

Lalia Garcia and Madison Bothe — who serve with Circuit Riders, a ministry of YWAM® — talk about faith with two students as they study outside the student union at Saddleback College, a community college in Mission Viejo, California.

Partnering on the Campus Circuit

CRU STORYLINES

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A mass of nearly 200 young people breaks into smaller clusters in a California park with white-trunked eucalyptus trees. The groups of people shuffle through the grass to join the men and women who had just raised their hands, mostly in the back of the crowd. Heads bow, and some extend a hand on another's shoulder. Voices speaking at once create a rising chatter.

Circuit Riders — an energetic team of YWAM® missionaries ages 18 to 25 — stand among about 15 Cru® staff members, praying for them as a send-off during the last day of an outreach event, which they called the “So Cal Launching Effort.”

On this breezy fall day, the whole group celebrates what God has done and prepares for the coming hours on college campuses.

Gospel-centered partnership involves similar-hearted, distinct personalities bringing their own approaches while looking to a bigger vision. And Cru and YWAM have demonstrated what can happen through joining forces, trusting God to see new groups of students following Jesus on college campuses. Together they visited 26

universities and community colleges in Southern California over the course of the three-day event.



Sammy Rodriguez, a Circuit Riders leader who trains students, gives a final charge to Circuit Riders and Cru® staff members in a Huntington Beach park on the last day of the So Cal Launching Effort. Sammy has worked with Circuit Riders since the ministry's beginning in 2011.

EveryCampus®: an unprecedented partnership

An initiative called EveryCampus® links Cru and YWAM today. This collaboration — initiated by InterVarsity

Christian Fellowship/USA® and Cru — involves YWAM and nearly 100 other Christian organizations that share a passion for ministry to university students, helping to start expanding campus ministries on colleges across the country and encouraging others to prayer-walk campuses near them.

On the first day of the Launching Effort, when Cru staff member Dan Allan stepped on the stage to speak to the group about the purpose behind these initiatives, an explosion of cheers and claps burst out as Circuit Riders rose to their feet.



Dan Allan, a Cru® staff member, speaks to Circuit Riders and Cru staff members about the vision and background for the outreach days. Dan serves as the executive director of Mission Expansion, which accelerates efforts to help college students follow Christ in the U.S. and in international locations.



A Circuit Rider pays close attention to speakers kicking off the So Cal Launching Effort. More than 130 Circuit Riders students and staff members gathered that morning at Christ Pacific Church in Huntington Beach, California, the Circuit Riders' home city. Circuit Riders students participate in a six-month school that trains and sends YWAM® missionaries for outreach on college, university and high school campuses.



Kai Gibbons, a Cru® staff member with Mission Expansion, who helped organize the event, trains Circuit Riders in how to find “key volunteers.” Key volunteers are students who seek to help others follow Christ on their campus and may want to start a Christian group with the same goal.

The Circuit Riders travel to college and high school campuses to talk to students about Jesus and invite them to be part of a Christian community. During the So Cal Launching Effort, Cru staff members with this same passion joined to help introduce students they met — who want to start a campus ministry — to local ministry workers and to the [Cru Coaching Center](#), a resource of more than 20 coaches nationwide available by phone or

online that exists to mobilize individuals who love Jesus and want to invite others to know Him.

The So Cal Launching Effort served as a training ground for future ministry launching and collaboration.

Similar to the original circuit riders, who traveled on horseback bringing the message of Jesus from one geographic territory to another, the following Circuit Riders drove near and far to talk to students, anticipating that God would work through their conversations.



Sammy Rodriguez passionately speaks to students before sending them off on a second day of outreach in Southern California. “Jesus is already moving on every campus we’re going to,” Sammy says to them.



Circuit Riders and Cru® staff members finish lunch together in a crowd outside Christ Pacific Church before receiving direction to head to area campuses on the first day of the So Cal Launching Effort.

Michael Corral: a noticeable shift

Michael Corral and Grace Lauvray, two Circuit Riders, climb gradual inclines and introduce themselves to students on benches or at tables around lunchtime the first day of outreach. The woody atmosphere of the University of California, Irvine's common area, where students sit and lie on the grass, conceals its serious academic nature.

