those wanting to work with youth but not necessarily in a church). Since then there has been a continual decrease in funding & personnel. The [center for youth leadership] was designed to add value back to churches & help youth pastors as well as undergrad students. That model never really stuck with the administration & resources were pulled to the point where we had 180 students and only 2 faculty members. Recently, we have seen other colleges within our denomination start extension partnerships with churches. They offered ministry training degrees via online cohorts at a cheaper price at church locations. Our administration fought against that model & it has impacted our enrollment. Also about 5 years ago our school changed our recruitment strategy & this former Bible College no longer went after ministry majors. We have had great retention, but we no longer have significant numbers coming in. For example we only had 35 students come in last fall, but we are graduating 45 in our two programs this semester. Next fall our projected Youth Ministry numbers will be down to 50 and we will have 45 Youth Development students. That is more than a 50% reduction in less than 10 years. As a result of declining enrollment the administration cut (fired) 5 of our long-term ministry prep faculty...They also restructured the College of Ministry

and eliminated the [center for youth leadership], merging it with the Department of Pastoral studies. In light of all of the changes, this is also my last semester. Administrative changes have devalued Youth Ministry. They feel our numbers were too high, the students were accumulating too much debt for low paying jobs, there weren't enough jobs to support the graduates & there are other majors that show greater viability for growth. Personally, I disagree with all of their conclusions, but they didn't come to talk to us about the changes – they just reacted to an overall declining enrollment and said it was a financial reality.

### **Discussion and Implications**

The SYMD was an initial attempt to better understand the state of youth ministry in academia in North America. It described the prevalence, type and nomenclature of accredited YM degrees, explored changes in YM academic programs in the last decade, and identified some possible contributing variables to those changes. This revealed several important preliminary findings about the current trends in youth ministry higher education that can assist faculty and administrators faced with decisions related to the future directions of their institution's degree programs. This discussion is based on a preliminary analysis of the data, and acknowledges there are many points that need further investigation.

What is the prevalence and type of academic youth ministry programs in higher education institutions in North America? The *Survey of Accrediting Institutions* sub-phase provided a comprehensive snapshot of the number and types of nationally accredited institutions and degrees currently offered. It identified 176 different institutions that had some form of undergraduate and/or graduate level YM degree, concentration, emphasis, specialization and/or certificate program. Of those, 106 institutions offered a full YM specific degree at the undergraduate or graduate level (92 and 25 respectively), with 11 schools offering both. There were 139 total different degrees offered at those institutions. Additionally, many institutions offered a smorgasbord of minors, emphases, concentrations and certificates, either as part of an explicitly labeled YM degree or under the broader umbrella of more general ministry degrees. Clearly, the ways to study youth ministry are vast and varied.

How has the number and/or types of programs and degrees offered changed in the last decade? The results of the *AYME Membership Survey* sub-phase provided important insights into the many changes, positive and negative, over the last decade. The survey results offer valuable responses and commentary from 46 highly educated, experienced, and tenured YM educators across North America, 19 of which were Deans, Directors, or Department Chairs.

### **Proliferation of Degrees**

It is evident that the number of youth ministry degrees has proliferated in the last 10 years, especially at the graduate level. Results of the member survey indicated a 29% overall increase in YM related degrees over the past decade, with undergraduate degrees increasing 21% and graduate degrees increasing 39% overall. Of the accrediting agencies, only ATS provided data relating to the number of degrees offered a decade ago, which showed a 125%

increase in the number of graduate degrees they accredited in 2005-06. Seven of the eight graduate programs reported by ATS in 2006 were still in existence in 2016.

On the surface, there is a drastic disparity between the increase in graduate degrees indicated by AYME members and ATS (39% and 125% respectively). There are several possible reasons for this disparity. One is that ATS only provided data related to explicitly YM commiserate degrees that included key terms like “youth,” “adolescent,” and “student” in their program/degree names. The member survey included more data on any YM education, including the degrees housed under broader names like Christian Education and other general ministry names. Additionally there are a number of graduate level degrees that were reported by our members that are accredited by agencies other than ATS.

Nevertheless, the findings seem to indicate a significant increase of YM degrees in the last decade (at least 29%), particularly at the graduate level (at least 39%). This finding is indicative of broader trends in theological higher education in general. In a January 2016 gathering of evangelical seminary presidents, ATS executives identified an overall increase in the number of seminaries in general, a rise in MA professional degrees, a decline in traditional MDiv degrees, and a rise in competency based MDiv programs.<sup>6</sup> This trend seems to be mirrored to some degree in YM related graduate degrees, and could be examined more deeply for graduate program and degree restructuring opportunities. It would also be beneficial to pursue more information regarding the proliferation of undergraduate degrees. CCCU and ABHE were unable to provide that data at the time of this study, however there may be alternative ways to acquire that data.

