

2017 SoTCM Graduates Exit Interview Summary
Spring 2017
May 26, 2017

The 2017 SoTCM majors who graduated with either a BA in Christian Ministry or Philosophy were invited to participate in a graduate interview by completing a survey. Fifteen of the twenty-four majors completed the survey and the following provides a summary of the survey results.

Q1: What are some of your positive experiences as a SoTCM major?

One of the major themes students indicated was the quality of the professors, engaging classes, and the professor's investment in their lives. As one student indicated, *"So my most positive experiences would simply be talking with the teachers before, during, and after class. And also talking with them in their office hours. They have definitely made a positive impact on my life due to their dedication and input."*

A related theme was the focus on a strong sense of community among faculty and students. As one student indicated, *"I feel known by my professors and feel that I have been given a great community in my department."* Students indicated that faculty and the Smee building (where SoTCM faculty are housed) was always a safe place. Students also indicated that they always felt welcomed by the faculty and staff of the SoTCM.

Q2: What aspects of the curriculum requirements of your major was most significant for you?

One of the primary themes was upper division courses in theology and philosophy. Students indicated that course such as Christ and the Church, Biblical Theology, and Logic were some of the most significant for them. They also indicated that ministry courses were most helpful, and that they wished there were more ministry classes offered.

Another major theme is that the courses challenged them to struggle with the hard questions and helped them rethink what they believed. They also stated that the format of smaller classes with discussion was most significant.

Q3: How could your educational experience in the SoTCM have been better?

One of the themes that emerged was the need to have courses offered more frequently. Students indicated that they missed out on taking some courses because of course only being offered every other year. Connected with this was the need to have more peer tutoring or faculty advising to help in planning the course schedules. Some of this problem was related to the change of the major's curriculum.

A related theme that emerged was the need for more practical theology courses, such as cross-cultural classes, and getting connected to the church earlier in their educational journey.

Q4: What would you suggest the SoTCM give attention to as it evaluates the program in order to better educate and mentor students in the future?

One area that many students indicated was having more school events and gatherings for students to connect. This could also include addressing current cultural and world events (ie. immigration, politics, etc.).

Several students indicated the important role philosophy plays in the curriculum and would like to have outside speakers come to talk to students about graduate schools.

A third theme was the need for faculty to mentor students on a regular basis. One student suggested that we “*pair students with a faculty member to meet on a regular basis.*” They indicated this was especially important given that their faith is challenged and the need for more process time with faculty.

Q5: What change or additions, if any, would you recommend for your particular major?

One of the themes was for Christian Studies students to take more philosophy and theology classes. Also, in these philosophy classes there needs to be more assignments and projects related to current events.

There is a desire for more ministry classes to be offered, particularly in the area of youth ministry and cross-cultural ministry.

Q6: In what ways have you grown in your Christian faith as a SoTCM major?

The majority of students indicated that they have been challenged spiritually and intellectually, and have been given a safe place by faculty to ask hard questions and to re-learn aspects of their faith. As one student stated, “*I have grown in so many ways! I feel like this department has helped me learn how to study the Bible, how to evaluate theological opinions, and how to research using good sources. I have grown to critically think through current issues in the church, and ponder ways I can help be an effective member of the body. I feel like my faith has become more vibrant and rooted because of my education. I have found what I'm passionate about, and I'm very thankful for that!*”

An overwhelming number of students indicated that they have learned so much about their faith and have been challenged to dive deeper in their understanding of Scripture and theology. They indicated their reconceived views of God and life have been challenged, by gracious faculty who care about them, in order to re-evaluate their beliefs.

Q7: What other observations or suggestions do you have that might be helpful as the SoTCM reviews its programs and curricula?

As indicated previously one of the major areas of frustration was the lack of course being offered more regularly, particularly ministry major courses. Students expressed concerns about not

being about to benefit from taking these classes. They also wanted to have more cross-cultural classes, study abroad, and short-term trips related to the course content.

Students also expressed concerns about faculty not posting their office hours and the difficulty of setting a time to meet with faculty. It would be helpful to have them listed on the course syllabus.

Students indicated the importance of biblical language classes and the philosophy major as important aspects of the curriculum. They wanted to make sure that these were not lost in the curriculum.