Though the campus has established ministries, staff members with Destino®, the Latino ministry of Cru, would like to start something on campus. At UCI, 26% of the students are Latino. The first few students the Circuit Riders meet don't know any Christians for them to talk to, but later they encounter a young man wearing a cross necklace who is part of a church ministry.



More than 30,00 undergraduate students attend UCI, where various trees around campus provide sweet spots for hammockers.



The majority of the student population at UCI is either Latino or Asian.



Circuit Riders Grace Lauvray and Michael Corral talk with Antonio Lopez while his dog gnaws on a tattered bone. They chat about spiritual and personal life and pray together.

In his black Converse shoes, Michael takes more steps forward.

“The first day I didn’t know what to expect,” Michael says.

Both Cru staff members and Circuit Riders desire to share the good news of Jesus, but the new concept of finding “key volunteers” offers a different method for Circuit Riders. This strategy encourages Christian students to become multiplying disciples of Jesus and envision

what God could do on their campus. Orienting to the different training and objectives that Cru staff members brought required a new mindset for Circuit Riders.

Michael's group of four Circuit Riders returns to UCI the next day. After another afternoon with new conversations, Michael feels more settled about this kind of outreach to find Christians.

"I felt more peace and less stress," Michael says.

The team ventured further from home base after a Starbucks stop for a jolt of caffeine on the last day. The final destination: Occidental College in Los Angeles. The small, private liberal arts college sits among residential homes on a hillside. Students seem on a mission to get to their next class, wearing headphones and rushing off to a Japanese test or a nearby lecture. Conversations don't begin as casually for the group.



Located in northeast Los Angeles, Occidental College has more than 2,000 students from 48 states. Cru® is currently not present on this campus.



Michael briefly chats with a student before a class, asking if he knows any Christians.

The team stops outside the Interfaith Center, a white-sided building with stained-glass windows, and ask an athletically dressed student, Austin, if he knows any Christians on campus.

“I think out of all the schools you could have picked, this is a pretty poor one in that regard,” Austin answers. He explains that he doesn’t think Occidental College has many Christian students.

Moments later another friend of Austin's holding a stack of books walks by.

“What's up, bro? I have a question for you,” Michael says, asking if he knows any Christians.

Austin's friend directs them to the office of religious affairs in the Interfaith Center. Austin's friend studies philosophy, and they start talking about spiritual topics, like what happens after death. Michael explains about how he began following Jesus. Before they leave, Michael asks how he can pray for the guys, and they part ways.

The group continues walking and searching for people who might be open to conversation. And moments for them to share about Jesus' goodness and truth arise around the quiet campus.



Jacob Eggert, a senior at Occidental College, meets Michael and Logan. Michael details his personal story of coming to know Christ.



Circuit Riders Rebecca Recinos, Grace Lauvry, Logan Dean and Michael head home at the end of an afternoon of meeting students at Occidental College.

Madison Bothe: Dreams for campuses

“I felt like God had birthed [the dream of] going to nations and America in my heart,” says Madison Bothe, a Circuit Riders staff member from Australia.

Madison first heard of Circuit Riders at a church conference in Australia. Motivated by the desire to see

God at work among college students, she moved from her home across the globe to join the ministry.

“Our heart is to work with and come alongside as many ministries and fellowships as we can,” she says, recognizing the goal as bigger than just Circuit Riders.

After three years as a staff member, she now helps lead the evangelistic tours in multiple states across the U.S.

Madison joins Sammy Rodriguez, who speaks to and trains Circuit Riders, at the front of the church on the first day of the outreach. Madison helps him read through the list of groups as he announces the names of three, four or five Circuit Riders in each group who will travel to each campus.

The second day, Madison joins five other Circuit Riders on a visit to Saddleback College, a suburban community college in Mission Viejo.

Before they gather to pray outside the student center on a bright afternoon, Mondo, another Circuit Rider, comments, “Bro, I like your sweater,” to a student wearing a shirt that says, “Jesus is King,” the title of Kanye West’s recent album. They talk about Jesus outside the bathroom doors.