It is important to note that the accrediting sub-phase of the SYMD reflects only a snapshot comparison between the numbers of degrees offered in 2005-06 and the numbers offered in 2015-16. While there has been an overall proliferation of YM degrees, there have also some notable variances in the number and types of degrees offered by AYME members during that decade. Three YM specific bachelor’s degrees were restructured and now only provide YM courses as part of a more general ministry degree, but another 3 YM degrees were added at the undergrad level. The same give and take was reflected at the graduate level, with 2 schools eliminating YM degree programs altogether, but 2 other schools adding MA degrees, and 4 others added YM concentrations/specializations to MDiv degrees.

Several schools added non-credit options such as certificates to their programs, which may provide an avenue for equipping youth workers who do not want to enroll in a more formal degree for varying reasons, including financial and scheduling issues. Non-credit options may also serve as an on-ramp into degree programs, and institutions may benefit from exploring these options.

### Changes in Enrollment

Enrollment in YM programs took a downturn over the last decade. Over half of the institutions (52%) reported an overall decline in numbers, while 31% reported an increase, and 16% were flat. This is dramatically different than a 2003 study by Cannister that found the

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<sup>6</sup> “Trends in Graduate Theological Education (and Our Response)” presented at the January 2016 Fellowship of Evangelical Seminary Presidents forum.

majority of the respondents reported increasing enrollments (92%) and increases in the scope of their programs (68%). Most of the rest of the programs were, at the least, maintaining their size (30%). Remarkably, only 2% of the programs were downsizing at that time.<sup>7</sup>

There were interesting parallels in the factors cited that contributed to growth and those that contributed to decline. There is some evidence that the schools that are flourishing (e.g. increasing in enrollment, especially those who have increased by 20% or more) have certain factors that have contributed to this growth:

1. *High value of YM.* Support by faculty/administration for the youth ministry program was the most commonly cited contributing variable to growth. This is both public and financial support. It included seeing the youth ministry degree on the same level as other religion degrees (or in the case of undergraduate institutions, as comparable to any other degree). These schools had admissions departments that promoted the youth ministry degree on par with other degrees to ensure adequate number of students in the program. A comparative 2009 study by Wes Black also found that a number of institutions valued YM programs and considered that a factor in their marketability and overall growth in enrollment.<sup>8</sup> The combined majority of the factors that contributed to growth identified by AYME members centered on the high value that students and church/denominational leaders attached to YM in general, and church/denominational leaders valuing theological training in their hiring decisions of YM staff.
2. *Positive curriculum changes.* Eighteen percent identified recent curriculum redesigns as a factor for growth. The indentified changes included reducing the number of units required in a degree (thereby reducing educational costs for the student), and increasing the practicality, applicability and flexibility of their curriculum to account for the greater variance in youth ministry expressions.

Conversely, those schools that have experienced a decline in enrollment (especially those who have dropped by 20% or more) also cited certain factors that contributed to this. Notice that some of the factors are the experiential opposite of those schools that are growing.

1. *Lack of value of YM.* This was indicated at the institutional level with 18% citing lack of support by faculty/administration for the YM program in general. It seemed in some cases that YM departments/faculty were virtually unknown in the greater institution. In one case, admissions personnel did not even realize the YM option existed at their school until informed by the YM department chair. The majority of the factors contributing to decline centered on the lack of value students, parents, and church/denominational leaders placed on YM and/or YM higher education.
2. *Detrimental curriculum revisions.* Twenty percent indicated the recent degree reductions and redesigns negatively impacted their enrollment. They believed that recent revisions resulted in curriculums that do not create space for youth ministry

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<sup>7</sup> Mark Cannister. "The State of the Professoriate: An Empirical Study of Youth Ministry Professors in North America." *Journal Of Youth Ministry* 1, no. 2 (Spring 2003) 65-78. *Academic Search Premier*, EBSCOhost (accessed August 23, 2016), 72.

<sup>8</sup> Wesley Black, 2009. "Christian Education: A Field in Motion." S-136.



degrees to offer a sufficient number of youth ministry courses to adequately prepare the student for ministry.

### Perceived Value of YM

It seems from the above parallels that the value that institutions, faculty, students, and church leaders place on YM can be problematic for some and positive for others, which is an issue that has plagued YM in general for decades. This disparity for the priority given youth ministry by church leaders was identified in a recent Barna study. “Six in 10 (61%) senior pastors say youth ministry is “one of the top priorities” of their church’s ministry, and 7 percent say it is the single highest priority. However, despite a clear majority, one-third of pastors (32%) say it is either somewhat, not too much, or not at all a priority.”<sup>9</sup> It is likely that the degree to which we can define the need for and create urgency for YM has direct correlation to how those in and out of our institutions value YM, and consequently YM degree programs. That is a complex issue that implicates how YM ministry leaders conduct themselves personally in any context, as well as how they represent the real value of YM to their institutions and churches. Solutions need to continue to be sought at the institutional, departmental, church, and cultural levels.

### Curriculum Revisions

Curriculum revisions also appeared as a factor contributing to both growth and decline. Nearly as many benefited from curriculum revisions as were negatively impacted by them, which indicates that the reasons and forms of curriculum redesign are complex and require deeper examination and considerable thought. Some schools lamented the national trend in reducing the number of required hours for a degree has diluted the content and quality of YM curriculum, which in turn negatively impacts learning outcomes. Others were negatively impacted by collapsing the YM degree into a more general degree. Conversely, a number of people identified the broadening of their degree as a factor for growth. Several others cited creative curriculum additions as factors for growth (i.e. practicums, internships, combined and accelerated degrees, and certificates). Of interest is that no one commented on increasing the accessibility of education through alternate delivery methods (i.e. online degrees and hybrid courses) as a factor for growth, even though that is a significant current discussion in higher education and should be explored as a variable related to growth.

These disparate views on curriculum revisions, whether forced or voluntary, may indicate a need for well grounded market research, and thoughtful strategies to maximize the practicality and flexibility of degrees. Care should be taken to streamline the courses and course content, while maintaining the overall quality of the degree and successful attainment of student learning outcomes. Broadening the degree may be a smart marketing move for some institutions to attract more students who want to study youth ministry as well as have other

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<sup>9</sup> “The Priorities, Challenges, and Trends in Youth Ministry” Research Releases in Leaders & Pastors, April 6, 2016. <http://www.barna.com/research/the-priorities-challenges-and-trends-in-youth-ministry/#.Vw5thl72YcU>

ministerial training. Several examples indicate that it is possible to maintain a strong YM department and curriculum as a concentration or emphasis within a broader degree, particularly at the graduate level. However, YM program leaders should heed the warning to be very intentional about changes in curriculum as YM programs have historically been prone to “trial and error” curriculum changes, which have sometimes resulted in convulsive and ineffective changes.<sup>10</sup>

### Financial Concerns

Financial concerns were also cited as a significant factor for decline in enrollment. Institutional financial woes were implicated by some respondents who have experienced consolidation or elimination of their degrees, with several institutions struggling to recover from the great recession of 2007-09. This likely contributed to financial concerns in the minds of potential and enrolled students (and parents) as well. The issue of declining enrollment may be indeed be indicative of underlying issues of rising educational costs combined with the low average income for ministerial positions in general, and YM positions specifically. A 2015 study by Group found the average salary package for paid youth workers was \$38,800, which is roughly the equivalent of what it was in 2005.<sup>11</sup> The financial reality for many is that YM positions have not kept up with the cost of living, thus increasing the disparity between educational costs and potential income. This may also be reflective of the larger trend toward bi-vocational ministry among YM students (as does the desire for broader degrees).

Additionally, there may be a correlation between the decline in enrollment and the proliferation of YM degrees noted above. This may have created competition for a limited market share, and this correlation should be explored in greater depth. Given the complexity of these issues and the reality that most educators are trained in their particular field of study, it may be wise to consult marketing faculty or professionals to develop contextualized marketing strategies in the current economic and cultural conditions.

### Renaming Degrees

The naming and renaming of degrees was a significant theme throughout the SYMD, which may indicate that faculty is sensitive to market trends and perceived needs. The accrediting agency survey accounted the varied nomenclature being used to describe YM specific degrees. Among the 139 YM degrees offered (undergrad and grad), there were 23 different names of YM related degrees. The most common name by far was Youth Ministry or Youth Ministries (55%), followed by Youth & Family Ministry (12%). (See Appendix B for full listing of names.) However, the members survey indicated that Youth Ministry was also the most commonly changed name over the past decade, with 6 different Youth Ministry degrees (8 undergrad, 2 grad) being renamed. New names included Youth & Family Ministry (3), Youth & Family Studies (2), Youth & Student Ministry, and Youth & Young Adult Studies. The reasons for renaming Youth Ministry degrees to include some kind of “family” descriptor were related

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<sup>10</sup> Black, “Christian Education: A Field in Motion” S-138.