Circuit Riders Ryan and Mondo start a spiritual conversation with a student and continue talking outside the bathroom in the Saddleback College student union.



Madison Bothe, a Circuit Riders staff member, talks about faith in Jesus with three freshmen women at Saddleback College.

Later, Madison and the group find Matt, a student on campus whom Madison has already met at a Circuit Riders gathering. Matt tells the group about his desire to see students following Jesus on his campus. He envisions a bigger picture and wants to encourage others in faith.

“There is more than just the head down, get to class and go home [mentality]. There is more. There is community,” Matt says.

Madison, wearing a black sweatshirt with a lion on the back and black Vans shoes, tells Matt about why they came to campus.

“We’re joining with Cru to find some key volunteers,” she says. “In other words, we’re looking for people who, like yourself, want to host a Jesus expression on campus or really want to partner to see Saddleback come to know Jesus.”

She asks him if he knows anyone else on the campus with that goal.

“There’s a few people that I’d love to talk with,” Matt says. “I want to get coffee with them.”

Matt sees the opportunity on campus and believes he is there for a reason.



Madison's group of Circuit Riders connects with Matt, a student at Saddleback College who wants to see other students know and follow Jesus on campus.

Lalia Garcia: Local connection

Lalia just graduated from Laguna Beach High School. She didn't experience a large Christian environment at her school and longs to share about Jesus with college students in Southern California.

"I want to see revival here," Lalia says.

She desires for students to find new life in Christ. For her, finding student volunteers on campus means partnering with God in work that He is already doing.

During the days at Saddleback College, Lalia saw some students she knew from high school. Although she had only graduated about six months prior, she reflected on the change that happened in her life transitioning from high school to adulthood and the difference that others might experience in the new stage of college as well.

The afternoon at Saddleback College nears an end when Lalia stops at the coffee cart among umbrella-topped tables outside the student union. Two young women wait ahead of her in line. Lalia overhears some words in their conversation that intrigue her.

“I just want her to know Jesus,” one said to the other as she recounted an experience of talking to another friend about her faith in Christ.

“Hey, do you love Jesus?” Lalia asked.

Lalia found out these young women were Christians, and she told them about the partnership with Cru to see new campus ministries arise. Lalia encouraged the one woman that she could show others God’s love on her campus and invited her to the Circuit Riders’ Monday night meeting.

Lalia then left her with a card with more information about EveryCampus.

Epilogue: Next steps

Along with the young woman in the coffee line, Cru staff members and Circuit Riders found more than 100 students who may have an interest in starting a Christian group at their school. Local Cru teams and the Coaching Center received their names and planned to follow up with them.



The Los Angeles skyline emerges from smog during the season of wildfires that plagued the area in fall 2019.

The Circuit Riders, based in Huntington Beach, organized the launching days before heading out on a tour starting in January called [Carry The Love](#). During the tour, they stopped at campuses across the U.S. for two days of worship, evangelistic training and outreach. Along with the fall launching event, and then launching efforts around the country in January and February 2020, Circuit Riders found more than 300 potential key volunteers from 124 campuses. Cru staff members continue to connect with them. In addition, 124 students from around the U.S. indicated new faith in Christ.

You can join in the mission of EveryCampus by taking a prayer walk near a college campus close to you or gathering some friends to pray with you, while practicing safety guidelines outlined by the CDC. As campuses have closed due to the coronavirus and social distancing is a part of our new reality, EveryCampus developed [a new guide for virtual prayer walks](#), enabling you to pray for any campus from any location.

Visit www.everycampus.com to search for campuses that need your partnership. If you're a student and would like to start a ministry on your campus, visit keyvolunteers.com.

Kai Gibbons, a Cru staff member who organized the event, says the vision of seeing ministries that make disciples of Jesus on every college campus in the U.S. takes more than one group's work.

“At the end of the day, we [hang] on to the reality that this is bigger than each organization individually.”



Surfers pause at the shoreline of Huntington Beach as a fall day comes to a close.

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