<sup>11</sup> Rick Lawrence, “The 2015 Youth Ministry Salary Survey” *Group Magazine*, Sept/Oct/Nov 2015, p. 28.

to wanting to better reflect current trends to include intergenerational ministry and young adult ministry emphases, and/or were a better reflection of the family emphasis of the existing curriculum. Several indicated their name change was believed to (or had potential to) be more marketable as it would attract more potential students. A few also indicated their name change was designed to benefit graduates who may serve in other than only youth serving ministries.

Several institutions had conducted some amount of research prior to changing their name (which is a good idea for those who are considering a name change). One graduate institution found that little more than half of their current YM degree students intended to serve in traditional church or parachurch YM settings, while the others desired to express youth ministry in a variety of non-traditional ways. The institution changed their name from Youth & Family Ministry to Youth & Family Studies in order to be more attractive to potential students who want to serve in traditional and non-traditional youth and family ministry roles, as well as to better serve graduating students in finding employment in the broader youth and family-services marketplace. They also cited the negative and/or narrow perception of a Youth Ministry degree as a factor for their change:

The name change will help our students avoid being stigmatized by the common stereotypes associated with the term "youth ministry." Unfortunately, when "ministry" is combined with "youth" our students can fall prey to a "goofy youth leader" stereotype that is alive and well in some churches, which can hinder influence and advancement within the church.

Clearly, whether or not to change the name of a degree is a complex issue. The name of the degree can be a leading indicator of content and applicability of the degree, which can influence the perceived value of the degree in the minds of students, parents, pastors and other employers. A carefully chosen name could be a significant marketing factor to attract prospective students, as well as increase job opportunities for graduates. Further research on any correlation between degree names and impact on enrollment could be useful in aiding those who are considering a name change.

### **Summary and Recommendations**

What is the prevalence and type of academic youth ministry programs in higher education institutions in North America? Has the number and/or types of programs and degrees offered changed in the last decade? After only a preliminary consideration of the data, it is apparent that youth ministry degree programs are prolific and varied, and have increased over the last decade. Many have been added, a number have closed, and several have been renamed or restructured. However, overall enrollment in YM degrees has decreased in over half of the institutions surveyed. The research cited above indicates that the variables contributing to this phenomenon are complex and interrelated.

This study seems to suggest that those overseeing undergraduate and graduate youth ministry programs should be cautious before eliminating a YM program, before adding a YM program, or before re-naming or re-branding a YM program. While it is tempting to blame factors outside of the field for the demise of some YM programs, and while it appears that lack of institutional support is a significant factor, responsibility must also be taken by those within

the field itself. Many from within the field may have either not acted at all or over-reacted to recent past challenges rather than proactively acting alongside of these events and issues. Upon time for deeper level consideration of the data and opportunity for collegial interaction, additional implications regarding this study will be forthcoming.

In conclusion, given the increasing number of youth and children on the planet combined with the ever-increasing risk factors they face, there is clearly a critical need for biblically trained, experienced youth workers. We are challenged to work through these complexities and figure out how to supply that training in the future.

### **Limitations and Additional Research**

Firstly, this is only a preliminary consideration of the data. Secondly, the collected data identified some variables that need to be explored further, and may not represent many critical variables that ought also to be considered. Thirdly, the population of the sample may not provide an accurate representation of the population being discussed.

While this research represents a global analysis relative to feedback from accrediting bodies, and depends on a good response rate from highly qualified AYME member faculty, many institutions with YM programs were not represented personally. It is possible that by expanding the offering of the surveys to professors beyond AYME membership that distinct data could be discovered. Perhaps there would be variations in the data when comparing schools with no AYME affiliation to those with AYME affiliation. Additionally, variances might also be possible relative to institutions with both undergraduate and graduate degrees as compared to those with only one or the other.

This study is limited in that it serves as a snapshot of the current prevalence and recent changes of accredited YM programs and does not provide any insights in the contributing factors, qualities or core competencies of the programs. The account of this research report depends mostly on quantitative frequency findings and some qualitative commentary, but not on quantitative correlational analyses. For example, there are no comparisons of the number and types of courses offered by the schools which are growing and those who are in decline. Nor are there any insights into core competencies that contribute to growing programs, and/or are necessary to adequately equip youth workers for future ministry.

Additional research might consider this data more thoroughly. It might also expand both the depth of the survey and the breadth of those solicited for responses. Such research might also benefit from more qualitative efforts allowing for the perspectives of administrators, pastors, denominational leaders, adolescent development experts, adolescent and family therapists, and even publishers to be heard.

## **Appendix A – AYME Member Survey Questions**

You have received this survey because you are registered as a member of the Association of Youth Ministry Educators (AYME) in the last three years and are associated with an institution of higher education. If you are not faculty or are no longer associated with an institution of higher education, please respond to this email to let us know that so we won't disturb you with further communication about this survey.

The purpose of this survey is to help the Association of Youth Ministry Educators determine the current status and recent changes of degrees for youth ministry within our member institutions.

Thank you for your willingness to complete this survey. We estimate that it will take you 20 minutes to complete. As a thank you for your participation, you are automatically entered into a drawing to win one of five \$20 VISA gift cards. Winners will be notified via email by May 30.

In order to complete the survey in one sitting, it would be helpful to gather the following Information beforehand:

1. Approximate number of students who were enrolled in what would have been your primary degree program for those in youth ministry in 2006.
2. Approximate number of students currently enrolled in your primary degree program for those in youth ministry.
3. The name of the degree(s) (including minors) for those in youth ministry in 2006.
4. The name of the degree(s) (including minors) for those currently in youth ministry.

Note that this survey asks for your name and the name of your institution in order to gather demographic information and eliminate any duplicate data. We want to assure you that this information will be confidential, known only to the principal researchers. When the survey is published and distributed in any form, all identifiable information will be removed.

### **AYME Youth Ministry Degree Survey 2016**

1. Name of person filling out survey
2. Name of the school/educational institution at which you currently teach
3. Indicate the highest degree that you've completed.
  - Ph.D.
  - Ed.D.
  - D.Miss.
  - D.Min.
  - M.Div.
  - M.A.
  - Other (please specify)

4. Indicate the total number of years you've spent in *youth ministry* in general (including youth ministry education).

0-3

4-6

7-9

10-12

13-15

More than 15

5. Indicate the total number of years you've spent in youth ministry education specifically.

0-3

4-6

7-9

10-12

13-15

More than 15

6. How many years have you taught at your current institution?

0-2

3-4

5-6

7-8

9-10

More than 10

7. What is your current position in your institution? (Check all that apply)

Professor

Associate Professor

Assistant Professor

Instructor

Adjunct Faculty

Department Chair

Dean

Provost

Student

Other (please specify)

8. What do you consider to be your primary specialty area in teaching?

Biblical Studies

Christian Education

Discipleship/Spiritual Formation

Leadership  
Practical Theology  
Theology (Historical or Systematic)  
Psychology/Developmental theory  
Culture/Sociology  
Youth Ministry  
Other (please specify)

9. At your institution, what is the name of the primary degree program for students who want to be in youth ministry?

Christian Education  
Christian Ministries  
Family Ministry  
Ministry  
Student Ministries  
Youth Ministry  
Youth and Family Ministry  
Not Applicable  
Other (please specify)

10. At your school/institution, indicate the level(s) of degree students can choose for the degree indicated above. Check all that apply.

BA or BS  
MA  
MDiv  
DMin  
PhD or EdD  
Not Applicable  
Other (please specify)

11. At your school/institution, indicate the various options students can choose for the degree(s) indicated above? (Check all that apply)

Major  
Minor  
Concentration  
Emphasis  
Undergraduate Certificate  
Graduate Certificate  
Not Applicable  
Other (please specify)

12. If you indicated that your school offers a BA or BS in the primary degree name you indicated earlier, please indicate the approximate number of years your school has had that degree.

0-2

3-4

5-6

7-8

9-10

11-12

13-14

15 or more

Not Applicable

13. How many youth ministry-specific courses are required in your primary youth ministry degree program at the undergraduate level?

1-5

6-8

9-12

13+

14. If you indicated that your school offers a MA in the primary degree name you indicated earlier, please indicate the approximate number of years your school has had that degree.

0-2

3-4

5-6

7-8

9-10

11-12

13-14

15 or more

Not Applicable

15. If you indicated that your school offers a MDiv with specialization in the primary degree name you indicated earlier, please indicate the approximate number of years your school has had that degree.

0-2

3-4

5-6

7-8

9-10

11-12

13-14



15 or more  
Not Applicable

16. How many youth ministry-specific courses are required in your primary youth ministry degree program at the graduate level?

1-5  
6-8  
9-12  
13+  
Not Applicable

17. If you indicated that your school offers a DMin in the primary degree name you indicated earlier, please indicate the approximate number of years your school has had that degree.

0-2  
3-4  
5-6  
7-8  
9-10  
11-12  
13-14  
15 or more  
Not Applicable

18. If you indicated that your school offers a Ph.D. or Ed.D. in the primary degree name you indicated earlier, please indicate the approximate number of years your school has had that degree.

0-2  
3-4  
5-6  
7-8  
9-10  
11-12  
13-14  
15 or more  
Not Applicable

19. In the last 10 years, if your institution has eliminated any youth ministry related degrees, please list the name(s) of the degree(s) eliminated.

20. If you indicated that your institution has eliminated any youth ministry related degrees In the last 10 years, please state why the degree(s) was/were eliminated.

21. In the last 10 years, if your institution has added any youth ministry related degrees, please list the name(s) of the degree(s) added.

22. If you indicated that your institution has added any youth ministry related degrees In the last 10 years, please state why the degree(s) was/were added.

23. In the last 10 years, has the name for the primary degree program for those who want to be in youth ministry changed?

Yes

No

Planning to change it in the next year

24. If you marked "Yes" or "Planning to Change It" in the previous question, please indicate the new or projected name in the "Other" field.

25. If you answered "Yes" to changing your degree name in the last 10 years, what was the previous name for your program?

26. If you answered "Yes" to changing your degree name in the last 10 years, why was the degree name changed?

27. Over the last 10 years, how has the primary degree for those who want to be in youth ministry changed in terms of number of students enrolled in the degree?

Numbers have increased by more than 20% or more over the last 10 years

Numbers have increased by 11-20% over the last 10 years

Numbers have increased by 1-10% over the last 10 years

Numbers have stayed the same over the last 10 years

Numbers have decreased by 1-10% over the last 10 years

Numbers have decreased by 11-20% over the last 10 years

Numbers have decreased by more than 20% over the last 10 years

Not Applicable

28. To what do you attribute this change in numbers over the last 10 years? (Check all that apply)

More students wanting to go into youth ministry

Less students wanting to go into youth ministry

Senior/lead pastors hiring theologically educated youth workers

Senior/lead pastors hiring non-theologically educated youth workers

Students desire classic university/seminary training for youth ministry

Students wanting to explore youth ministry in other ways than classic university/ seminary training

Students wanting a degree broader than youth ministry.

Faculty and administration recognize the importance of youth ministry degrees

Faculty and administration do not recognize the importance of youth ministry degrees

School/Institution redesigning degrees such that youth ministry is positively impacted

School/Institution redesigning degrees such that youth ministry is negatively impacted  
Churches requiring that youth workers have a theological degree (BA, BS, MA, MDiv) in youth ministry.

Churches are not requiring youth workers to have a theological degree (BA, BS, MA, MDiv) in youth ministry.

Not Applicable

Other (please specify)

29. Recognizing that each school's/institution's situation is unique, please provide us a brief narrative that describes any factors or issues related to changes in your degree program for youth workers that would be helpful for us to know.

### Appendix B – Detail of Degree Names from Accrediting Survey

	Degree Name	BA/S	MA	M.Div	Total
1.	Youth Ministry (incl. combination degree names)	41	5	3	49
2.	Youth Ministries	26	2		28
3.	Youth and Family Ministry(ies)	13	2	2	17
4.	Youth and Young Adult Ministry(ies)	4	2	3	9
5.	Student Ministry	4	1	2	7
6.	Children, Youth and Family Ministry(ies)	1	3	3	7
7.	Theology and Youth Ministry(ies)	3			3
8.	Children's and Family Ministry		1	1	2
9.	Youth and Family Studies	1	1		2
10.	Youth Pastor	1		1	2
11.	Youth Ministry, Family & Culture	1	1		2
12.	Youth and Student Ministries	1			1
13.	Youth Development Studies	1			1
14.	Youth Discipleship	1			1
15.	Youth Leadership	1			1
16.	Youth Studies	1			1
17.	Youth Work	1			1
18.	Youth and Worship	1			1
19.	Christian Education and Youth Ministry	1			1
20.	Christian Ministry: Student and Family Ministry	1			1
21.	Christian Ministry: Youth and Family Ministry	1			1
22.	Next Generation	1			1
23.	Intercultural Youth Ministries	1			1